



# VOLUNTEER BURNABY

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT STARTS HERE

# Bridging generations at Volunteer Grandparents



by Kelina Kwan

Majorie Anderson, a social worker in Vancouver, was chatting with her friend from the crisis centre one day about how in their work, they encountered many children and elderly people who were unable to enjoy the benefits of an extended family. How can they help they wondered? Being a person full of innovation, Anderson had the inspiring idea of founding Volunteers for Intergenerational Programs Society (VIP), a voluntary grandparenting program. This was 40 years ago. Since then, VIP has grown and evolved into the extremely vibrant charity – Volunteer Grandparents.

To celebrate 40 years of service in the community, Anderson, Gary Robinson, first Chair of the Board of Directors, and many volunteers were invited to attend Volunteer Grandparents' 40th Anniversary AGM this year to honour their service as volunteer grandparents.

Volunteer Grandparents offers a number of grandparenting programs such as the Family Match Grandparent Program and the School Grandparent Program. I recently spoke with Pat Dent, one of their long-time volunteers honoured at the AGM, about her experience as a volunteer in the school Grandparent Program. Dent has been volunteering for more than 15 years. For the past four to five years, she has been volunteering at the Grandview school in their "Read Well" program. Volunteers listen to children reading from an assigned book on a one-to-one basis and comment on how they did. "The child reads to us, and they also have a work paper to work on that's related to the reading they have done so they understand what they are reading," Dent said.

So how did Dent become a volunteer grandparent? Dent remembered looking for things to keep her occupied when she retired. She was introduced to the program by a friend at a senior centre and she never looked back. "I really enjoy it" she said. "I go throughout the school year from September to June, and you can see how the kids progress. It is nice to be with younger people. Once you are retired, you are always with people of your own age, so you want to mix with different age groups. It keeps you young." Dent believes it is also good for the kids to spend time with an older person especially for those who don't have a grandparent in their lives.

Veronica Grossi, Program Coordinator of Volunteer Grandparents stressed the importance of how volunteers like Dent are contributing. "Many of our school volunteers assist the children at school by individually listening to them read and offering words of support and encouragement. Reading together helps strengthen the bond between the child and the senior. Research has

shown that by improving a child's reading skills, it will lead to a stronger sense of self confidence and an eagerness to learn. Additionally, reading to a young person helps with language acquisition, expanding a child's imagination and can help initiate conversations."

Volunteers in the program also interact with others in the school. Dent enjoys chatting with teachers when she visits the staff room during recess, and is very impressed with the dedication and commitment of the teachers at the school. Teachers and students show their appreciation to the volunteer grandparents by hosting a volunteer tea with entertainment. "The kids come and give us some entertainment. It's fun to see them! They all know your name and you are like a good friend to them." Dent said.

Not only is Dent impressed with the teachers, she is also full of praise for the work done by Volunteer Grandparents. "Volunteer Grandparents hosts a [volunteer appreciation] picnic every year and we meet up with all the other volunteers." "It's really good, I go every year. I really enjoy it. They really work hard on it throughout the year, and it's lots of fun. And Veronica and the volunteers really work hard to make it different every year."

Dent said she definitely recommends volunteering to other seniors. "It's only 3 hours a week, it's not a big commitment, and it is very rewarding. It's nice to be with young children and be able to help them."

Volunteer Grandparents is currently screening volunteers for the school program. You can fill a void in a child's life by becoming a Volunteer Grandparent! If you are over the age of 50, have the ability to relate well with children, believe in the importance of grandparent connections and want to share your skills, this important role is a good fit for you.

To learn more about this exciting opportunity call Veronica Grossi at Volunteer Grandparents, 604-736-8271 ([www.volunteergrandparents.ca](http://www.volunteergrandparents.ca)).

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).

Volunteer Appreciation Picnic (Above and Below right)



Pat Dent, Volunteer of the Month



**Volunteer**  
...you'll be glad you did



## Community Engagement & Volunteer Fair

Not-for-profit organizations can choose to participate for one or two days in the Community Engagement & Volunteer Fair. Join us at this annual event to connect with SFU students and to share with them the amazing work that your organization is engaging in!

SFU Burnaby Campus, Academic Quadrangle  
South Concourse  
September, 25 – 26, 2013 - 11:00 am to 3:00 pm



Sandra Robinson, Marjorie Anderson, Veronica Grossi and Gary Robinson at the AGM