

COMMUNITY NEWS RELEASE

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Local Anti-Tobacco Champion Celebrated During Non-Smoking Week

The Lung Association & Heart and Stroke Foundation honour Crescent Beach's Rose Marie Borutski for her contribution and commitment to fueling action on the issue of affordable smoke-free housing – the newest frontier on the fight against tobacco.

A leading advocate and trailblazer in the fight for increased smoke-free housing, Rose Marie Borutski is one of 10 BC individuals and organizations being recognized as a 2013 Champion for Tobacco-Free Living by the BC Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation (BC & 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).

Rose Marie suffers from chronic health issues and chemical sensitivities. In 2007, due to worsening health, she began to search for an affordable social housing solution on a 'Persons-with-Disability' income. She found Kiwanis Park Place, a social housing complex near Crescent Beach. They offered her what she thought was a smoke-free unit, but upon settling in, Rose Marie found herself surrounded by smokers and at the centre of the latest battleground in the fight against tobacco: other people's homes.

"Rose Marie's first-hand experience battling the negative health effects caused by second-hand smoke in shared housing is stirring up important public discussion and debate on an issue in desperate need of attention and action," says Scott McDonald, CEO of the BC Lung Association.

Approximately 85 percent of British Columbians are non-smokers, and the province has more than 725,000 residential strata lots, yet but a few have outlawed smoking.

"We need more British Columbians, like Rose Marie, whose unyielding efforts to wake up decision-makers on housing-related tobacco use issues is long overdue," says Diego Marchese, CEO, Heart and Stroke Foundation (BC & Yukon).

Rose Marie Borutski's story

In 2007, Rosemarie moved into a smoke-free apartment in a social housing complex. Little did she know she would be surrounded by tobacco users above and below and forced to fight for her right to breathe clean air.

Rose Marie felt sick and helpless. She spoke with neighbours and found 44 others equally aggravated. Together they delivered a petition to their landlord, but to no avail. Next, she filed a Human Rights Complaint, an exercise requiring years of research and writing and drained much of her little disability discretionary income. Still, nothing.

In early 2012, five years later, the situation at Kiwanis Park Place still hadn't improved, but Rose Marie's perseverance paid off. She was told she would receive a monthly 'Private Market Rent Subsidy'. This enabled her to move out and rent a smoke-free rental unit in an unsubsidized housing complex.

While grateful, Rose Marie knows she is one of very few given the subsidy and she refuses to give up the fight on behalf of countless others forced to suffer and unable to afford their way out.

“Receiving the market rent subsidy only confirms there continues to be a real shortage of smoke-free, social housing available to others like me who live on limited incomes,” she says.

So Rose Marie battles on, buoyed by glimmerings of progress and public acknowledgment of her efforts. She authors a popular blog on the issue called ‘Canadians PUSH for Smoke-Free Housing.’ She’s also penned a few thousands pages on the subject of Big Tobacco, and is in pursuit of an editor.

“It’s encouraging to be acknowledged and I’m thankful for the rent subsidy. I’m happy Rich Coleman, Minister Responsible for Housing, has at long last acknowledged second-hand smoke as a legal source of nuisance, which threatens tenants’ right to quiet enjoyment and thus requires landlords to act when a complaint is filed.”

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 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 Rose Marie Borutski 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 among 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 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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