

## Good News on the Volunteer Visitor Front

Over the past few months there have been a number of happenings in Richmond. These have been definitely controversial, fully discussed and hotly debated and could be either good or bad for Richmond residents according to your own opinion.

I can give you a good news story that will be embraced by everyone, as a step towards the much needed support programs for Richmond seniors, disabled, and others requiring that extra helping hand.

A number of years ago, Volunteer Richmond had a program in place – Volunteer Visitors, but unfortunately, this was cancelled owing to financial restraints. Happily, Health Services now recognize that this was an excellent program and have reinstated it along with other programs.

As I mentioned, Richmond Health Services is providing the funding to Volunteer Richmond Information Services. As this is a pilot project, the funding will support services for the Blundell area; therefore, these services will only be available at this time to people living within the boundary of the Blundell Neighbourhood. If these services are well received by seniors, then other areas in Richmond will also receive the benefits, and there is no reason why this should not be so. After a positive evaluation of these programs, then they will be implemented throughout BC and in fact, will be considered as a model for other Provinces.

The new services designed to support Healthy Independent Aging are:

**Volunteer Visitor** -- People will be matched based on interest, language, ability in order to find a mutual friendship. The volunteer will visit once a week for a couple of hours to chat, play cards, assist with letter writing, help with crafts. The possibilities are endless, depending on the interests of the client.

**Volunteer Phoners** -- Will initially be matched up, based on interest, language, etc. and make phone contact 1 - 5 times a week with their client to provide social interaction and connection with another person. Seniors unable to get around and feel isolated will benefit greatly from this program. With a little encouragement, I am certain a number of isolated seniors will eventually take advantage of the Seniors Centres and enjoy the social contact.

**Volunteer Drivers** -- Volunteers with good driving records, a reliable car and an interest in driving clients to and from medical appointments will be available to provide this very important service. Clients will be able to call in and request a volunteer driver for an upcoming medical appointment. The client will pay the cost of mileage and parking and be able to get in and out of the car on their own.

The desired outcome of these programs are to reduce stress on the Health Care System, encourage and maintain independence in the community, improve the quality of life and reduce isolation for the frail, elderly.

The current volunteer programs and services, shopping, peer counselling, senior information line still continues throughout the City.

National Volunteer Week is during the last week in April and Volunteer Richmond is hosting an Open House on April 28, 2008 - 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at Caring Place (parking available on Granville side of building). Volunteer Richmond invite previous and current volunteers and encourage them to bring a friend to meet Laurie Chiasson, Manager of Seniors Community Support Services and discuss these exciting new programs.

If you are unable to attend, but have questions of Laurie, I know she will be delighted to hear from you at 604-279-7147 or [lchiasson@volunteerrichmond.ca](mailto:lchiasson@volunteerrichmond.ca).