

Community Matters

stories of connection, hospitality & reciprocity in the community

Community Matters is a newsletter by the Building Caring Communities Team.
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WAM Seeds Community Conversations



WAM is a conversation for people who care about neighbourhoods and a place for those who long for a community that is full of hospitality and connections. Each month, 15-25 people gather to spend time with neighbours and have conversations in small groups about things that are important to them. The topics typically include the sharing of people's personal gifts and talents, ideas of connections they would like to create, and how they hope to make neighbourhood spaces more welcoming and accessible.

A recent group developed almost 100 ways that they could build on the gifts present in their neighbourhood. The ideas included things like art events, historical walks, neighbourhood cleanups and potluck dinners!

At the most recent meeting, a Mount Pleasant resident shared a story of how she was inspired to host a "Soup with Neighbours" night on the fourth Sunday of each month. To get this started, she went door to door and personally invited all her neighbours. 24 of them showed up at the most recent dinner, many of whom had never said anything to each other beyond "hello." She plans to continue the dinners for the next four months.

The name WAM means "We Are Many" and was inspired by a poem written by Shane Koyzan. Some lines from the poem are:

*The invitation is open to any,
Take my hand in yours,
Now we are many.*

The initial round of WAM conversations is now coming to an end. It began in the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood, drawing people mostly from that area and others from Burnaby, Commercial Drive and North Vancouver. Now WAM Community Conversations are spreading throughout the Lower Mainland! To talk about WAM conversations in your neighbourhood, contact Joe at 604-365-9113. Support to seed conversations will be provided as needed.

**Join the next WAM conversation on Tuesday, March 25th from 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm
at the Homesteader's Emporium – 649 East Hastings Street, Vancouver.**

Looking to get more connected in your neighbourhood?

Do you have a great community initiative you want to spread the word about?
Contact the Building Caring Communities Team at the Hub: BC2@posabilities.ca.

Sharing the Love on Valentines Day

The flyer read, "What better way to start the morning than to celebrate love with friends, sing some songs and cheer along the sleepy morning commuters?" For the *Building Caring Communities* Team's second 'pop-up' event entitled 'Love Day', we called upon the talents and big hearts of many to celebrate Valentine's Day with us. We serenaded passers-by at the Commercial-Broadway SkyTrain station, and handed out sweet treats and hand-made valentines. Many people stopped to chat as they started their day, from students and early morning dog-walkers, to a construction worker who wanted a Valentine sticker on his hard hat. Even SkyTrain staff joined in on the fun!

Greg Jung, one of the volunteers that morning, was happy to share some of his highlights from 'Love Day'. When asked what stood out for him and why, he replied "getting to meet new people because it's fun". Greg tells the story of how he said "Happy Valentine's Day" to an individual with headphones on, thinking it would be a lost cause. But to his surprise, the individual removed his headphones and responded "You have a happy Valentine's Day too." This was a highlight for Greg because it made him feel appreciated.

Of the countless love songs the group sang that day, Greg's personal favorites were Alan Jackson's "Livin' on Love" and the Beatles' "Hey Jude." Greg has earned himself the reputation of being a fearless and hardworking volunteer at the pop-up events. His friendliness and willingness to meet new people are great gifts!

The goal of these pop-up events is to create a pleasant disruption in daily routines, spread fun and build connections. We look forward to seeing you at the next pop-up event!

Join the Building Caring Communities Team at our next pop-up event, 'Spring It Forward', on Friday March 21st from 11am - 1pm at the River Market - 810 Quayside Drive, New Westminster



"I pledge to create real, face-to-face community"

This is the final button you press when you're creating a new group on Meetup.com. The internet has been bringing people with shared interests together virtually for years now. However, Meetup.com is different. It's focused exclusively on bringing people with shared interests together in-person, face to face, here in the real world, here in the Lower Mainland.

Out near Brentwood SkyTrain station, a monthly **UNO card game club meetup** runs at a local Starbucks. Andrew attends because he's already beaten all the staff at his house and is looking for new competition. James attends because he's a newcomer to Canada from Singapore, and hasn't found many UNO enthusiasts amongst his workmates. The first player to win five games takes the evening's series. The prize is usually something tasty and easy to share.

Across town at Joe's Table Cafe on Kingsway, people from all walks of life have been dropping in to attend the monthly **jigsaw puzzlers' meetup**. They either bring their own projects to work on, or take part in some friendly competition in the 100-piece race. Jigsaws are a meditative activity. Having something for the hands to focus on often helps shyer members participate more in the conversation. Jon has been doing puzzles for decades and loves the chance to get out of the house. Liu enjoys the chance to practice speaking English in a casual group setting. Most agree that while they had never thought of doing jigsaws alongside other people, they now often prefer this to working alone at home.

At "**Draw by Night**", local drawing enthusiasts meet, eat, drink and draw at long tables covered in utility paper. Art supplies and snacks are provided free of charge by the event organizers. A DJ spins sets of music, while a VJ projects idea-inspiring visuals onto a giant screen in the corner. These visuals relate to the bi-monthly event's quirky art themes, like "Cat-nado" or "Bugs Gone Wild". There's lots of laughter, conversation and compliments on people's creations. Jon from the jigsaw puzzlers' meetup has been drawing at home and as part of his daytime community integration program for a decade. Now he's also a "Draw by Night" regular, enjoying the opportunity to work alongside, get feedback from and chat with other artists in the hip Vancouver Film School Café in Gastown.

To join one of the meetups mentioned above, or find one that matches your interests, visit **Meetup.com** and search based on your interests. What if there is no existing meetup group that shares your interests? That's easy – you can start your own meetup! The process is really simple – start creating real, face-to-face community today!

Get connected in your community: UPCOMING EVENTS

Our Generation: Open house and living shrine to the '70s
Homeowner David Beattie has opened his doors to the public in an attempt to combat social isolation in Vancouver. Enjoy engaging conversation while listening to LPs (Long Play records) and sipping tea. Cellphone free zone!
When: 10 am – 10 pm daily
Where: 5123 Aberdeen Street, Vancouver

Music jam and dance
For \$2, enjoy fantastic live music, a coffee and a treat.
When: 1:30 – 4:30 pm every Friday
Where: John Braithwaite Community Centre – 145 1st St W, North Vancouver

Cosmos Café: For the weird, the wonderful and the rest of us
Come enjoy live songs, stories and poetry! If you would like to get up on stage yourself, please arrive at 7pm to sign-up.
When: 7:30 – 9:30 pm first Saturday of every month
Where: 2950 Laurel Street, Vancouver