

## 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 **Vancouver's Fraser Street Apartments, a Raincity Housing Site**, for its contribution and commitment to tobacco use protection and reduction.*

The Fraser Street Apartments, a social housing site run by Raincity Housing, is one of 10 BC organizations and individuals being recognized as a 2013 Champion for Tobacco-Free Living Award Winner by the BC Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation (BC & 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 Raincity Housing's Fraser Street Apartments' commitment to providing a safe, healthy, smoke-free environment for their tenants, and especially management and staff's commitment to modelling healthy choices, as motivations for the award.

"We need more smoke-free social housing sites like Fraser Street Apartments. They're changing public perceptions about the possibilities in a social housing environment and providing an example of just what can be achieved," says Diego Marchese, CEO, Heart and Stroke Foundation (BC & Yukon).

#### **The Fraser Street Apartments story**

It all began when Vancouver Community Health Services approached Fraser Street Apartments and proposed a smoke-free pilot project. The idea was to reduce the harms of second-hand smoke on tenants and staff by implementing a 100% smoke-free policy, but the project evolved quickly into something more.

Darlene Fiddler, Manager of Frasers Streets Apartments, admits encountering a few hurdles at first.

"We quickly realized if we wanted things to work, those of us who smoked – including me - would have to start by becoming tobacco-free ourselves," she says. About half the staff smoked, and quitting wasn't easy, but we did it. "We supported one another and we learned a lot. Most importantly, we earned the respect of our tenants."

The next step was creating tenant buy-in and designing a road map for becoming smoke-free.

"We gave our tenants lots of notice, provided workshops and education on the importance of a smoke-free environment and made quit smoking tools such as free nicotine patches available for those who wanted them," says Darlene.

In the end, all of Fraser Street Apartments' tenants supported the change.

“I think the key to our success was our approach,” says Darlene. “It really helped that tenants saw us quit. It made them more willing. We didn’t force anyone to quit, but instead presented the benefits of quitting. Our focus was always to create a healthier work environment for staff, and a healthier living environment for tenants, not to single out smokers.”

Since becoming a smoke-free housing site, Darlene says they’ve had no trouble attracting new tenants.

“Most market housing nowadays is non-smoking and tenants want to be prepared for it when the time comes to move,” she says. “We’ve not had one person refuse to stay here because we’re smoke-free. Instead, they really appreciate that we’re providing a healthy living environment.”

This is particularly beneficial for tenants with compromised immune systems and respiratory issues, who tend to be sensitive to smoke, so it cuts down on potential health complications.

As for the future, Fraser Street Apartment’s healthy living commitment has tenants getting proactive.

“Now they’re asking for healthier meals and snacks, and more interested in fitness,” Darlene says. “We’ve started leading daily walks and even got our local YMCA to offer interested tenants a gym/swim pass discount!”

#### **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 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 Raincity Housing’s Fraser Street Apartments Site that 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](http://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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