

December 24, 2010

Seniors Centre: a success story

By Helmut Manz/Quantum Shift

Somebody once said that the way senior citizens are treated says a lot about a community. After just over a year in operation, the Squamish Seniors Centre (SSC) is making a loud and clear statement. According to their newsletter, this is "the place to be... where seniors are in action!" And they're not kidding.

The 365 members of the centre can spend an afternoon carpet bowling or line dancing. They can join an exercise or tai chi class, take Spanish lessons, play cards or bingo, learn about computers, enrol in a photography class, or sign up for a bus tour.

Recent excursions offered by the centre include trips to Granville Island, Chinatown, Hastings Park Casino and the Burnaby Village Heritage Christmas display.

A partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health provides guest speakers who cover topics ranging from nutrition to wills and estates.

During Grandparents' Week, seniors had their grandchildren in tow for intergenerational activities, including carpet bowling and arts and crafts.

In October the centre hosted a Seniors Health and Wellness Fair. More recently a number of Christmas-related functions were held, including a dinner dance and a soup-and-sandwich event, with Howe Sound Secondary students entertaining the appreciative crowd.

The spacious 10,000-square-foot structure, in the Solterra-designed Rockcliff at Eaglewind complex, has a well-laid-out floor plan with its own kitchen and dining area, a large special events room, a TV lounge with pool table and a number of smaller presentation rooms.

After the building opened, there was no kitchen staff on hand, so a food service committee was formed comprised of volunteers. Various culinary offerings were soon flowing into the newly christened Clock Tower Café and eventually cooks were hired under the management of Greg Van Heerden. However, the membership was recently informed that more daily food sales revenue has to be generated to keep the paid staff on site.

Every start-up has its share of logistical hiccups and differences of opinion related to operational procedures. There have been some deficiencies, both in and outside the building, that have been brought to the attention of staff. Although the SSC has had a few growing pains, this enterprise appears to have withstood those challenges and is rapidly becoming one of the flagships in the Service Squamish Initiative fleet.

Carol Wynne, seniors recreation program supervisor, notes that besides doing a lot of planning and research, the most important strategies for success have been teamwork, a willingness to listen and the ability to improvise. She and her staff, including Wendy Shard and Pria Giri at the front desk, and Jack Bir, who is in charge of maintenance, have things well under control. They are supported by a strong group of directors and an advisory board, led by board President Glenn Rudkin.

The Seniors Centre will host an open house from Jan. 4 to Jan. 7. Everyone is welcome, so why not head over there for a look around, a coffee and a bite to eat? In the meantime, Merry Christmas to all and have a great New Year.

Glacier Media Inc.



2010 Glacier Media Inc.. Permission granted for up to 5 copies. All rights reserved.

You may forward this article or get additional permissions by typing http://license.icopyright.net/3.8581?icx_id=2010312249960 into any web browser. Glacier Media Inc. and Squamish Chief logos are registered trademarks of Glacier Media Inc. The iCopyright logo is a registered trademark of iCopyright, Inc.