

COMMUNITY RELEASE

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Local Anti-Tobacco Champion Celebrated During Non-Smoking Week

The Lung Association & Heart and Stroke Foundation honour Vancouver's Dr. Fred Bass for his contribution and commitment to reducing the harms of tobacco use.

An activist, physician and former Vancouver city councillor, Dr. Fred Bass is one of 10 BC individuals and organizations being recognized as a 2013 Champion for Tobacco-Free Living Award Winner by the BC Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation (B.C. & Yukon).

The awards, launched for the first time this year, recognize efforts to reduce the harmful effects of tobacco and will be presented during National Non-Smoking Week, January 20 to 26, 2013. (See [here](#) a full list of 2013 award winners).

Scott McDonald, CEO of the BC Lung Association, cites Dr. Bass's lifelong commitment to tobacco reduction issues and especially his determination to ensure patients get the information and help they need to quit smoking as motivations for the award.

"No one is more committed than Dr. Bass. He is very deserving of this recognition for all the important advocacy work he's done and continues to do," says Diego Marchese, CEO, Heart and Stroke Foundation (BC & Yukon).

Dr. Fred Bass's story

Never one to sit on the sidelines, Dr. Bass is tireless in his efforts to make a difference.

"Before I came to Canada I worked in tuberculosis (TB) control and witnessed a dramatic change in TB treatment from years in a remote hospital to a few months plus prolonged medication. I saw the applicability of the new TB model to the ignored epidemic of cigarette smoking and wrote about it both in the US and after arrival in Canada."

Dr. Bass's career in preventive medicine and social activism spans a half a century, from US Army Preventive Medicine physician to tobacco consultant and also climate activist.

Originally from the US, Dr. Bass joined the Vancouver Health Department in 1975. Soon after, he collaborated with the BC Medical Association to found its Tobacco and Illness Committee. This trailblazing group of physicians helped reframe thinking of tobacco addiction as an epidemic, tobacco as a dangerous product and the tobacco industry as a main propagator of the epidemic. Dr. Bass chaired the committee for two decades.

Dr Bass notes, "Today, some of what we have learned from wrestling with tobacco addiction has application to our other smoking problem—burning too much carbon and changing the earth's climate in the process." In May 2012 Bass was arrested for the first time in his life in White Rock for blocking a coal train from the US headed for Roberts Bank and then to Asia. He says, "Burning coal is the leading people-based cause of steeply-rising CO2 in the atmosphere and it is driving radical climate change."

Dr. Bass has fought the dangers of tobacco use at all levels from advocating smoke-free workplaces to Vancouver city council, to helping smokers to quit, to rallying against the only industry allowed to market a lethal product that kills its users.

Dr. Bass also founded the 'BC Doctors' Stop-Smoking Program' in 1989 to help BC doctors help their patients to stop smoking. In 1997 the program evolved into 'the Society for Clinical Preventive Care' which sought until 2007 to make all effective forms of clinical prevention a reality.

"As a physician, I've spent my career trying to get our healthcare system to address the underlying causes of disease through prevention as well as treatment," says Dr. Bass. "Smoking is still the #1 preventable cause of death and disease. Yet, to quote the US Surgeon General's latest guideline, '...it is difficult to identify any other condition that presents such a mix of lethality, prevalence and neglect, despite effective and readily available interventions'."

After decades as an anti-tobacco advocate, Dr. Bass reflects, "Not that long ago, people smoked virtually everywhere. In the 1960s, nearly half of all adults puffed away. But as the result of cumulative measures over time including smoking bans, cigarette tax increases, graphic warnings on packaging and clinical tobacco intervention; smoking prevalence has fallen in many parts of the western world. In fact, as a society, we have abandoned smoking tobacco faster than we got hooked on it—not bad, considering how addictive cigarettes are."

About the Champion for Tobacco-Free Living Awards

Winners of the Champion for Tobacco-Free Living Awards are chosen by the BC Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation (B.C. & Yukon) for their long-term contribution to clearing the air of second-hand smoke, helping people quit smoking and encouraging British Columbians to stay tobacco-free. Nominees are selected by BC community members, public health staff and health care professionals. Launched in 2013, the awards will be announced annually during January National Non-Smoking Week.

Scott McDonald, CEO, BC Lung Association

"Recent headlines have many thinking the most pressing public health concern is obesity, lack of physical activity or perhaps illegal drug use. All are important. However, the leading cause of preventable death in British Columbia is tobacco-related illness. It is with the help of champions like Dr. Bass we continue to make progress on this important health issue."

Diego Marchese, CEO, Heart and Stroke Foundation (BC & Yukon)

"We feel it's extremely important to honour and acknowledge the important work being done by individuals and organizations to affect positive social change. Actions to reduce tobacco use and exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke are amongst the most important measures available to increase overall public health."

About the Heart and Stroke Foundation

The Heart and Stroke Foundation (heartandstroke.ca), a volunteer-based health charity, leads in eliminating heart disease and stroke and reducing their impact through the advancement of research and its application, the promotion of healthy living, and advocacy.

About the Lung Association

The BC Lung Association, a non-profit, non-governmental organization, is dedicated to improving lung health and promoting clean air initiatives across the province. Through public awareness campaigns, the Association

acts as an educational resource for the general public as well as those living with respiratory conditions. The BC Lung Association also specializes in patient support programs, community services and advanced medical research.

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