



*Merry Christmas
and Happy Holidays!*



Photo by Hannah Scott

With many holiday events cancelled because of the pandemic, Richmondites have been flocking to a house on Garry Street where the residents have created elaborate light displays for decades.

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Christmas, a time of faith and hope

By DON FENNELL
@rmdsentinel

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been challenging to stay positive. But if any time of the year offers a reminder of the importance of faith and hope, it is Christmas.

Rev. Paula Porter Leggett, pastor at St. Alban Anglican Church in Richmond, says we can identify with the way life was upturned for Mary and Joseph—away from home, family and on their own in Bethlehem.

"That sense of being alone, being dislocated from the familiar, is with lots of us this Christmas," she says. "We can take comfort remembering the courage and faithfulness of Mary and Joseph, and we can have hope as we remember that in the midst of that 'chaos,' new life was born for everyone in the Christ child. Nothing can get in the way of God's work to recover this

broken world and, alternatively, God can use anything to work for us."

In Christianity, Christmas is celebrated to remember the birth of Jesus Christ—the son of God. The name comes from the Mass of Christ. A mass service (sometimes called Communion or Eucharist) is traditionally held to remember that Christ died for us and then came back to life.

Gifts are given in celebration of Christmas to reflect Christian tradition symbolizing the presence of gifts by the Three Wise Men to the infant Jesus.

The church in the early 4th century fixed the date of Dec. 25 to correspond with the date of winter solstice on the Roman calendar. Billions of people worldwide observe Dec. 25 as a religious and cultural celebration.

The poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas* in 1822 helped popularize the tradition of gift exchange, and seasonal shopping soon took hold as an im-

portant period in the economics of business.

The pandemic has impacted this holiday season in various ways, including cancelling services of worship, Sunday school and other pilgrimages and festivities—though many have turned to modern technology to engage.

In Richmond, while festivities to mark the holiday season are in view in every neighbourhood, and city hall has traditionally been aglow in lights, Steveston has long been a hallmark. Its charming old-town appearance lends itself to the magic of Christmas that ignites joy in everyone. From *Winter in the Village* that invites locals and visitors alike to its beloved heritage attractions including the Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site featuring a *Festival of Trees*, and virtual events including *Songs in the Snow* and a gingerbread contest, there's no doubting what time of the year it is.

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Archives treasure trove of memories past

By ROY PHILLIPS
(Oakridge, 1991)

Mr. Ackroyd, who lived with his family on No. 3 Road one block south of Lansdowne Road, was an electrician by trade and raised a colony of honey bees as a hobby.

During the church Christmas party of plays and recitations at the Richmond United Church on River Road at Cambie, and after the Christmas party was over, there was suddenly a loud ringing of sleigh bells at the front door, and there was Mr. Ackroyd, dressed as Santa Claus with a huge sack of gifts on his back. (He) was then paraded up front to the stage, where he would pass out the gifts, donated by church mothers, to the young girls and boys of the

congregation.

After the excitement of opening the gifts was over, Santa Claus would ask a young boy to volunteer to come up on the stage and swallow a teaspoon of castor oil as a symbol of preparation for the huge Christmas dinners in the coming days. With some hesitation and a look of foreboding on his face, the young boy would swallow the distasteful spoon full of castor oil, and the church congregation would be filled with laughter as the young boy's face would change to smiles, as Santa Claus handed him the bottle of liquid honey.

Happy memories, Roy Phillips

(Formerly from Patterson Road at Bridgeport, Richmond—1918)

—The preceding is part of the Richmond United Church collection in the City of Richmond Archives, used with permission.



Photograph depicts a Christmas season view of the exterior front entrance to the Richmond Municipal Offices, showing original curving awning at entrance and three digit street number 691. File number 1988 18 58.

Photo courtesy Richmond Archives



Photograph depicts Christmas in Steveston, showing group outside in a sleigh. File number 1978 23 12.

Photo courtesy Richmond Archives

Richmondites share their favourite Christmas moments

By **DON FENNELL**
@rmdsentinel

For many, the first line from the 19th century poem *'Twas The Night Before Christmas* by Clement Clarke Moore brings back fond memories of Christmases past.

As little children, Christmas Eve was filled with anticipation and excitement—and an inability to sleep. The following morning, after all, would present the opportunity to open gifts carefully wrapped and placed under the bright lights of the Christmas tree.

Marika Lopez remembers.

One of her Christmas traditions as a child was sharing the joy of the holiday with her family, who would gather in front of the TV to watch *Mickey's Twice Upon a Christmas*.

But her parents also observed some cultural traditions, Nochebuena among them.

A Spanish word referring to the night of Christmas Eve and celebrated on Dec. 24 every year, in Latin American cultures it is often the biggest feast of the Christmas season.

"Usually my mom would make us ham, egg, bread and hot chocolate," recalls Marika, a young Richmondite dedicated to advancing public understanding about epilepsy. "We would wait until midnight and open a few gifts, then go to bed. Then, Christmas morning is when we opened our presents from Santa."

Recently-elected Richmond-Queensborough MLA Aman Singh grew up in Hong Kong where he had the opportunity to experience what amounts to an "unbounded treasure chest of memories"—chief among this holiday season.

"No one lights up the night like the people of Hong Kong," he says. "Even on a normal day, the concrete jungle that can sometimes be underwhelming comes to life at night with a myriad of colours and lights. Hong Kong on any night is a sight to see, but oh, during the holiday season it's completely magical."

"I remember being tickled with excitement as my mom, dad, brother and I boarded the bus from



Steveston in the snow.

Photo courtesy Tourism Richmond

Causeway Bay to the Star Ferry to make the crossing from Hong Kong Island to Kowloon."

(For those who don't know, the Star Ferry has been running since 1871. Though they have been modernized they have retained their amazing old world appearance.)

"The ferry ride itself is magical as you cross between the island and the mainland—you are surrounded by a city alive with lights. Across the crossing in Kowloon, we would walk past the space museum, joined by thousands of people milling around, towards the Tsim Sha Tsui promenade. Looking to the right across the water you could see the Hong Kong Island skyline in its full glory and ahead skyscrapers adorned with thousands of Christmas lights."

As Singh shares the memory, he has tears in his eyes thinking of his mother's hand holding his tight with love.

"I close my eyes and I am immediately transported back to that time and place," he says.

A dedicated hockey mom, even if her kids have now graduated to the adult game, Loreen Long remembers Boxing Day onwards as being hockey tournament time. And in between, squeezing in time to watch the world junior championships.

But a trip to Edmonton to experience a white Christmas with her boys' (Craig and Cole) paternal grandparents also stands out among the holiday memories.

"Santa found them there, and they built snowmen

and tobogganed down a neighbouring hill," she remembers. "When we visited again that summer, we found a chocolate covered in a wrapper with Santa on it that Cole had dropped (and looked for 20 minutes but couldn't find)."

Long also recalls getting snowed in and having their flight home cancelled. They haven't visited Edmonton in the winter since.

"We prefer to go see snow at Seymour, Grouse or Whistler," she says.

Pre-COVID, another tradition in the Long household was inviting friends and family over for Christmas Eve.

"We often included some Christmas crafts, and the most popular activity was each person drawing names and

decorating a gingerbread cookie to resemble them and guessing who was who. It was a night we loved."

For emerging Steveston singer/songwriter Audrey De Boer, Christmas is undoubtedly her favourite time of the year.

"I am that girl who cannot wait to decorate the Christmas tree. I truly have so many things about the season that warm my soul. Picking favourites is difficult because Christmas is everything to me."

Growing up in Steveston has brought many joys of the season, says De Boer.

"The Christmas traditions Steveston has will always be the best part of my memories and I still look forward to them every year. The Santa Claus parade, the hayrides, the breakfasts with Santa and the way the Steveston streets twinkle with the all the Christmas lights—I will always love Christmas, and every year I so much enjoy spending time in the community and with our family."

This year will certainly be different, De Boer says, but is even more important than ever.

"We will try to do what we can to safely connect with families in need, seniors and those around us that are, like us, missing some of the traditions of the days leading to Christmas Day. This year it will be simple and different but the magic still lives in it all. From my home to yours; all the best for a wonderful holiday time."

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Christmas Fund still bringing joy after challenging year

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Despite a new format to adhere to COVID-19 protocols, the Richmond Christmas Fund exceeded its auction goal thanks to generous contributions from community members.

The public auction raised \$17,670 and the private reserve auction a further \$18,105, for a combined total of \$35,775. The goal for the on-line event was \$30,000.

"We were hopeful that we would hit our target," says Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives president and CEO Ed Gavsie. "I don't know that we were surprised, but we were certainly grateful that we surpassed our goal."

In its 88th year, the Richmond Christmas Fund had to make many changes to its format to adapt to the pandemic. Registration was all done virtually, and all people who were helped last year were contacted again and grandfathered in—which is not the normal process, but helped speed up the normal registration.

Last year, the Christmas Fund helped 2,915 people have a better holiday season. This year, it helped over 2,850 people.

Items including food, gift cards and toys were distributed through pre-arranged pick-up, outside with minimal contact.

The annual RCMP toy drive was held as a drive-through event this year, in



Photo courtesy RCRG

The Richmond Christmas Fund surpassed its auction goal, as well as receiving at least \$10,000 in donations from each of eight "angel donors."

and members of the public.

"Our unofficial slogan is, 'In a year to forget, help make this holiday season one to remember.'"

a new location. The community showed up in a huge way, donating enough toys to fill four storage lockers—1,000 cubic feet of toys. The toy drive is the single largest donation to the Christmas Fund each year, and this year raised more than \$11,000.

The Christmas Fund team is also thankful for the generous support of eight "angel donors"—far surpassing the three from last year—who each contributed \$10,000 or more. New donors this year include Canadian Tire, Herband and Sage Foundation. Over the years, Richmond realtors have also contributed over \$100,000.

The second-largest donor is the Richmond Auto Mall, whose annual "Windows of Hope" proceeded with decorations by professional window painters—but without the community painting gathering.

This year, the Christmas fund was able to help everyone who sought it.

"This will be the third year in a row that we haven't had to turn anyone away," says Gavsie.

He adds that while this year has meant a lot of changes for the Christmas Fund team, it's been great to see the support from companies

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Schools celebrate Christmas with myriad of activities

For many, Christmas truly is the most wonderful time of the year.

Everywhere you go, signs of the season are in the air and holiday cheer abounds. And in Richmond's public schools, students spent considerable time and energy this month on various projects to brighten the lives of those around them and in the community.

Here's just a sampling of the activities this December:



Byng Elementary – Gingerbread Village

Making gingerbread houses using graham wafers on milk cartons has been a long-standing tradition at the school, going back at least 25 years. Grade 1 and 2 students were encouraged to use the core competencies of creative thinking, critical thinking and communication to design patterns and share ideas with each other. To complete the project, they brought their individual houses together to create a Gingerbread Village with snow and lights.



Mitchell Elementary – Holiday Window Walk

Students and staff wanted to build connection and community through their Holiday Window Walk. Classes were encouraged to decorate their windows in a winter holiday theme and then the teachers scheduled different times for classes to "tour" the windows and vote for their favourite.

Richmond Secondary – Virtual Winter Music Concert

This year, the traditional winter concert was transformed into a virtual event. Parents, students, friends and community members were invited to watch the winter concert on Dec. 8 featuring a wide range of classic, pop and holiday music performed by talented young musicians. The school community spent considerable time co-ordinating the video production so that everyone was able to enjoy these performances from the safety and comfort of their home. This first-ever virtual winter concert drew more than 300 viewers.

considerable time co-ordinating the video production so that everyone was able to enjoy these performances from the safety and comfort of their home. This first-ever virtual winter concert drew more than 300 viewers.

Lee Elementary – Band Concert

Staff and students worked diligently to prepare for their winter concert. Amid the pandemic, they learned new technologies, thinking outside of the box and making sure to keep music in the community. Every day, the sound of holiday music was heard in the halls as students practised their songs. All divisions participated, and the school band teacher spent additional time providing virtual lessons to transitional students to ensure that were part of the experience too. The concert was shared with the entire school community on Dec. 17.

MacNeill Secondary – Virtual Breakfast with Santa

As is tradition at the school the last day before winter break (Dec. 18 this year), students wore PJs to class and watched videos. Although Breakfast with Santa was different this year, student council made a video and shared it via the school's Twitter account, hoping to spread the holiday cheer.

McMath Secondary – Winter Spirit Week

To celebrate the last week before winter break, student council hosted their annual Comfy Week. This year, to promote energy conservation, the heat was turned down through the school, so everyone was encouraged to dress in warm, cozy and comfy clothing.

Also on tap, on separate days throughout the week, were Candy Cane Day (when everyone dressed up in red and white), Fuzzy Socks Day, Winter Wonderland (students dressed in blue and white, wearing mittens, scarves and toques, eh!), Ugly Sweater Day (Christmas-themed or not) and PJ Day.

Woodward Elementary – Holiday Fun

The school used Zoom to help power its holiday events: the Woodward Family Holiday Zoom Party (families from the school community gathering in holiday sing-alongs and activities) and the Woodward Winter Concert in which the school prepared a pre-recorded video that played during the Zoom meeting.

Blair Elementary – Winter Zoombly

Students at Blair (in school and at home) were invited to the school's Winter Zoombly on Dec. 18. As a special treat for this holiday, the school invited a Juno Award-winning children's singer (longtime Richmond favourite Charlotte Diamond), for an exclusive performance via Zoom.



Photos courtesy Richmond School District

Longtime Richmond favourite Charlotte Diamond held an exclusive virtual concert for students and staff at Blair Elementary.

Richmond leaders share New Year's Eve plans

Kenny Chiu, MP Steveston-Richmond East

What are your New Year's Eve plans this year?

Have a big dinner with my wife and two university-aged kids, and of course my dog Nugget. I'll also call my 85-year-old mother, who's stranded and too scared to come home from a supposed four-month visit with relatives that turned into a year of stress and uncertainty. And, I'm also going to binge watch *The Crown* with my wife.

What are your hopes and goals for 2021?

For Canada: speedy recovery and national unity. Personally, I want to be an even more effective local representative of Steveston-Richmond East in Ottawa, through a strengthened presence in and interaction via social media and electronic outreach as well as in person canvassing (safe & physically distanced).



enjoying a special meal with friends over Zoom and if the weather is good, my little household will head out on an evening neighbourhood bike ride to catch the lights and decorations before they disappear and then head home for some bubbly to reflect on all of the best things about 2020 and what's to come in 2021.

What are your hopes and goals for 2021?

While we still have to keep to our household bubbles for a little longer, I'm hoping to make some reading progress on my "shelve for later" booklist—even though I work in a library and have easy access to books, I always want to read more than I possibly have time for. And when the travel restrictions are lifted, I can't wait to head out on mini road trips to explore more of our beautiful province as there are so many places I want to see and experience.

Shaena Furlong, acting co-CEO, Richmond Chamber of Commerce

What are your New Year's Eve plans this year?

One thing this year has given us is a lot of quality time spent with the people we live with. I'll be celebrating New Year's Eve at home with my partner, our dog and some takeout sushi.

What are your hopes and goals for 2021?

I hope the spirit of collaboration that emerged so strongly in 2020 is here to stay. I want to work with local businesses and elected officials to make sure every Richmond employer is on track for recovery. Like many, I've missed seeing old friends and meeting new people. So, I'm looking forward to welcoming back the business community with some fantastic events as soon as it's safe to do so.

Sandra Nixon, chairperson, Richmond School Board

What are your New Year's Eve plans this year?

Playing board games with my spouse and kids (*Monopoly*, *Clue* and *Settlers of Catan*).

What are your hopes and goals for 2021?

Hopes: that all students will be back in classes with their friends and teachers; that the "new normal" will be more loving, creative and adaptive; and that the world will be able to turn its attention back to addressing climate change and other important issues.

Goals: Don't take being with others for granted; give a lot of hugs; keep baking bread.

Susan Walters, Chief Librarian, Richmond Public Library

What are your New Year's Eve plans this year?

Like all of us, my NYE plans look a little different this year, but I still plan on

Tim Wilkinson, Fire Chief, Richmond Fire-Rescue

What are your New Year's Eve plans this year?

My wife and I get together with our children and our grandchild, but (this year) on a Zoom call—get everyone together and just have a nice family conversation like we would if we were in the room together. Our kids are adults now, but both of them are in Richmond, and in fact my daughter is only a couple of doors down. It's interesting being so close yet almost so far.

What are your hopes and goals for 2021?

My No. 1 goal: I hope and pray that everyone's healthy and well and coming through this difficult time with their mental health in good state. As much as the pandemic is hard on us physically, mentally I think it's every bit as hard and for some folks probably harder.

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Victor Ghirra Toy Drive a legacy of love at holiday time

By **DON FENNELL**
 @rmdsentinel

Just like Santa, Victor Ghirra was known to have a big heart. And in keeping with tradition, an annual event in memory of the man with a golden heart—dedicated to spreading love and holiday cheer—continued despite the pandemic.

Only this year's 14th annual toy collection was a drive-thru event, with supporters urged to drop off toys for the Winter Wonderland-themed event in the parking lot of the Riverside Grand Ballroom.

"It's a really tough year, collecting toys and the ways groups fundraise has changed drastically," said toy drive organizer Harvey Kooner. "But this year was the greatest need for toys from good causes we've seen in the history of the toy drive."

Kooner said he heard from at least one Christmas bureau that their shelves were already bare by early December. And fundraisers, events and other drive-thru toy drives were cancelled. They wanted to make sure that with the help of the community their efforts would make a difference this holiday season.

Kooner has fond memories of Ghirra, his longtime friend, a modest man who



Photo submitted

In the holiday spirit, the 14th annual Victor Ghirra toy collection was held as a drive-thru event this year in the parking lot at the Riverside Grand Ballroom.

deflected any attention or praise directed his way.

"There were so many heartwarming stories shared about his life, the great person he was, but the one that touched me the most was finding out that Victor had quietly been purchasing thousands of dollars in toys for Children's Hospital, and donating them to needy children who weren't as lucky as his own," says Kooner. "When they would ask, 'Who are you, and where are these toys from, which organization?' true to his nature, he would simply reply, 'It doesn't matter who I am, or where I am from, these toys are for the kids, and that's all you need to know.'"

It turned out that Ghirra had been making trips to the hospital anonymously for over a dozen years. He was purely being himself, and never told anyone what he was up to. Hear-

ing about his selfless acts became the genesis of this annual event, says Kooner.

Since the toy drive started in 2007, more than 40,650 toys have been collected and distributed to dozens of non-profit organizations. It's a labour of love that Ghirra would most certainly be proud to see carrying on.

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Local baker shares Christmas cheer

By LORRAINE GRAVES

[@rmdsentinel](#)

It may be a Christmas like no other, but Steveston resident Dr. James Hoyland still anticipates the holiday warmly.

"Our Christmas is always a fairly low-key family affair. We like to do family crafts and a lot of cooking. We open our stockings before breakfast. Presents are after breakfast, and we take it in turns opening one gift at a time," says Hoyland of his family of four.

The day will be full of "games, food, crafts and a lot of laughter," he says.

Asked about what the pandemic has taught them to treasure, Hoyland muses, "We have always been a close family who enjoy staying home together so the start of the lockdown was not a great hardship for us, at least to begin with."

The family misses the travelling they usually do throughout the year, but particularly this season when they typically visit at least one of their elders. This year, the wider family plans to be together through video calls that bridge the distance between Steveston and Hoyland's homeland, Britain.

In fact, the pandemic has even curtailed his usual trip by bike from the southwest tip of Lulu Island to his job at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

"I've been teaching almost entirely online, so the commute to work is to a converted cupboard in my house where I've set up my video production suite," he says.

No newcomer to video production, Hoyland was in two series of the CBC's *The Great Canadian Baking Show*, which he calls a wonderful experience where he learned a lot and made some marvellous friends.

"From a baking point of view, I learned a lot on the show and (while) preparing for it. But I was also



Richmond baker James Hoyland in the CBC baking tent.

Photo courtesy CBC

pleasantly surprised at my own determination to keep going when things were going wrong," he says.

Closer to home, Hoyland shows that same determination to keep going when he talks of the benefit of living in Richmond.

"We are blessed to live in a location where we a few short steps from beautiful open space, which we now value more than ever," he says.

When asked what he's learned to treasure from the pandemic, he says, "For me though, one thing I have really missed is the wider human contact. I will take those interactions less for granted once they return."

Still baking and creating new recipes, Hoyland shares a Christmas favourite (with a kick) from his

household, that he calls a pleasantly decadent little snack. He says the gin and tonic shortbread is easy to make and "very moreish" (a British saying meaning something you want to eat more of). If you want to make it without the alcohol, Hoyland suggests substituting lemon juice for the gin.

And what does this nationally-acclaimed baker eat on Christmas Day?

"Bagels or pancakes for breakfast. A gougère or tourtière for dinner with pavlova for dessert. I make a traditional British Christmas pudding, but I'm the only one who likes it so I eat all myself," Hoyland says with a smile.

To see Hoyland in action, visit www.cbc.ca/life/greatcanadianbakingshow/episodes

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Gin and tonic shortbread

Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup softened unsalted butter
- 1/3 cup juniper sugar (see recipe below)
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp. finely grated lemon zest
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 and 3/4 cups flour
- 1 Tbsp. arrowroot powder

Steps:

• Make the juniper sugar the night before: grind 2-3 tablespoons of dried juniper berries in a spice or coffee grinder until it is a fine soft powder. Sieve out any large bits. Mix with half a cup of sugar. Place in a jar and let sit overnight.

• Cream together butter and sugar by hand, or in a stand mixer, until soft and fluffy.

- Add the remaining ingredients and mix slowly until combined.
- On a lightly floured surface roll the dough into a log about one and a half inches in diameter.
- Wrap the log tightly in parchment or waxed paper and refrigerate for two hours, or freeze for about half an hour.
- Preheat oven to 350°F.
- Slice the log into rounds 1/4 inch thick and place on papered baking trays (they do not spread much so they can be placed close together).
- Bake for 15 to 20 minutes until bottoms of cookies are golden.

Icing ingredients:

- 1 cup icing sugar
- 2-3 Tbsp. gin (you may not need all of it)

Steps:

• Drizzle gin, a little at a time, into icing sugar in a small bowl until it makes a fairly thick paste.

• Pipe or spread onto cookies and sprinkle with more juniper sugar.

RAPS COMMUNITY REPORT Caring for the animals who care for us

The future is bright



**Eyal
Lichtmann**

The City of Richmond has chosen to contract the BC SPCA to deliver animal care and control services in the city during the period of transition while the City Animal Shelter is redeveloped—beginning in a few weeks.

RAPS has been honoured to provide these services for the past 13 years. We made Richmond a “no-kill community” and, with the support of Richmond residents, have saved and improved the lives of thousands of animals. The BC SPCA has a constellation of shelters in the province and it makes perfect sense for them to manage the animals during this time. RAPS would have had to construct a new temporary facility.

However, there seems to be some confusion around the future. The city’s decision affects the Richmond Animal Shelter only. RAPS continues to operate Canada’s largest cat sanctuary, three thrift stores and the community-owned, not-for-profit RAPS Animal Hospital. We will continue to serve the people of Richmond, including school and community groups. We will foster animals in the community and advocate for animals and their people with all levels of government. Except for the Animal Shelter management, nothing will change.

Well, actually ... that’s not true. We are growing. Because we have had a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers of Richmond, we were limited in our ability to welcome animals to the shelter from outside the city. This is not the case at the cat sanctuary, where animals come to us from all over—especially from jurisdictions where they might have faced euthanasia. We are now aiming

to open a RAPS Dog Sanctuary, so we can save dogs that are difficult to adopt and rehabilitate them in preparation for a forever home. After that, we plan to open our own animal shelter too—again founded on our no-kill promise.

We are reimagining animal care, innovating in ways that lead the sector. One crucial way we are doing this is by recognizing that ensuring the best for animals often demands that we help animals ... and their people. In the past three years, we have provided almost \$2 million in support to households in the community through the RAPS Animal Hospital. We are now caring for 10 times as many animals each year than we did five years ago.

RAPS has always been a Richmond-based organization, although we now serve the entire province. We believe that where an animal lives should not determine whether an animal lives. Unencumbered by a commitment to the city government, we will now be free to welcome animals no matter where they come from. That means we will be able to do more than ever. But all of our assets and infrastructure are based in Richmond. We are Richmond proud.

Everything we have achieved in 25 years has been because of the support of animal-loving people who share our vision of a world where every animal has the love and care they want and deserve.



Bodhi and Luke.

Photo by Karen Nicholson

This is an exciting time of change—and it is a wonderful time to thank everyone in the Richmond community for everything you have done to help us save and improve the lives of animals.

Happy holidays. And may 2021 be our greatest year yet.

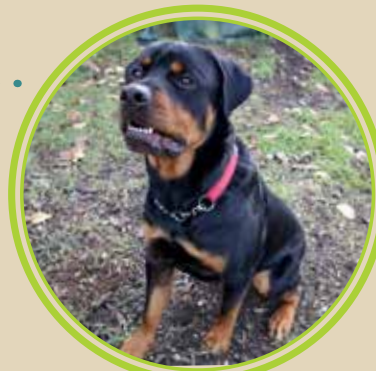
Eyal Lichtmann is the CEO and executive director of the Regional Animal Protection Society.



MY NAME IS BALOO

I'm Baloo, a very handsome and happy boy. I have lots of energy when I meet new people and sometimes need to be reminded to be slow, careful and gentle. I try my best to listen but it's definitely a skill I'm working on. I'm not a big fan of other boy dogs. I need a confident person (no kids please) who is comfortable with a strong boy like me. I love my food and will guard it with a passion. They have also called me naughty because sometimes I'm gentle and then I trick them and become overly playful....whoops.

****Due to COVID-19, all meet and greets will be by appointment only. Please call us at 604-275-2036 to set up an appointment.****



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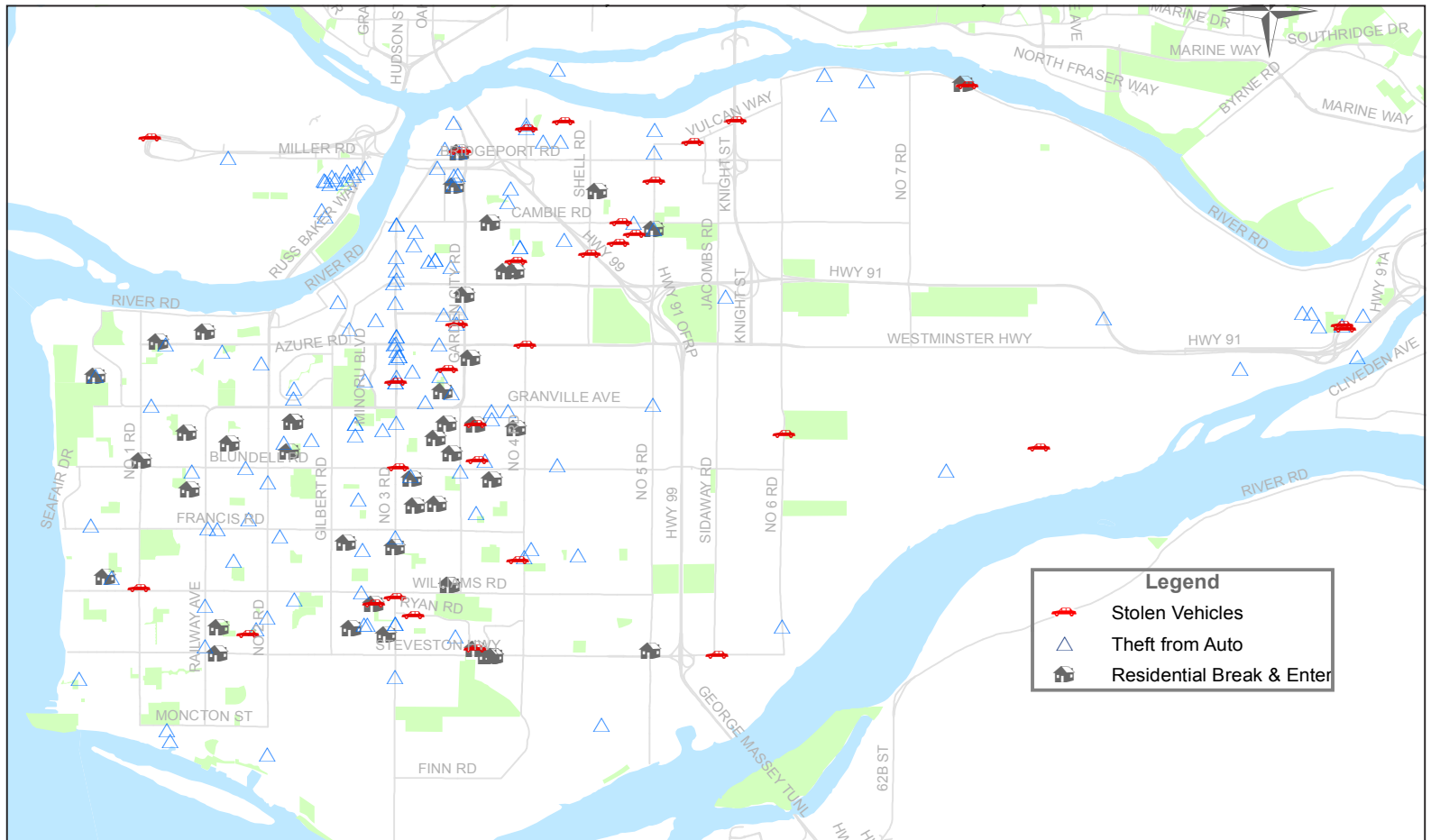
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Airport's holiday hamper drive a success

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Vancouver International Airport collected 429 meals for families in need during its annual holiday hamper drive earlier this month.

Hampers included holiday meal essentials such as mashed potatoes, stuffing and cranberry sauce. For each hamper donated, the airport added a turkey.

The holiday hamper initiative began in 2011, and since then has donated over 7,000 meals to Quest Food, an organization that provides access to affordable food options via not-for-profit grocery markets for people who face food security challenges in BC.

People who didn't have a chance to donate can still contribute through Quest's holiday gift certificate campaign that helps people in need access affordable groceries. For more details, go to: questoutreach.org/fundraising-campaign/

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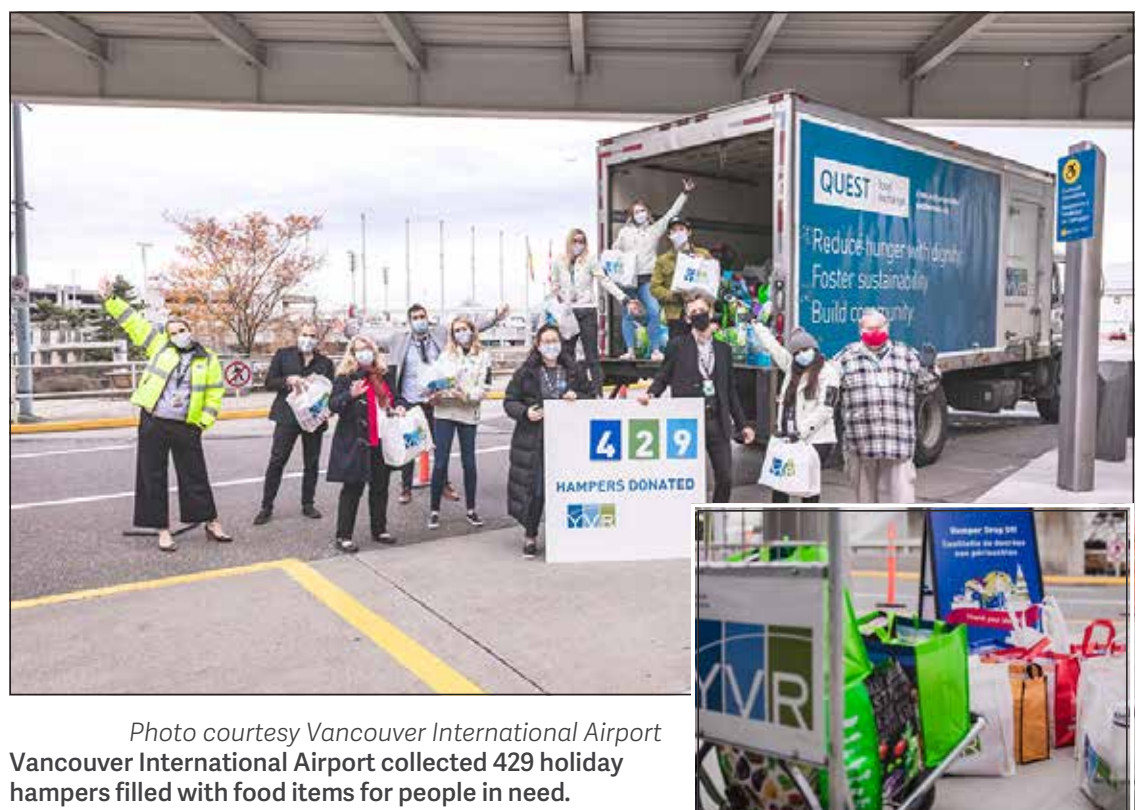


Photo courtesy Vancouver International Airport
Vancouver International Airport collected 429 holiday hampers filled with food items for people in need.

Intern helps Trinity Western community come together

The Trinity Western University community is coming together this holiday season, thanks in part to the help of Student Life intern Amy Saya. Saya says it's her job to "make friends with people" and build community among the 800 students at Trinity Western University (TWU)'s Richmond campus. Most students at the campus are international, and don't have family members living in Canada.

"We feel that delivering a little touch of love will show them that we still care and that we want to be intentional (about community)," says Saya.

Just one month into her role, she has already been baking for the students and creatively showing care from a distance.

"It's quite a hoot," she says of one baking session with another student leader who had never baked before. "We believe it brings warmth, to be able to gift something that's homemade, and it tastes yummy."

And on Dec. 11, the Student Life team hosted a special, socially distanced Christmas "walk-thru" event, where students could pick up baked goodies, gifts and balloons. Student Life leaders set up long tables to display gifts that were pre-packaged and ready for pick-up. Floor arrows and dividers helped direct the flow of traffic and ensure both COVID safety and gifting efficiency.

Working alongside Saya are a team of 12 other student leaders who run clubs. This semester, clubs are operating online, and there are virtual meet-ups for every hobby from karaoke singing, exercises, culture-learning to cooking.

"It's cool to get to know students intentionally," Saya says.

But, with social distancing and other public health measures, this can be a challenge. Practically all of TWU's classes are online this semester, and



Photo by Amy Saya

Trinity Western University students were treated to a Christmas "walk-thru" event with gifts.

Saya laments that students have not had the chance to drop by her office on campus.

"Everyday things are changing," Saya says. "But that's OK. I think it promotes a lot of adaptability for this season."

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Enjoy local winter activities over the school break

Just because we can't get together for the usual holiday celebrations, doesn't mean this festive season is limited to binge-watching television, playing video games or vacuuming the house—again.

Inside or outside, daytime or evening, the City of Richmond and its partners have organized plenty of fun local activities to do during the two-week school break through Jan. 3.

Take in the creative festive light displays while wandering throughout Steveston Village, City Hall Plaza, Britannia Heritage Shipyards and other areas of the city. Stay physically-distanced, grab a warm beverage and even a selfie or two while keeping healthy and enjoying the winter weather. Or, channel your inner Tessa Virtue or Elias Pettersson by registering for a Winter Wonderland skating session at Minoru Arenas.

Indoors, families can register for a swim session at the Minoru Centre for Active Living. Or, do an online workout at home led by a professionally trained instructor.

Spend time learning about local areas with self-guided historical walking tours at Terra Nova and Brighthouse Parks. Experience some of Richmond's beautiful outdoors and burn a few calories while walking the trails and remembering times past.

All activities are virtual or physically-distanced and meet strict health and safety guidelines as set out by local and provincial health authorities where required.

Winter day camps still have spaces to keep kids active and social during the school break. Find all the details and how to register at www.richmond.ca/winterbreak.

Gateway brings favourite holiday musicals home

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

At this time of year, theatregoers are usually pencilling a handful of holiday shows into their calendars.

But this year, with most annual events either cancelled or postponed, theatre companies are thinking outside the box. Richmond's Gateway Theatre is bringing the gift of music to online audiences through their virtual musical revue show, *Home for the Holidays*.

"The show was inspired by an online concert for (musical theatre composer) Stephen Sondheim's birthday, made at the beginning of the pandemic," explains director Barbara Tomasic, who is also Gateway's director of artistic programs.

"It made me think—if we can't do a holiday show this year, what if we bring the gift of music to our audience online? We started by looking at the history of the holiday musical at Gateway, and choosing the shows and songs that were most popular. From there we went and talked to past performers to see if they were interested in being involved."

Gateway's video editor and musical supervisor provided thorough instructions for performers, who filmed individually in their own homes with help from backing tracks (created by Chris King) and costumes and set pieces (created by Donnie Tejani). Filming angles were pre-planned with Tomasic, who says the shots "are meant to feel like you are at home with the performers, as opposed to watching a staged show."

Actor Chelsea Rose is one of the cast members of the Christmas show. When approached by Tomasic, her answer was an easy and enthusiastic "yes."

But the rehearsal process was unlike anything Rose had experienced before. There were preparation meetings via video conferencing platform Zoom, as well as email correspondence. But cast members had to make time to rehearse and record individually.

"I believe that our community is hungry for entertainment, and for connection," says Rose. "We're nostalgic for the days, not so long ago, that we could go to a theatre, immerse ourselves in a story, or song and let our minds drift from the realities of life. I believe that we can still accomplish this at home. Audiences can get comfortable. They don't have to worry about traffic, where to park, what to wear. They can cozy up together, with their favourite snacks and drinks, and reminisce with us, in the comfort of their own homes."



Photos submitted

Barbara Tomasic (left) directs Gateway's virtual holiday show, and Chelsea Rose (right) is one of the performers.

While it's not easy to engage audiences virtually, Rose says performers treat cameras as they would a live audience. Looking directly into the lens translates to looking directly at viewers to create togetherness, and she adds that music is the greatest strength of the show.

"The songs in *Home for the Holidays* are the kind you can sing along to," says Rose. "They're your favourite songs from your favourite musicals. I think that familiarity, in itself, will help to create a beautiful, palpable relationship through the screen."

And, after a challenging year in the performing arts industry, Gateway's unique show is bringing life and light back to stages that have been dark for months.

"Around summertime, I think theatre companies started to realize we were in this for the long-haul, and if they wanted to survive, they were going to have to adapt," says Rose. "I've been lucky to have been involved in a number of productions that have moved online. *Home for the Holidays* is an emotional one, though—the song I will be performing is from *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, a show I hold dearly to my heart, which was the last live musical I did. It brings me back, and reminds me how desperately I miss the stage."

For Rose, being part of the show has helped her feel close to the craft she loves. And the hope is that audience members feel the same kinship, even from home.

"I hope (audience members) feel like they are close to the experience, to the performers, and that they are able to relax and be entertained," says Tomasic. "I also hope they sing along!"

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Wade finds his calling in the theatre

By DON FENNELL
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At seven, the boy was already showing a passion for the arts. Each week he looked forward to standing next to his mom at church and singing his heart out.

A creative side thanks to a vivid imagination was also quickly emerging, reflected in a homemade Halloween costume of The Comic Creator. It was little more than a bunch of cartoon characters he'd drawn on paper and then taped all over himself, but a good opportunity to show his resourcefulness if nothing else. And, thankfully he recalls, it didn't rain.

A few years later, perhaps in Grade 3, he caught the acting bug after auditioning for his elementary school's Christmas play. He's still not sure what motivated to try out for the role which consisted of dancing in a classroom to music, but cast as the lead in *The Littlest Christmas Tree*, it planted the seeds for a future on the stage.

A voracious appetite for books and adventure video games also occupied a considerable amount of his time growing up.

Richmond-raised Andrew Wade has grown a lot from those early years. But the memories reflect an upbringing that didn't just embrace the arts, it encouraged them. As well as becoming an award-winning actor, playwright, and stage manager, he remains devoted to his hometown as executive director for the Richmond Arts Council.

"I firmly believe that the arts, and stories, can build empathy between people like almost nothing else," says Wade, who attended Westwind and Tomekichi Homma elementary schools and later Hugh McRoberts secondary before going on to graduate in 2011 from the University of Victoria with a bachelor of fine arts in acting and a bachelor of arts in writing.

"I think Richmond has done a great job at using the arts to build bridges between our varied immi-



grant cultures, as well as with the First Nations cultures on whose land we reside. The arts are necessary work if we want to keep racism and 'other-ism' from dividing us."

Occasionally a front of house manager or bartender at Gateway Theatre, Wade has also written and led heritage tours in Steveston including the popular historic vignettes performed by local high school students. Indeed his portfolio of achievements is a lengthy and impressive one, that includes winning the Vancouver Young Playwright's competition for *The Romantics* in 2011; being nominated for two Ovation awards and a Community Theatre Coalition award; and writing, producing and performing original works in as many as 23 festivals across Canada. He also co-created and wrote the book and lyrics for *Titus!: The Light and Delightful Musical Comedy of Titus Andronicus* which was a hit at the Vancouver Fringe Festival.

"I am so fortunate for the varied life I've been able to lead," he says. "As the executive director

for the Richmond Arts Coalition, I've been able to support dozens of local artists in a managerial role, and I've stage-managed deep and important work like Paneet Singh's *A Vancouver Guldasta*. There is great satisfaction in being a really useful engine, doing whatever needs to be done to support one's collaborators. In my heart, however, I feel I most associate with the work of empathy—of feeling why people act in the ways they do, and sharing that with an audience. This can be done as an actor or as a playwright."

Proud of local theatre

Wade says our theatre community does well to convey the sense of fun and play inherent in the medium.

"The show is going to be better if the actor is enjoying performing in it," he explains. "That said, the craft takes a lot of skill, and we're not always great at conveying that side of the equation. (That) leads to audiences being surprised that actors are being paid and to underpayment of performers in general."

He also believes the theatre could do better reflecting society back at it. He wants everyone in the audience to be see themselves on stage through an increasing diversity of actors and backstage people and the stories being told.

And what's Wade's favourite role to date?

"I try to be a creature of gratitude, so my favourite role is usually the last one I had the opportunity to perform," he offers.

Others, he continues, are favourites for different reasons: Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* at the University of Victoria, "for capping off my time there with the final emotional beat of the play, full of tears, surrounded by people I'd trained with for years"; Skeets Miller in *Floyd Collins*, Hullaboo from his own play,



WADE

From Page 14

Hullaboo and The End of Everything, and his most recent being the villainous manager J.R. in *A Country Star* with Jubilations Dinner Theatre, for the chance to tour with a show across three cities over eight months, improvising and riffing with the audience every night.

"Mostly, I'm looking forward to my favourite being the next one," he says.

Wade enjoys the opportunity to reminisce, especially about the early days that helped to spawn his love of the arts.

"My dear mom would come into my classrooms from time to time with her guitar and lead our class in singalongs," he recalls.

As for theatre, remember that Grade 3 Christmas play? Well, in the play *The Littlest Christmas Tree* is taunted and teased by the other trees for being so small, but he gets picked by Santa in the end.

"As a kid who felt he was bullied, I felt the catharsis of the role," Wade says. "Mostly though, the eureka moment of my love for theatre came after the play ended. The entire school stood up and applauded, which wasn't something I had even thought about. I got to walk out of the gym to the sound of applause, with the Grade 7s giving me high-fives on the way out. Magical."

Many actors have served as inspiration

Proud of his British heritage, Wade grew up with live theatre. He's not sure what the first play he attended was, but remembers attending both the Metro Panto and the Arts Club production of *Amadeus* at a young age. He was entertained by both, but for very different reasons—pantomime for its silliness and *Amadeus* for its depth of emotion and ambition.

"I felt such a yearning to be up on those stages," he says, and about a decade later was cast in the pantomime.

Many actors have served as role models through the years. Locally, that includes Peter Jorgensen and all the "brilliant" work he does; Dave Morris for his "incredible" improvisational skills; and from the world of pop culture Conan O'Brien and Andy Richter for their commitment to the absurd and imbuing meaning to things for meaning's sake.

"And any song that Neil Patrick Harris has sung any role he has played, I want to imitate," Wade says.

And what if he could play any role, what would Wade pick? Javert in *Les Miserables*.

"I enjoy the amount of empathy it takes to play a villain," he explains.

To his surprise 34 years old now, Wade has grown immensely since first raising his voice in those church pews and then stepping onto the stage. He's also matured as a performer and writer. But, perhaps not surprisingly, his motto is rather simple and straightforward: "follow the butterflies." It's a hand-written message he has taped to his wall, reminding him that nervous excitement is a good thing.

He may never have become the successful web-comic he dreamed about as a child, but has had the chance to sing and act for thousands, sometimes bringing them to tears out of connection or sheer laughter. And he's written stories that have helped friends get through tough periods in their lives.



"I'm happy with what goals I've realized thus far," he says. "That said, I definitely still have childhood dreams I want to fulfill—acting for TV and playing ice hockey come to mind. But I still need to learn how to stop while on skates for that last one. Post-pandemic, I definitely plan on looking into whatever is the lowest tier of beer league."

Forever grateful for all those who have helped pave the way, he relishes the chance to give back believing a community full of art is a community seeking to explore, understand and empathize.

What would Wade perhaps be today if not an actor?

"I joke that in a parallel dimension I'm a rather unhappy accountant, or possibly a lawyer who has had at least one heart attack by now due to all the feelings of confrontation. Maybe in a decade I'll see if I can do some good as a politician. For now, I need to piece together my screen acting demo reel, edit a grant proposal, and start preliminary planning for ArtRich 2021. I eagerly await a post-pandemic time for live theatre."

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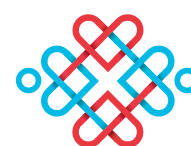
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