

# Richmond Food Bank Society Annual Report for 2013-2014

## **Our Programs and People**

This past year is characterized by growth: serving more clients, recruiting more volunteers, and a small growth in staff as Margaret Hewlett, Executive Director plans to retain talent, build capacity, and maintain continuity of service through foreseeable external and internal changes for the Richmond Food Bank. We are very grateful that donations keep pace with our growing needs and the rising expenses that impact the food bank, just as they impact the people we serve.

We are continuously looking for ways to reach out to people who are living in poverty but who do not use the food bank. One example is offering diabetes bags. Programs Coordinator Keith Yee is working with the volunteers to streamline our distribution and speed turnover in our limited parking area, and Larry McIntyre has been problem-solving along with his work as a greeter and listener, finding ways to reduce early congestion and conflicts due to people holding spots in the line-up. The number draw initiated by our volunteers at Daniels Road has proven to be helpful here as well.

Thursdays are becoming very busy. An all-day distribution the last Thursday of December, after Christmas service interruption, was a test for a day of continuous distribution, should we need to expand our service hours. Troubled clients who don't function well during the regular and more congested distribution times are increasingly availing themselves of quiet distribution time before our Thursday evening distribution, which is also getting very busy. Also on Thursdays, Lily of Youth Unlimited conducts a Craft Corner in the afternoon: a place for girls and young women to gather after school. Richmond Family Place follows by offering its Family Fun Café on Thursday Evenings from 4:40pm – 6:60pm, serving families with young children who come for a meal together followed by play school for the children while their caregivers collect their groceries and learn about other resources in the community. Volunteers at Peace Church continue to provide stellar leadership and service on Tuesday afternoons, serving 70 households in a typical week.

Both the Play & Learn area and the Saturday Ageless Volunteerism program for seniors are exceeding our hopes for success. Richmond Family Place has provided consistent coverage for the Play & Learn area. Volunteers Coordinator Hajira assists Keith in providing oversight and management as they rotate supervisor shifts with Johanna Waldorf (who also provides expressive arts therapy for the participants) and Office Manager Judy Ying Sun. Thanks to volunteer Mary's coordination, we have coverage for our Information Table and Wellness Centre through our Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday day-time and evening distributions. We are proud of these three programs that address the needs of preschool aged children and their parents; seniors who are isolated by disability, language, or poverty; and anyone who is new to the community and the many services available to them.

More volunteers both reflect and support our expanding service and activities. Hajira has grown our corps of regular volunteers to more than 180 as well as a growing number of workplace and school groups who come in for occasional days of volunteerism. Regular re-orientations remind volunteers and staff of safety practices and policies for effective service and messaging – so important for new volunteers and also for several who have been with us for more than years. We

recognized Vi's 30 years of service by nominating her for a Volunteers are Stars award. Vi was very pleased to attend the awards evening with Hajira.

To recognize the contributions of all our volunteers, we organized a number of social events including a laughing Yoga session and lunch, a summer BBQ at the Terra Nova Rural Park, an autumn Potluck lunch, a Tea Tasting party in February, and Volunteer Appreciation Party in April at ANAF 284. Throughout the year, we encourage eating together and fellowship over our daily tea time and frequently volunteers on any day will prepare a healthy lunch for their colleagues.

## **Outreach and Communications**

Alex Nixon, our Outreach and Communications Coordinator launched our new website featuring our updated logo and colour and a clean and uncluttered look. Jennifer, a volunteer with our Information table, is promoting the video on our home page among Richmond Health nurses as a window to our programs and the people we serve. Our Cantonese speaking volunteers and supporters gave good feedback on a Fairchild TV segment focused on the Richmond Food Bank's services, finances, and administration.

Staff and Directors take turns to represent the Richmond Food Bank Society at community events and at donation presentations. Alex, Keith, and Hajira are engaged at a number of community tables including Richmond Poverty Response Committee, Richmond Food Security Society, Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee, Isolated Seniors, Richmond Falls Prevention Network, Richmond Children First, Literacy Richmond, and the Community Meals committee. Staff interact regularly with other food banks and with agencies and community groups that serve low-income and marginalized people.

## **Community Partners and Support**

Richmond Health Department's dental hygienist, Lisa Enns provides dental clinics and oral supplies for children and now also for seniors, thanks to a grant from Vancouver Coastal Health, supplementing funds for children from the Dr Bud Sipko Foundation and several other dentists who met a challenge with additional donations for children. Our Play & Learn program is strong and healthy, staffed and administered by Richmond Family Place with funding from Success by 6, as recommended to United Way of the Lower Mainland by Richmond Children First.

A growing number of student groups coming to learn and share their knowledge, especially student nurses from BCIT and UBC, and UBC engineering students, including a group who drew up plans to enhance our Play & Learn area and another who is researching our distribution, needs, and suitable locations should we need to relocate. We are also working with the UBC Community Learning Initiative to address long-term strategic goals with a multi-year project that can include community partners. New interns at the Sharing Farm have come to see who their "market" is when growing nutritious and culturally suitable vegetables for the RFB and community meals. And a team of high school students come frequently with Youth Unlimited to contribute to the community. Several workplace groups (252 individuals, 74 times since January), including Sage, AOL, Reid Hurst Nagy, and Banana Republic helped through the fall and spring for cleaning, sorting – a huge help to Warehouse Manager Rick Younie and his team of regular volunteers,

especially in their work to manage the proliferation of mice that are displaced by demolitions in our rapidly developing city centre. At the same time, CMHA-Pathways Clubhouse's Transitions to Employment therapeutic program for people with persistent mental illness provides daily janitorial services to keep our premises clean, as appropriate to our people-centred services.

We received several generous donations and thanks from former clients and had good responses to 2013 mail-out as well as a wide range of modest to generous donations from individuals, groups and businesses. Among these: Richmond Minor Hockey contributed \$11,000 and the Tzu Chi Foundation donated \$12,000 to purchase fresh milk and also distributed their annual Winter Relief packs. ANAF Unit 284 donated \$7,000 donation from meat draws. Ling Yen Mountain Temple gave \$5,000 plus 16,000 lbs of food in December and January and continues to make generous monthly food donations. The Spirit of Rhythm concert in August yielded just over \$2,500, an interfaith drive brought in generous food and cash donations in July, and the LDS Thanksgiving food drive was very successful. Several Directors and staff attended the Richmond Youth Concert Band's annual fundraising gala and also attended the Band's Music for Moms concert to received proceeds from the gala and present a certificate of thanks for \$22,000 raised since 2008. No less valuable are a number of donations in kind and skilled trades, providing product, space, and services that are essential and costly at market rates.

### **Richmond Poverty Response Committee**

2013-2014 was a busy year for the Richmond Poverty Response Committee. In addition to engaging community members and stakeholder organizations with monthly meetings, the PRC moved forward with projects through the task forces and the committee as a whole:

- **Richmond Rental Connect:** This project brought together 49 landlords and tenants through six informative workshops on tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities, financial literacy, and affordable housing. In addition, two workshops were co-presented with staff of the Rental Tenancy Branch. The website, [www.richmondrentalconnect.ca](http://www.richmondrentalconnect.ca), connected tenants with affordable housing and landlords with good tenants. Rental Connect will continue on for another year at the PRC before it is handed off to another organization- early discussions are with CHIMO.
- **Transportation Task Force:** The Task Force met monthly to engage in advocacy around affordable transportation options, including offering free transit to homeless and at-risk for homeless people, and to prepare a Transportation Report Card for Richmond, expected to be launched in Autumn 2014. The TTF is also organizing "Complete Streets: Moving Richmond to be a Multi-Modal City," a forum about transportation on Thursday 26 June 2014.
- **Richmond Homelessness Coalition:** The Coalition helped with the Homeless Count, where volunteers travelled across Richmond to complete a census of the homeless population, and organized Homeless Connect, a free event for Richmond's transient population that provided breakfast and lunch, health and wellness services, clothing and other supplies, and an opportunity for to meet with Richmond's elected officials.

- **Healthy Food Retail Study:** This study will map Richmond's green grocers/fresh produce/grocery stores, poverty, and health data. The goal is to determine whether there is any relationship between the data and how we can better address the needs of the community. In partnership with the Richmond Food Security Society, Vancouver Coastal Health, the Richmond Food Bank, and UBC Land and Food Systems.
- **MLA Visits:** De Whalen and residents of Richmond East and Steveston-Richmond met with MLAs Honourable Linda Reid and John Yap to discuss poverty in our community. This was an opportunity to tell stories of low-income Richmond families and individuals and to highlight larger trends.

In 2014-2015, the PRC aims to hold a public workshop on free transit; meet with the Honourable Teresa Wat, MLA for Richmond Centre, to discuss poverty in her electoral riding; complete a survey of other Metro Vancouver municipalities' social and community services for the Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee (RCSAC); collaborate with the Richmond Food Security Society, the Richmond Food Bank, and the UBC Community Learning Initiative on a multi-year, multi-disciplinary project; and continue organizing Richmond Rental Connect workshops and the Homeless Connect event.

## **Our Thanks**

The work described above is possible only with the donations, help, and support of our many donors and volunteers. Donations come in many forms: monetary, in kind, and skilled services. Volunteerism ranges from occasional help by individuals and teams for an hour or a day, to regular weekly days, to organizing and executing off-site activities to support our work, to clients who offer rides or translations or who help set up the tent to shelter from the weather when the line-up is long, to our Board of Directors, most who are also regular service volunteers. We are also grateful for our neighbours who help with loaned storage and parking spaces, let us grow food in their window boxes, make donations, and most importantly: understand the special needs of the people we serve.

We thank each one for the myriad ways you support our organization, our work, and our neighbours in need.