

# EFry CONNECTIONS

VOL 3 NO 1 WINTER 2010-11

A Newsletter for  
Friends of the  
Elizabeth Fry Society  
of Greater Vancouver



**The generosity of our donors and volunteers is critical to EFry's ability to support those in need. If you have not already done so, please consider contacting our offices with a donation.**

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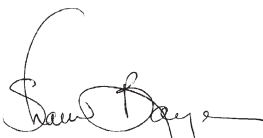
## A message from the Executive Director

This year, weather forecasters predict Vancouver will face one of the harshest winters in recent history. For EFry, this will mean even greater demand for shelter, warm clothing and food. We expect more than 4,000 people will seek our help in meeting basic winter needs this season.

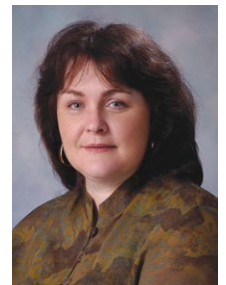
Two years ago, Dawn Bergman burned to death huddled with her shopping cart after starting a fire to try and keep warm outside. Her death was part of the impetus that led EFry to speak out on the safety of women in shelters. Since then, six of the seven foundational changes EFry called for have been implemented.

The harsh realities of winter continue to bring home the struggles of poverty and homelessness. Did you know the one-time winter supplement for a mother and two children is just \$80? That's to cover increased heat, clothes, footwear, food, January school supplies, and Christmas costs. For far too many women and their families, EFry offers the only Christmas they will have. Last year, we delivered more than 1,200 food hampers, provided Christmas dinner to 950 people and gave presents to over 800 children. But we don't do it alone. The generosity of our donors and volunteers is critical to EFry's ability to support those in need. If you have not already done so, please consider contacting our offices with a donation.

And, we hope all those we know will have a warm and happy winter season. ■



Shawn Bayes,  
Executive Director  
EFry





Left to right: Susan Witter, Past Chair, Shawn Bayes, Executive Director and Debra Carpentier, Board Chair.

## EFry Board of Directors 2010–2011

Meet EFry's Board of Directors for 2010-2011. This year, we are pleased to welcome Riana Paine and Sandra Michaels to the Board. A chartered accountant, Riana brings five years of private practice audit experience with government and non-profit organizations to EFry. Sandra has been a vocational rehabilitation consultant and case manager at Worksafe BC for the past 18 years, and also has a history with the Women's Secretariat and Residential Tenancy Branch for BC.

Debra Carpentier – Board Chair  
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 Anne Johannes – Treasurer  
 Marguerite Parker – Secretary  
 Susan Witter – Past Chair  
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## EFry thanks ... Rob Hargreaves

For the past 15 years, computer programmer Rob Hargreaves has supported EFry — first as a volunteer. Five years ago, he also became a regular donor, making a monthly contribution through Visa.

"I do it because EFry deals people who are over-looked and are the ones who really need help," Rob explains. "What it does is not sexy, but it performs a great service to the community."

Rob has given his time to EFry in many ways, including sitting on the Board of Directors for two years. As the holidays approach, he generously donates many hours to wrapping gives for children in need.

"We are so fortunate to have volunteers and donors like Rob," says EFry executive director Shawn Bayes. "His time means so much to us, and his regular Visa donations have helped us fund programs like Pathways, which provides transitional housing for women without resources moving towards independent living."

For Rob, volunteering has given him the opportunity to see firsthand the positive differences he helps create.

"Many of the folks that work with EFry used to be clients," says Rob. "I like that they hire the people they help. When the organization is made up of the very people it used to care for, that's a great thing." ■

## Fire at EFry

At 9:30 p.m. on September 13, an electrical fire broke out at EFry's primary program building in New Westminster. The location houses one of our drop-in centres, three floors of residential and transitional housing, and was the brief home of Small Frys Boutique, a retail skills training program that will provide toys and children's clothes to women living below the poverty line.

"I'm very proud of how our staff responded," says Shawn Bayes, executive director. "There was no panic, no injury. Everyone responded in the calm, orderly way practiced during our emergency preparedness training."

Firefighters managed to contain the blaze, but not before smoke and water did extensive damage — to Small Frys Boutique in particular. All the new children's clothes, shoes and toys donated for the program were destroyed.

"While we are of course most thankful no one was hurt, it's heartbreaking to see those donations gone," says Shawn. "They would have helped a lot of children." The training program has been postponed until the affected part of the building has been repaired and more donations can be obtained to stock the boutique.

EFry's drop-in centre also experienced significant water damage. "Our insurers understood the importance of the drop-in for the homeless women and children we support, and were able to authorize around the clock overtime to get us back up and running five days later," says Shawn. "Our 34 residential clients were able to safely return home later the night of the fire, albeit to smoky housing. It's been a relief to be able to continue residential and housing operations throughout the restoration process." ■

## Volunteer Profile – Evelyn Florendo

In November 1984, Evelyn Florendo read an article that set the wheels in motion for a life dedicated to helping young offenders.

“It was about how these young people were hurting themselves while in a youth detention centre,” she says shaking her head. “Once I read the story, I skipped my lunch and went straight to the director of the centre and told him I wanted to help these kids.”

This was the birth of Christmas in Prison, a program started by Evelyn to provide gifts, food and some compassion to kids at facilities like the Burnaby Youth Custody Centre. For 27 years, she has generously given her time, money and energy to make the holiday season a happy one for youth in the legal system. In addition to her own resources, Evelyn has convinced others like Nintendo to make donations to the program and has arranged for professional athletes, politicians and archbishops to visit the kids as well.

“I care about them like my own,” the single mother of four and grandmother of three says. “I feel their pain in my heart and I want to help them.”

Evelyn is an energetic 74-year-old whose love for the program and

the kids is very evident when you ask her about it. Despite helping hundreds of youth over the years, Evelyn still remembers individual faces quite well.

“I’ll never forget my first Christmas in 1984 and there was this beautiful 15-year-old girl helping put the food out,” she recalls, her eyes becoming animated. “I had asked her what the one thing she wanted for Christmas was and she said she wanted a teddy bear. Afterwards, I cried and cried because I didn’t have a teddy bear to give and I only had two dollars in my purse.”

The tearful Evelyn then went to a Hudson’s Bay store where she met the manager.

“He asked me why I was upset and I told him,” she explains. The manager then took her to the toy section of the store where there were several teddy bears on the shelves.

“He said to me, ‘Mrs. Florendo, choose the biggest teddy bear,’” she says with a smile.

The next day, Evelyn and her son delivered holiday gifts to the young offenders. The last person on the delivery list was the girl.

“I gave her the teddy bear and she gave me a big hug,” she continues. “She said nobody had ever given her a Christmas present before.”



Evelyn Florendo

Evelyn pauses, thinking about the moment.

“Every Christmas I think of her. It comes from the heart,” she says, tapping her chest.

This is the last year that youth in prison and EFry will benefit from her efforts as Evelyn is retiring. She leaves large shoes to fill. Applications for volunteer opportunities like this, and those of our extensive volunteer work of over 20,000 hours annually, can be made through (604) 520-1166. ■

## Partnering in policy

**EFry staff member will be working with public policy experts to support women’s safety in shelters**

EFry is pleased to share the news that executive assistant Claudette Lovencin has been accepted to participate in the prestigious United Way Public Policy Institute. The six-month series of sessions, led by former-premier Mike Harcourt, will bring together public policy experts and managers from non-profit social services and health-related agencies who are looking to better understand the public policy process.

“I hope that at the end of the six months, I’ll be able to identify standards for the safety of women in coed shelters

and social housing that are in place other jurisdictions and can be used to showcase innovative solutions,” Claudette explains. “It will be valuable to identify the mechanisms available for consultation and advocacy within government. I think it will be a vital step in informing ourselves and allowing us to move forward with the development of policy and regulation for the safety of women in coed shelters and public housing.”

Congratulations on this exciting opportunity, Claudette!



Claudette Lovencin

## Kids Market Wishing Tree supports EFry

For the past 10 years, Granville Island's Kids Market has been inviting patrons to share the joy of Christmas by taking the name of a child in need from its Wishing Tree and buying them a present from one of the market's 27 children's shops. EFry supplies the names.

"We are grateful to Kids Market and the public for helping bring the holidays to many of our youngest clients," says Shawn Bayes. "So many children would not receive a gift otherwise."

In 2010, supporters of the Wishing Tree donated over 200 presents to girls and boys, ranging in age from newborn through teen.

Lana Loyer, general manager for Kids Market is a strong supporter of the Wishing Tree. "People from all over the city bring their children to see our Santa," she says. "Buying for an EFry child from the Wishing Tree is a wonderful way to teach youngsters about sharing and the spirit of Christmas."

Kids Market customers donate unwrapped gifts which are then delivered to EFry in time for the holidays. In past years, market retailers have also shared their bounty with us. Steve and Beatrice Ingel, who own Little Treasures and the Shoe Box gave more than two dozen new children coats to EFry last year.

"The Wishing Tree provides each of us with the opportunity to be Santa," says Lana. "What could be more perfect for Christmas than that?"

The Wishing Tree at Granville Island's Kids Market is up from December 4 – 24, 2010. ■



## You're never too young to make a difference

We'd like to thank the children of Beacon Unitarian Church in New Westminster for donating their time and enthusiasm to help wrap stocking stuffers for our holiday program.

The home economics students of New Westminster Senior and Riverside Secondary Schools will be flexing their culinary muscles as the driving force behind EFry's annual client community holiday dinner. The students will prepare 36 turkeys and all the trimmings to serve the nearly 600 people we expect at the first of this year's events. Thanks to you all. Your help is much appreciated.

## 'Twas the Night Before Christmas

And all through BC, children were read stories by their dads or mommies.

EFry's Storybook Program, which links incarnated parents and their children through the power of reading, will provide over 300 children with beautifully illustrated copies of the timeless classic, *The Night Before Christmas*, accompanied by recording of their parents' reading the story to them.

"Children need to connect with their parents more than ever at this time of year," says Marni Ziegler, Director, Fraser Region Community Initiatives. "When we found this recordable edition of the book, we knew it was the perfect fit for our Storybook Program. The book, produced through Hallmark, has a special device that advances the recording as the child turns the page. Local store owners generously assisted us with a 20 per cent cost reduction so that children can receive this new book at this important time of year when they are missing their parents.

Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night.



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