



Tyler Dobbin, Burnaby Youth Hub Worker – 4570 Imperial St.



# VOLUNTEER BURNABY

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## Volunteer and Give from the Heart

by Kelina Kwan

Troubled youths come from families that have challenges affecting their kids' performance at school and make them vulnerable to crime, drugs and other social problems. The Lower Mainland Purpose Society offers their Family Development Work, Family Therapy, Family Circle, Pitter-Patter Circle Time and others in response to this reality. But they do not stop there. The Purpose Society knows that they cannot just help youths who have issues living at home; they also need to help kids who have already left home. This was the start of their programs for street-involved youths.

Dawn Embree, Executive Director of the Lower Mainland Purpose Society recounts their journey, from a small Burnaby organization that provided basic academic upgrading and life

skills training for youths that are on probation, to a charity with over 100 employees and five major service areas – Education, Family, Youth, Early Childhood and Health Services. Every program provided by the Purpose Society has sprung from needs they see in their current services. This means that all their programs are inter-related and can support each other. This is how they have grown to be so successful across so many service areas over the past 30 years.

But Embree admitted that even with over 100 employees, they could not have done what they are doing without the help of a large volunteer base. The youth drop-in centre in Burnaby as an example, is totally dependent on the support of a strong and loyal volunteer base. With the loss of government funding for the program, they have been

getting by with very limited staffing, and a large volunteer core. "We won't be able to keep the centre open if we didn't have volunteers," Embree said. Volunteers need a system of orientation and training. Purpose Society believes that volunteers that are well-orientated, well-trained, and well-supported are much more prepared to deal with issues they encounter in their volunteer work. At the Purpose Society, all in-house training programs are available to volunteers. "Our volunteers also get a lot of feedback and interaction with people who are very skilled in the field. It gives volunteers a taste of what it's really like to work in a certain field," said Dawn Embree. After their orientation, volunteers are matched with the co-ordinators of their chosen programs.

What makes volunteers stay for many years, working with extremely marginalized individuals? Dawn Embree believes that it is the unique people for whom they volunteer. Day care volunteers, in the Burnaby Early Childhood Programs find that "It is extremely rewarding to see how they grow and develop, to watch them learn. That's a wonderful thing." Other volunteers deal with youths in their youth centres or HIV positive adults in their "Stride" program in Edmonds. "These individuals have really significant challenges in their lives; if the volunteers

are around these people for a long time, they get to know them, and they get to see how their support has contributed to the positive choices and changes in these people's lives." Ultimately, it is perhaps not the training, the connection with professionals, and even the job potential that draw people to volunteer. Volunteering comes from the heart, the feeling you get from "witnessing other people making positive changes in their lives that you are a part of, it is tremendously fulfilling." This is perhaps also the drive behind the Purpose Society to keep looking for people who need their help, and we can all be part of that support that makes everyone's lives better.

Volunteer and give from the heart – it is what makes a difference in our community.

For more information on the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, and how to volunteer with them, please visit [www.purposesociety.org](http://www.purposesociety.org)

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April 14th • 10:00am to 5:00pm  
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**We would  
like to thank...**

Roland Kym for serving on the Board of Directors for Volunteer Grandparents and Volunteer Burnaby from 2008 to 2012. We wish Roland all the best in his future endeavors.

**VOLUNTEER BURNABY**

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