

## 2012 BCRTA Golden Star Award Winners

The BCRTA believes that within every community there is a wealth of knowledge and wisdom among seniors that should be used to enhance the learning experience of students at every grade level, right from Kindergarten through Grade 12. The BCRTA Golden Star Awards were established to recognize and reward programs in the BC public school system that have as the salient feature the interaction of students with seniors and seniors with students.

The following are the five BCRTA Golden Star Award recipients for 2012:

Cataline Elementary School, Williams Lake, BC - The grade 6/7 class at this school dubbed their intergenerational project "2 Cool 4 School Academy". The project involves an "immersion" period in the fall and the spring where the curriculum is provided to the students in a classroom at the Seniors' Village five minutes walk from the school, with bi-monthly visits continuing between the immersion periods. Strong relational bonds have formed between the students and their senior buddies at the Village. The students have benefitted from the information provided by the Seniors' Village staff on such topics as nutrition, mental illness and death. They have also been stretched to think critically in developing their listening and problem solving skills in adapting to their new surroundings and senior buddies. The award money will go towards a bursary that is being set up for those students needing assistance for post-secondary education.

Eileen Madson Primary School, Invermere, BC - Since December 2010 a kindergarten class has attended class once a week in a large open space with kitchen and bathroom facilities at Columbia Garden Village, an assisted and independent living centre for senior citizens. As of October 2011 the program expanded to include all the kindergarten students in the school, with half the students attending every Tuesday, and the remaining half every Friday. Students interact with the seniors by working, playing and reading alongside them. The interaction has taught students about aging, death and compassion; and has motivated some of the seniors to visit the classroom whenever the children are there. One senior underwent months of physical therapy to build up enough strength in her legs to make the 50 meter trip down the carpeted hallway to join the children in their activities. The award money will be used to support the transportation of the students to the Village and purchase educational art supplies. Any remaining funds will be put toward the purchase of an FM system to enhance the learning environment by amplifying teacher and student voices to assist those participating seniors who have difficulty hearing.

Fruitvale Elementary School, Fruitvale, BC - While there are various examples of seniors' involvement at this school, one unique senior began working with the grade 3 teacher and her class in October 2010. This senior, an accomplished harmonica player, wanted to pass on his knowledge of the harmonica to children. The program began as a cobbled affair: the teacher had no knowledge about the harmonica, the senior no teacher training and neither were sure if the harmonica was a suitable instrument for 8- and 9-year olds. The outcome has been a valuable learning experience for all involved. The senior continues to share his expertise with grade 3 students during music class, and an afterschool club has been formed for those students who have moved on to grade 4 but want to continue learning more about the harmonica. The grade 3's and the club have performed mini concerts at community celebrations, at a local seniors' residence, at the Rossland Winter Carnival Variety Show and at a special banquet honouring the retiring mayor of Fruitvale. Apparently it is not uncommon for impromptu harmonica to be heard out on the school playground at recess and at lunch. One special senior's dream of passing on his harmonica skills has been realized; his love of harmonica has strengthened the school and its connection with the community. The award money will be used to purchase harmonica instructional booklets and CDs, t-shirts for the club members and a set of quality harmonicas. If there are

funds remaining the teacher would also like to put some monies toward the travel expenses for the senior who will be attending a harmonica conference in Texas next summer for all the hours he has dedicated to the classroom, club and school.

James Ardiel Elementary School, Surrey, BC - What began three years ago as monthly visits by kindergarten students with their Grandfriends at Cherington Place, an intermediate extended, dementia care facility as now expanded to joint collage and painting projects, exercises days, Christmas concerts and a spring art exhibition. Connecting a younger generation to an older generation has had positive benefits for both. In the photo album accompanying the application, one child wrote: *"The Grandfriends are so special to us, and we are special to them. We are friends and friends visit each other!"* Another section of the photo album included two oft-repeated quotes *"A child needs a grandparent, anybody's grandparent, to grow a little more securely into an unfamiliar world"* (Charles and Ann Morse). *"What children need most are the essentials that grandparents provide in abundance. They give unconditional love, kindness, patience, humour, comfort, lessons in life."* (Rudolph Guliani). The award money will be used to purchase books about seniors and children to be read in the classroom, new watercolour paints, oil pastels, crayons, brushes and art paper for continued joint art projects, as well as frames for displaying the art in the hallways at the Cherington Place.

Walnut Grove Secondary School, Langley, BC - The Humanitarian Club meets every Thursday at lunch to raise awareness and finances for seventeen different local and global community service projects. These include collection of gently used toys for Children's Hospital; collection of non-perishable food items for Langley's Food Bank; a weekly visit with Golden Agers at the Langley Gardens Retirement Community Centre; and monthly preparation, set up, serving and clean-up at Friends Langley Vineyard's community meal. The application was by and large completed by the students. Here are some of their comments:

- *"The moment I step into the Humanitarian Club meeting room and watch as endless pairs of feet step into the doorway, I never fail to be dumbfounded by the fact that all seventy of us gather together with only one thing on our minds: the desire to help. We attend the meetings not because we get bonus marks, not because we get something in return, but because we care."*
- *"I really like going to the Langley Vineyard.. . . Even the seniors that come, I think they enjoy being around other people, younger people especially. I think the older generation appreciate that the new generation is looking out for them."*
- *"Langley Gardens. . . Each elder has his or her own capability. . . Some have minds that remain sharp even after darkness enveloped their sight, while others manoeuvre around calmly in their wheelchairs. I believe, however, that they remain an asset to the community for their wisdom and experience, as well as their past contributions. . . "*
- *"When visiting the Langley Gardens Retirement Center my peers and I are continuously challenged as we learn to interact with the residents without using the technology we have become accustomed to . . . I have learned to deal first hand with people facing such diseases as Alzheimer's, Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and blindness."*
- *"George . . . a ninety-seven-year-old resident of Langley Gardens. . . He had much to teach us, from his patience and compassion to his sheer willingness to lend us his time. . . While many would assume that a man of such age would not look forward to working with teenagers such as us, he was positively jovial. It is an experience I will never forget."*

The award money will be used by the club to continue to raise awareness for local and global community projects.