



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

Canadian Memorial Church & Centre for Peace

December 16, 2011

Welcome to our StreetMeals December Newsletter.

2011 has been a landmark year for StreetMeals. As we continue the journey we started with Ellen Shonsta, known as StreetMum, back in February 1999, our program has grown while keeping close to our original mission to serve homeless and at-risk youth and adults living in downtown Vancouver.

We have built strong connections with Family Services of Greater Vancouver Youth Programs <http://www.fsgv.ca/programpages/youthservices/> and we are pleased to include Directions, Youth Detox and Safe House for Youth in our circle of friends. These programs provide youth with low barrier access to a range of services to enable them to make safer and healthier choices in their lives. Our StreetMeals contributions include hundreds of volunteer hours, regular deliveries of sandwiches, fruit, granola bars, and juice for Street Youth Job Action (SYJA) lunches, breads and pastries donated by Terra Breads and hot chili for Saturday video afternoons. Our team has collected and delivered much-needed supplies to help these programs better serve their clients. Last month alone, our donations included a new living room furniture, a treadmill, and a much-needed freezer, blankets, jackets, sleeping bags, toiletries and a Christmas tree! Directions are now housed in their temporary facilities – a high-ceilinged, bright and cheery building at 900 Hornby Street (former site of the Kettle of Fish). This will be their home while the new multi-purpose building is constructed at the old address on Burrard Street. This new building will accommodate all of the current services of Directions, plus supported housing.

We have seen the success of our StreetMeals scholarship program as we celebrated graduations from UBC, SFU, Douglas College and Vancouver Film School. These young students are so inspiring and we wish them well as they launch their careers.

Our StreetMeals youth team has launched a program at Prince of Wales Mini School. The new Feed the Street Club meets monthly and prepares sandwiches for Directions and First United. This program has brought a new awareness of homelessness and the challenges facing homeless youth to high school students. Congratulations to Eleanor, Kali, Nikki and friends for their perseverance and commitment.

There were also a number of special events at Directions including our 2nd annual parking lot party. The youth enjoyed hamburgers and hot dogs, salads, fruit and ice cream under a brilliant sun that heated up the parking lot to cooking temperature. We could have managed without the barbeques and just cooked on the pavement! But it was lots of fun and the air was filled with wonderful smells and the sounds of guitar music, played by one of the young well-fed participants. Next time we will supply the cooks with roller blades to deliver the burgers even faster.

The Believe Street Meal team in West Vancouver provided hot meals to dozens of hungry people as they celebrated Easter on the chilly streets of downtown Vancouver with a large team of volunteers. They even handed out hard-boiled eggs which were decorated by Junior Youth Group at Christ the Redeemer Church. The eggs were delivered to Directions Youth Centre that night and we are sure the recipients thoroughly enjoyed them. Another meal was served at Thanksgiving, ensuring that people of all ages and circumstances continue to be recognized. The team also makes sandwiches and lunches for Directions and continues to reach out to at-risk youth.

We are looking forward to our Christmas event on Saturday December 17 at Canadian Memorial. Once again we are creating individual gift bags for youth at Directions, Youth Detox and Safe House. Many of these youth have no contact with family, making Christmas just another day to get by. We hope that these gifts will bring some love and happiness into their lives as we acknowledge their struggles, their dreams and their right to live in a world that believes in them. Sandwich-making, chili-making and gift-bag assembly starts at 9:00 am. Our Christmas lunch starts at 12:30 pm and you are welcome to join us. Just call the office at 604 731 3101 and confirm that you are coming.

The StreetMeals programs are supported by the congregation of Canadian Memorial, the First Baptist Foundation <http://www.firstbc.org/qry/page.taf?id=240> individual and corporate donors, and the many volunteers who bring their energy, enthusiasm and love to this mission. Thank you for supporting us and for making a difference!

As you are considering annual donations at this time of year, there are so many opportunities to give. Please consider supporting StreetMeals with a donation to Canadian Memorial United Church. This will assist in many areas including our lunch programs, Christmas gifts and scholarships. Thank you.

Blessings to all and Merry Christmas

Joanne and the StreetMeals Team

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