

## COMMUNITY NEWS RELEASE

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

*The Lung Association & Heart and Stroke Foundation honour Kamloops' Thompson Rivers University Wellness Centre and Respiratory Therapy Department for its contribution and commitment to tobacco use reduction and protection.*

Kamloops' Thompson River University (TRU) Wellness Centre together with the Respiratory Therapy (RT) Department 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, will be presented during National Non-Smoking Week, January 20 to 26, 2013. (See [here](#) a full list of 2013 award winners).

During the past eight years, TRU's Wellness Centre, the RT Department and its supporters have improved student and staff access to quit smoking resources, expanded campus-wide smoke-free policies, and fostered partnerships between faculties such as Respiratory Therapy, Nursing and Social Work to deliver quit smoking campaigns that serve as both student learning and mentoring opportunities.

"TRU Wellness Centre is a role model for other post-secondary institutions on how to go about achieving reductions in second-hand smoke exposure and improvements in student access to and awareness of quit smoking resources," says Diego Marchese, CEO, Heart and Stroke Foundation (B.C. & Yukon).

Scott McDonald, CEO of the BC Lung Association, cites TRU's sustained commitment to tobacco use reduction and its ingenuity at involving students and faculty members in creating interactive solutions as reasons for the award.

### The TRU Story

Located in Kamloops, BC, TRU services 25,000 full-time, part-time, online and international students.

In 2004, the university established its first Wellness Centre and implemented a policy prohibiting tobacco sales on campus, banning smoking in university vehicles and extending the provincial ban on smoking within three metres of exits and entryways to 7.6 metres. Eight years on, TRU has proven itself a true innovator on tobacco use issues.

"We have to credit our students who just keep coming up with great ideas," says Chelsea Corsi, TRU Wellness Coordinator. "For example, two years ago they implemented annual 'butt' clean-up days, helping create a visual connection between the mess tobacco butts create while showing students how much of their money has gone up in smoke."

Each January, TRU conducts its 'Great Canadian Smoke-out,' running quit contests with cash prizes in addition to regular quit smoking support groups and information kiosks across campus. These campaigns are often targeted to populations with higher smoking rates – like international and trades students.

TRU has partnered with different faculties such as Respiratory Therapy, Nursing and Social Work to use campaigns as learning and mentoring opportunities for students. When the Respiratory Therapy students created quit smoking materials as a project, they were so successful that tobacco training became part of the mandatory school curriculum.

“The cross-pollination of ideas between faculty and students is powerful,” says Janine Chan, a member of TRU’s Respiratory Therapy Faculty. “Not only did the students realize how this knowledge could have an impact in their future workplaces, but their efforts led to changes in our programming. In the past, Respiratory Therapy students were not trained on smoking cessation practices, now it’s mandatory curriculum.”

TRU’s hard work has proved to be well worth the effort, bringing success to those who are trying to kick the smoking habit.

“It’s rewarding work and we’ve done a lot to be proud of,” Chelsea says. “I’ll never forget this mature student, a woman who had smoked for 30 years. She sought me out, just to say thank you. With our help and encouragement she’d finally succeeded in quitting for good.”

#### **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 Thompson River University 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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