

COMMUNITY NEWS RELEASE

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Local Anti-Tobacco Champion Celebrated During National Non-Smoking Week

*The Lung Association & Heart and Stroke Foundation honour **Grouse Mountain Resort** for its contribution and commitment to tobacco use reduction and protection.*

The first BC mountain resort property to go 100% smoke-free, Grouse Mountain is one of 10 BC organizations and individuals being recognized as a 2013 Champion for Tobacco-Free Living by the BC Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation (B.C. & Yukon).

The awards, launched for the first time this year, are being presented during National Non-Smoking Week, January 20 to 26, 2013. (See [here](#) a full list of 2013 award winners).

“Grouse Mountain is to be commended for its commitment to ensuring a safe, healthy and clean environment for guests, staff and the general public, which it reinforced by becoming 100% smoke-free,” says Diego Marchese, CEO, Heart and Stroke Foundation (BC & Yukon).

“As the largest youth employer on Vancouver’s North Shore with a million plus visitors each year, Grouse Mountain’s smoke-free status is helping build awareness of the single greatest health prevention measure there is – not smoking.” says Scott McDonald, CEO of the BC Lung Association.

Grouse Mountain’s Story

Like all businesses, the tourism sector is driven financially, but the decision to become a smoke-free environment wasn’t based on economics, according to Grouse Mountain HR director Charmaine Carswell.

“We chose to do it because it aligned with our mission of being a health-oriented, family-friendly environment,” she says. “As a recreation provider, we wanted to be a leader by exemplifying good health practices, and from a safety perspective we benefit by minimizing the risk of forest fire during the summer months.”

The catalyst for the move began in 2007, when Grouse Mountain wanted to go smoke free as a result of some new government legislation. Grouse Mountain contacted the BC Cancer Society for information and assistance in moving towards an ambitious, totally smoke-free operation. Its Human Resources and Health and Safety departments worked together with the BC Lung Association and the Canadian Cancer Society to develop a strategy to become 100% smoke-free. All parties were interested in leading an initiative to combat tobacco use in the workplace and particularly wanted to target young people.

“We’re the number one youth employer on the North Shore, so making the connection with us made sense,” says Charmaine. “We worked collaboratively with them to do the right thing and ban smoking throughout the entire premise, including the outdoor space, not just offices and vehicles. It was considered an ambitious project!”

In the early smoke-free days, 'quit and win' contests were particularly popular with the company's young staff. Charmaine says, "The Cancer Society brought over carbon monoxide (CO) detectors to read the level of CO in participants' blood, which tend to be high in those who smoke. It was amazing at the end of the contest to watch people who had quit getting tested again. The drop in CO levels was huge and provided a tangible indication of just how much healthier quitters were becoming."

Now in its fifth year as a smoke-free resort, Grouse Mountain continues to support and encourage employees who are ready to quit, making them aware of free support available and subsidizing quit-smoking aids.

Since becoming smoke-free, the resort has been asked to share lessons learned with others including, Seymour and Cypress mountains as well as internationally. "There's a lot of interest in learning from our experience, which has been nothing but positive," says Charmaine.

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 (BC & 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 concerns are 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 Grouse Mountain 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 among the most important measures available to increase overall public health."

Smoke-Free Places Facts

- Smoking bans in public places are recognized as the most effective means for reducing exposure to second-hand smoke. They have been shown to decrease tobacco consumption, reduce serious health-related hospital admissions, increase quit attempts, lengthen the time between relapse and boost quit rates (Centre for Addiction Research BC, 2006).
- Over 94% of British Columbians overwhelmingly support measures that promote smoke-free environments (Ipsos Reid, 2006).
- There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. It is not a mere annoyance; it is a serious health hazard that can lead to disease and premature death in children and non-smoking adults (U.S, Surgeon General, 2006).
- Second-hand smoke is a carcinogen and contains more than 50 cancer-causing chemicals. Even brief exposure to second-hand smoke has immediate adverse effects and increases risk for heart disease and lung cancer (U.S, Surgeon General, 2006).

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 BC Lung Association

The BC Lung Association (bc.lung.ca), 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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