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George Derby Centre residents enjoy a day of fishing at Silverbrook U-Catch Rainbow Trout Farm.

Make Volunteering Count

by Kelina Kwan

George Cleveland Derby left Canada in 1916 to fight in the First World War. During the preliminary fighting at Vimy Ridge, an exploding shell buried him in a trench and Derby was left with a disabled knee. Derby has since devoted his work to helping veterans. He went on to become the Western Regional Administrator in Vancouver for the Department of Veterans Affairs. In 1946, he negotiated land acquisition for a new veterans' hospital, and in that year, the George Derby Centre was named in his honour.

Today the George Derby Centre is a community-based residential care facility providing excellent care and services to 300 residents

who are Canadian Veterans of the Armed Forces. But this is not why the George Derby Centre is unique. In addition to 24-hour nursing, medical, clinic care, rehabilitation, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy, the centre also provides a wide range of programs for both the physical and mental well-being of the residents. Yoying Orosa, Director of Therapeutic Programs at the George Derby Centre recently explained to me how the outstanding services they provide are very dependent on the "multi layers" of volunteers.

"We have volunteers throughout the entire organization," Orosa said. The centre has a volunteer board of directors. The gift shop is run by the George Derby Volunteers

Society. The society consists of long-standing volunteers who tirelessly seek out the best deal in town in order to make a profit, so they can make donations to purchase items for improving the quality of life for the residents, such as vital signs machines and bathing equipment.

The centre runs a very extensive arts program and music therapy program, and volunteers provide help there. Latest research has repeatedly shown that art plays a major role in helping people with dementia, and the centre has taken this to heart and made it an integral part of their therapeutic programs. The program provides a variety of activities such as drumming circles, story-telling, painting, weaving and more. "The artwork produced is truly amazing. The creativity that is being expressed is quite phenomenal" said Orosa. Volunteers help draw "spares" for residents to paint on, sew fabric painted by residents into cushions or hot pads, etc. Volunteers also provide cloth-altering services, which is "very important as residents gain and lose weight and this enables them to have clothes fit better without having to go outside the facility."

The centre has a contingent of volunteers for spiritual care who help the chaplain. They help in a variety of ways including taking residents to services on the weekends, and some also sit with residents who are deemed to need palliative care and are coming to the end of their lives. "The volunteers who do this are wonderful. They all bring back stories of how meaningful it has been for them to sit with residents at the end of their lives and families really appreciate this, especially if they are from out of town and can't come in to be with the resident as soon as they need to be. It is a real comfort for them to know that somebody is there sitting with their loved ones."

Orosa sums up how important volunteers are to the centre and what it means for everyone involved, by telling me about a volunteer, a collector who regularly brings in items for presentation. He once brought in sunken treasures recovered, and this led to some residents' realization of the dream to go fishing. So volunteers took residents fishing. Quite a number of them were fishermen in their day, and this day out to a fish farm became a competition of who caught the most fish! "All the residents were so high when they came home!" Orosa mused. "But the neatest thing was the next

day, volunteers kindly cleaned the fish caught, and the residents who went fishing had their trout barbecued for lunch. It was absolutely fabulous, they really enjoyed that. They got to enjoy the outcome of their experience, which is really good." And it is all because of the help of many volunteers – volunteering really counts in the George Derby Centre.

Volunteers are an integral part of the centre, and they also help out in many more activities including gardening, horticulture, organizing art shows, and gathering residents for outings. Because of dementia and memory loss, this is a very important task in the centre. The list of volunteers needed is endless and Orosa said they are always looking for volunteers.

If you want to experience how volunteering changes lives, and make it count, contact the George Derby Centre, please visit www.georgederbycentre.ca, or call 604.521.2676.

For more information on how to get involved in your community, please contact Volunteer Burnaby through their website at www.volunteerburnaby.ca.

Volunteer Burnaby is partially funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland

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City of Burnaby Environment Awards 2013

Do you know of any community volunteers contributing to the improvement, protection or awareness of Burnaby's natural environment? Last year, the efforts of several deserving youth and adult community members were recognized through the City of Burnaby's Environmental Awards Program. The nomination process for the 2013 Environment Awards is now open. Please visit burnaby.ca/environmentawards for more details.

2012 City of Burnaby Environment Award winners.

Meet one of Burnaby's local heroes – Tanaya Shaw

Tanaya is long-time volunteer with the City of Burnaby Citizen Support Services' 'Baby Cuddle' program. As part of her role, Tanaya provides close support to Burnaby families in need by assisting new parents of infants. As a volunteer that goes 'above and beyond' in giving back to the Burnaby community, Tanaya was awarded a 2012 Local Hero award by Burnaby City Council.

To nominate other special Burnaby volunteers for a City of Burnaby Local Hero Award visit www.burnaby.ca/local-heroes or call 604-570-3623. Deadline for nominations is May 12, 2013.