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Learn for Fun - Teach for Pleasure at the Community Centred College for the Retired

by Kelina Kwan

A recent news report on how retirement can affect your health, advocated staying active after retirement or not retiring at all in order to stay healthy. So if you have already retired, what can you do?

Apparently, someone already thought of the answer 40 years ago. When Mabel Dunham retired more than 40 years ago, she decided to enroll for the Bachelor of Education and Adult Education diploma at UBC. She graduated in 1972. She was over 60 years old. Convinced other people her age would also be interested in furthering their education, it became Mabel's mission to structure a self-help college. In 1973, she began by offering a course at Edmonds House - a newly opened senior citizens centre in Burnaby. This was the beginning of a new and exciting program for people over the age of 55. The response and interest proved

there is no age barrier for the desire to learn new things. From this beginning, the Community Centred College for the Retired was born, and they have just celebrated their 40th Anniversary.

I recently talked to Dave Mannings, Board Director of the College. He mused that the College is the beginning of continuing senior education, and a lot of other organizations have since picked up on the idea.

Today, the Community Centred College for the Retired focuses on skill-building courses rather than academic courses. "When people get a new computer, or a new program, they want to learn something about that. Or they want to travel and they want to learn little bit of French or Spanish or Mandarin. Or ladies want to learn how to quilt. Or they want to learn how to play the piano." Mannings said. "These are possibilities we

offer."

The College is also always looking for volunteers, because courses are taught by senior volunteers who have appropriate backgrounds and experience. So the College is not only a place for seniors to keep active by learning, but also by teaching and sharing. "I was talking to the registrar the other day, and she was looking for a new piano teacher," said Mannings. "Sometimes we are not sure what people out there can do, so when we are talking to the public, we ask about their background, their education, and what they know that people may be interested to learn." Mannings encourages people to tell them what they know, and what they want to learn so the College can provide a variety of relevant and interesting courses.

The College has 3 classrooms - a general room, a computer room and a music room. Classes run on a semester basis, so they are now just wrapping up their Spring-semester. There are no courses during July and August, and the College reopens after Labour Day in September. If you are not interested in semester-

long courses, there are also workshops that are one or two sessions long, and the College has a wide range of workshops to choose from.

When asked how courses are received by the community, Mannings said "It's a very positive and enjoyable experience for all. It's not only about learning, it is also a social and friendship-building environment where seniors sit around, chat and have a cup of coffee." For some, the College is the only occasion they come out and meet other people, so it is a much valued and fun activity.

"Sometimes, people enjoy the courses so much that they take them again!" Mannings said. Amongst the most popular courses is Genealogy. It's taught by a member of the BC Genealogy Society. "People want to know their family history, their ancestry. We are one of the few places where people can come and do deep exploration of their history because we have the full version of ancestry.com. If you try to get it on your own, it will be very expensive." Mannings commented.

The College constantly looks for older volunteer teachers as they often have more time on hand. However, they are not ruling out younger volunteers who want to teach. The College website has an "In search of" section that lists which courses need instructors. It's a good place to start if you want to volunteer. Potential volunteers are interviewed and if everything goes well, courses will be scheduled.

"Learn for fun and teach for pleasure" is the motto of the College. There is still plenty to do after retirement after all, and the Community Centred College is the place to be.

To volunteer as a course teacher, please call 604.517.8732 Monday to Friday between 9am to 3pm, or visit www.cccrburnaby.org for more information.

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

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Come join us and all of our fantastic volunteers on Saturday, June 1st for the annual Hats Off Day festival. There will be a parade, games, food and fun for people of all ages! Hats Off Day is continually voted Burnaby's most popular festival, so don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to experience some real community flavour!

HATS OFF DAY

Saturday
June 1, 2013
9:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Hastings Street
(between Boundary & Gamma)
www.hatsoffday.com

