



# VOLUNTEER BURNABY

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[www.volunteerburnaby.ca](http://www.volunteerburnaby.ca)

## Volunteering for families

by Kelina Kwan

Where would you go if you have recently arrived in Burnaby, have a young family, and need help? If you ask Katalin Camara, she will refer you to Burnaby Family Life. Camara started working for the organization as a volunteer 17 years ago, and is now the Director of Operations. What is so unique about Burnaby Family Life? What makes Camara and others like her stay for so long?

Burnaby Family Life began as a grass-roots organization, and has been serving families in Burnaby for the past 40 years. The organization runs many family-related programs providing services for families with young children, a licensed day care, child-minding services, programs for children living with abuse, programs for adults in families dealing with violence, family life education, pregnancy outreach programs, and the list goes on.

Camara joined the organization in 1994, soon after a big change occurred in the population in Burnaby. To serve the fast growing new immigrant families, Burnaby Family Life introduced a number of multi-cultural programs, some of which

are still running today. Coupled with the change in population and programming, is the change in personnel. In order to help immigrant families effectively, "We have staff who are immigrants. They work more easily with immigrants because they understand what the new families have been through. They understand the immigration process and the settlement process" said Camara.

Today, Burnaby Family Life has staff who, together, speak more than 45 different languages. It is the place where immigrants and their families go to for help because "they feel it is their home. They feel welcomed. They feel they are accepted, not that they will have to adjust or that they cannot be themselves. They feel they are comfortable in our culture" said Camara.

This is also how Burnaby Family Life makes volunteers feel. The organization has volunteers who help out in general, but their core organized volunteering centers around the licensed day care. "We have a lot of practicum students who volunteer, mainly in early childhood education. But we also have practicum nurses, practicum student counsellors,

and students doing master level work. We try to support the practicum placement." Camara also points out that the only difference between volunteers and staff members is that volunteers are not paid. Otherwise, volunteers are treated as if they are part of the staff. The organization interviews, hires, orientates, and trains volunteers as if they are part of their staff family. They also try their best to provide volunteers with what they need in order to volunteer with them. For example, if a volunteer needs to travel to a location, they will provide bus passes. They also provide feedback and volunteer appreciation, and make sure that volunteers and staff are communicating regularly.

When asked why people want to volunteer with Burnaby Family Life, Camara said that people like to get involved because volunteering is valued here. Apart from being able to help young children and families, volunteering can realistically turn into paid work or a career. Camara herself is a good example of that. "When somebody is doing a great job and at the same time when there is a need, of course, we will consider the person who has been with us for a long time and is doing an awesome job before we consider a total stranger."

What makes Burnaby Family Life unique is its diversity and the organization's commitment to serving the needs of their clients. "Our number one priority is always the clients we are serving, the

families we are serving." Everyone in the organization follows the five values that form the core of the organization: Learning, Integrity, Cooperation, Respect and Empowerment. By adhering to these values, volunteers and staff work together as a team, support each other and respect each other. "It's like a big family. People feel proud about their work, and feel good about it" said Camara.

If you want to help families and young children, and work with people who come from literally all over the world who are highly committed

and enthusiastic, then volunteer with Burnaby Family Life. It can possibly turn into one of the most enriching experiences of your life.

For more information on Burnaby Family Life and current volunteer opportunities, please visit [www.burnabyfamilylife.org](http://www.burnabyfamilylife.org). Or call 604-659-2200.

For more information on how to get involved in your community, please contact Volunteer Burnaby through their website at [www.volunteerburnaby.ca](http://www.volunteerburnaby.ca). Or call 604.294.5533.

### Volunteer Opportunity!

The Hats Off Day Committee is actively seeking volunteers to assist with the road closure of Hastings Street from Boundary Road to Gamma Avenue. We are looking for individuals and groups to help fill the 140 spots we need to effectively close Hastings and monitor Albert and Pender streets and keep pedestrian traffic safe. If you would like to volunteer you can email Lee Faurot at [lee@volunteerburnaby.ca](mailto:lee@volunteerburnaby.ca)

Volunteer  
...you'll be glad you did



### Volunteer of the Month...

#### Simone Callahan



Meet Simone Callahan, Hats Off Day planning committee member and display coordinator. Simone splits her time between Australia and Canada. With what started as a short term volunteer job has turned into a three year and counting commitment to Burnaby's largest and most popular street festival and parade. This goes to show that international volunteering happens at home and abroad. We thank Simone for her smile, enthusiasm, humour and the special effort she makes to making Hats Off Day the best it can be.

**VOLUNTEER BURNABY**

203-2101 Holdom Avenue Burnaby  
604.294.5533 [www.volunteerburnaby.ca](http://www.volunteerburnaby.ca)

## VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED

Do you enjoy driving and giving a helping hand? Join a great team of volunteers at Burnaby Meals on Wheels. Your gift of a few hours a week will make a difference!

Call Kerstin at 604-299-5754 ext. 27  
or email [kerstin@mealsonwheels-burnaby.com](mailto:kerstin@mealsonwheels-burnaby.com)



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