

Blueridge Good Neighbour Day Likely A Go This June

By Eric G. Andersen

Blueridge Community Association Chair

Blueridge Good Neighbour Day, a fun-filled event that has celebrated our community for 22 years, looks like it is back on track for this year, after a three-year break caused by COVID.

The way it looks right now, there should be a Blueridge Good Neighbour Day (BGND) taking place in June! Our first planning meeting took place on Jan. 20 and we have a small, but energetic committee. A few more people indicated their interest in helping out after our first meeting, so it is probably a good idea to mark Sunday, June 11 on your calendar. Watch for the date and location to be confirmed on our website, blueridgeca.org and online in the March Blueridge Bulletin.

For residents new to Blueridge and Seymour Heights, this event has run consecutively since 1998, before COVID changed everyone's lives in 2019. That's when the provincial government banned larger public gatherings to prevent the uncontrolled spread of the virus.

The community day, which gets financial support from more than 100 retail merchants and other North Shore organizations, traditionally kicks off with a noisy but happy morning parade down Berkley. The parade includes everything from antique cars and fire engines and their crews, to sports and service groups and lots of kids on decorated bikes and trikes. After the parade, everyone is invited to head up to the Blueridge Elementary School grounds to enjoy an array of rides and games, a beer garden and booths of baked goods among other items, stretching across the school's playing fields.

This fun-filled event with entertainment for kids of all ages has been a great way to get our community together.



Eric G. Andersen



To make the return of this event a success, much work has to be done in the months leading up to the day. We have lost some key volunteers who helped organize things in the past, and this means we need new people to step up and help out! Without your help with the planning, the event can't happen! However, no one person needs to do it all. The more help we get, the easier and the more fun it is for everyone! Specific tasks can be done on your own, without attending meetings, while some activities need to be planned in collaboration with others on the BGND committee.

If you are interested, please contact us ASAP at: volunteer@blueridgeca.org, and we will get back to you promptly.

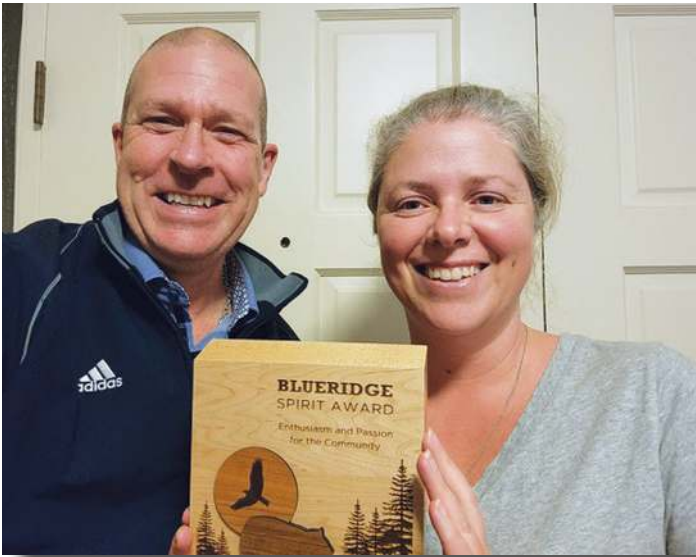
For new residents to Blueridge and Seymour Heights, joining the planning committee is an awesome way to get to know great neighbours who are keen to make a difference in Blueridge. For the rest of us, it is a wonderful way to reconnect with old friends and meet new ones.



Families having fun during Blueridge Good Neighbour Day on the Blueridge Elementary grounds in June 2017. A small planning group has already begun meeting to organize the event for this June but really needs some help. If you can volunteer some time, please contact asap volunteer@blueridgeca.org (Photo: Tammy Sharp)

Blueridge Winners Announced

By Michael Bernard



Graham Gilley with Jennifer Dickson, winner of the Blueridge Spirit Award

Two Blueridge residents have been named recipients of community awards recognizing the distinctly different ways that they are making Blueridge a better place to live.

Jennifer Dickson is the latest winner of the Blueridge Spirit Award while **Justin Meiklem** has been chosen the new Blueridge Outstanding Neighbour award winner.

Graham Gilley, the previous Spirit Award winner, who passed along the award to Jennifer, says "she is one of those community members who will step up and just do what needs doing."

For the past 10 years, she has been involved with a wide range of community sports groups including:

- the North Vancouver Football Club as age group co-ordinator
- GSL Football League (registrar)
- Mount Seymour Little League (treasurer, president, vice president)
- NS Spring Flag Football League (registrar)
- District 5 Little League (treasurer)
- Windsor School Football (manager)

Graham says that Jennifer doesn't think only about sports. "She has been chair of the Blueridge Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) and is currently Treasurer of the Windsor PAC, for which, as the Windsor PAC Chair, I am very grateful. Jennifer is a very smart, dedicated and humble volunteer, and I thoroughly enjoy her healthy sense of humour."

For Blueridge resident **Ali Karimi**, there was no question whom she and her husband had in mind when it came to nominating someone for Blueridge's Outstanding Neighbour Award.

Ali explains she and her spouse are a senior couple with various physical conditions, making it hard for them to work around the house.

"Shortly after moving to our new place, Justin Meiklem and his family came to see us. He told us to never hesitate to let him know if we needed help with anything. This was interesting in itself because we still don't know some of our other neighbours."

"We had assumed Justin was nice and a polite neighbour, which is a blessing for anyone, but Justin went beyond that, said Ali. Every time he would see us working on something, he would come and ask if we needed help."

"This includes gardening, moving things around, and fixing things. He regularly mows our lawn without us asking him to do so. He has taken away our tree branches, making sure the compost and garbage bins are in and out and many other things. His family has also been very kind and helpful."

"I feel very lucky to have a neighbour who helps us without even being asked for his help. We know there are many good people around us, but I think Justin should get recognition for all his kindness and goodness. Kindness is contagious, and I wish for every neighbourhood to have at least one person like Justin."



Justin Meiklem (centre), winner of the Blueridge Outstanding Neighbour Award, flanked by BCA chair Eric Andersen (left) and Elmira Nazar, BCA volunteer co-ordinator (right).

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TOUGH FISCAL CHOICES IN DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER

By Jim Hanson

Hanson is a Blueridge resident and a District Councillor

Our Mayor and Council are actively engaged in the finalization of the 2023-2027 Financial Plan (Budget). We are facing tough choices.

General inflation combined with a localized “cost premium” on the North Shore mean that the District cannot maintain current levels of services without increasing rates of taxation on homeowners. There is a voice on Council (and in our community) that the overall high rates of income in the District justify increases in taxes on homeowners to free up funds for pressing issues. The debate was focussed recently on the District’s plans for cycling routes. At what pace should we continue to build out these routes, given the fiscal pressures we face, and the looming potential for a recession and further financial challenges?

At present, the proposed increase in taxation is 4.5%. To achieve this rate, which is among the lowest in Metro, the usual 1% additional levy for future infrastructure has been temporarily suspended. Alongside the increase in District taxation, residents must be prepared for significant increases in Metro utility levies for water, sewer, recycling and solid waste over the next five years. The sewer levy for example is set to increase 19.3% annually compounded over five years. Cost overruns could make these increases even higher.

For my part, I will urge a cautious line on tax increases. I do not believe that a majority of District residents would favour large increases to taxation

in the District. While I would support a small increase over and above the 4.5% (say, up to 5.5%) if that would allow the cycling path network to be completed in this term, I will not favour large tax increases on a sustained basis. Nor do I wish the legacy of this Council to be the depletion of the District’s hard-saved reserves and increases to debt and debt servicing charges. In my view, we should not seek to download our financial problems to the next generation. I believe as quickly as possible we should re-instate the policy of 3% annual increases with 2% for operating and 1% for infrastructure.

This is the time for residents to have their say on these issues. The budget was “introduced” to Mayor and Council on February 13, 2023. Public input is now open on the District web site (DNV.org/budget). Residents are welcome to appear before us in Council and state their views in ‘Public Input’ at the commencement of each meeting. The “Budget” will be “deliberated” and then finally approved March 27, 2023. I encourage all residents to be part of the process.



Jim Hanson

Dîner en Bleu – It’s Up to You!

By Eric G. Andersen



Breaking bread with neighbours is a tradition as old as time itself. In fact, lots of Blueridge residents have been asking when this fun Dîner en Bleu event would resume, now that COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.

We sent out the call for volunteers in the January Blueridge Bulletin, hoping that planning could start before the summer begins. Sadly, our pleas for volunteers to organize this event have not been successful. Unless things change in the next month or so and a few people step up to help, we will have to accept that there will be no such dinner held in Blueridge this year.

The dinner for 120 participants is held at a location in Blueridge announced at the last minute. A very long set of tables are set end to end and the diners are, as you may have guessed, dressed in blue.

As you can see from the photo of one of our pre-COVID events, people are clearly enjoying connecting with friends, long-time neighbours and newcomers to Blueridge over a meal al fresco, Italian for “in the fresh air.” All attending agreed it was a great success.

So, we are sending out our last plea for people to join a planning committee for Dîner en Bleu. If you are interested, please contact us as soon as possible at: volunteer@blueridgeca.org

Poll identifies your top neighbourhood activities

By Carolann Fraenkel

Thanks to everyone who took our recent poll to identify what you see as Blueridge's most important activities and initiatives. Here is a ranked list of what you named:

- E-Bulletin (a neighbourhood news feature distributed monthly, free to email subscribers)
- Creek Clean Up
- Website (www.blueridgeca.org)
- Blueridge Good Neighbour Day (held annually in June except during COVID)
- All Candidates Meetings (for municipal, provincial and federal elections)
- Blueridge Cares (a pre-Christmas hamper initiative)
- Project Community (discounted services for residents)
- Paper Newsletter (delivered door-to-door, three times a year)
- Firesmart Program (local fire prevention and control tips)
- Community/Sharing Garden (garden plots for rent southwest of Seymour Heights Elementary)
- Little Free Libraries (weather-protected stands for books)
- Scholarship Program (\$500 annually to recognize student volunteer activities)
- Meet and Greet with new neighbours
- Facebook and Instagram Updates
- Blueridge Awards (recognizing residents who make Blueridge better)
- Dîner en Bleu (al fresco dining on a local street in summer months)
- Plant Swap (free stand on Berkley for leave a plant/take a plant)



And here are the top four new activities that you expressed an interest in starting up:

- Trail / Neighbourhood Cleanup
- Neighbourhood Garage Sales
- Music/Art Activities or concerts
- Wild Animal Awareness (critter control)



As always, nothing happens without volunteers. If you have volunteered to help out, thank you! We will be in touch. If you would like to volunteer, please email volunteer@blueridgeca.org and tell us what looks interesting to you.



The Blueridge Sharing Garden, ranked among the top 10 of favourite neighbourhood features, awaits Blueridge green thumbs this spring. Gardeners can rent plots to cultivate their favourite produce.

Improve Air Quality, Realize Savings

By Michael Bernard

Some of you may recall my article for the January Blueridge Bulletin about recently converting my wood-burning fireplace to a natural gas fireplace insert. I noted that tough new Metro Vancouver regulations now ban wood burning between May and September. To achieve cleaner air, there are more regulations on the way which will benefit a lot of people.

In this article, I want to focus on the incentives that energy companies and government provide to accelerate the clean air goal. For several years, I'd paid about \$400 a cord for wood from John the Woodman in Maple Ridge. While that wasn't cheap, I'd found that his seasoned alder, birch and maple was the only firewood I could count on to be clean, well-sized and reliably dry. I was also shelling out \$150 to rent a Modo Co-op van to drive 110 kilometres round-trip to John's each September, and I'd still have to stack it, at an increasing cost each year to my poor back.

After reading about Metro Vancouver's tougher regulations and seeing FortisBC's TV commercials for rebates, I looked into natural gas fireplace inserts. So last summer, I bought one from a Richmond fireplace dealer who was offering a seasonal \$1,000 discount off a \$5,000 unit. I applied for a \$300 rebate from Fortis, but then happily learned that because I had replaced my aging mid-efficiency gas furnace the previous January, Fortis was willing to double my rebate for the fireplace insert to \$600! (That \$600 was in addition to the \$1,000 rebate from Fortis for installing a high-efficiency furnace.)

The second payoff—for \$500—came from Metro Vancouver's regional government initiative aimed at encouraging homeowners to phase out their wood-burning fireplaces. The Community Wood Smoke Reduction Program has an online application on its website.

It's too early to calculate how much we'll save in heating costs by using the fireplace insert to "zone heat" our family room while turning down our high-efficiency furnace, but our heating costs are heading down. Complicating the cost comparison is a 10-percent increase in natural gas prices this year and the timing of last winter's cold spells.

What I can say is that the fireplace insert provides a cozy fire with a conveniently adjustable flame. While nothing can ever compete with the smell and sound of a crackling wood fire, a fireplace insert's log set and flames can be surprisingly realistic, including the glowing coals.

Best of all, it happens with the push of a button on my remote control!



Your eyes aren't deceiving you: bears are up all year long now

By Christine Miller

This winter, if you thought you saw a bear or big, five-toed prints in the snow or mud, you weren't alone. Some bears did not hibernate this season, and others are likely leaving their winter dens to visit food sources for a snack. Some residents who thought it safe to leave food for birds now find their feeders emptied by a local bear. Some bears visit Blueridge on garbage days while yet others come upon carts containing food stored outdoors.

There have been more bear sightings in winter than ever before, here and elsewhere in B.C.

Several things could contribute to this, including excessive dry or wet periods that impact the bears' natural food supply the rest of the year. Human activities encroaching on wildlife habitat on local mountains, plus development (like West Van's British Properties) could displace some bears from their usual denning sites. Of course, accessible household waste and bird feeders continue to invite the bears to stay awake.

Regardless of the causes, we've been reminded of something important: we need to manage our attractants and be prepared for year-round bear encounters. Bird feeding needs to be more controlled, with small amounts of bird food placed out only when residents are there to monitor. There are ways to prevent household waste from attracting wildlife. Information is available at northshorebears.com, nsbbsociety@gmail.com, and 604-317-4911 (call or text).

In 2023, the NSBBS plans to develop a Blueridge pilot project to boost resident awareness and reduce wildlife attractants. Please contact the society if you want to participate, especially if you border on a forested area or a ravine from which bears can enter residential areas.

The society receives coyote sighting reports too. Remember to respect their space as coyotes as they might be setting up a den, mating or raising their pups. People also need to keep their dogs leashed or close by and be responsive if in an off-leash area.

A Vet Remembers Blueridge's earlier days

By Robert Earney

Visiting my grandparents in their Blueridge home in North Vancouver has been a tradition for me for over 40 years. As a former soldier, I have been deployed overseas three times around Christmas, but no matter where I was in the world, I always thought of Blueridge. This neighborhood is filled with magical memories, especially during the holiday season when the streets are lit up with twinkling lights and snow covers the ground.

My grandparents bought their Blueridge house back in 1969 for \$32,000. At the time, my grandfather's father-in-law told him he paid too much and that everyone thought he was crazy for living so far out there. But, over the years, my grandparents have seen the neighborhood grow and change, with the only noticeable differences being how much taller the trees are and how popular the trails have become.

“

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I was recently walking the Bridle Trail with my 93-year-old grandmother. She is hilarious and has a sharp wit, much like that of the late comedian Betty White. As we walked, I mentioned to her that we needed to watch out for bike riders on the trail. Without missing a beat, she replied, “Well, they need to watch out for horses.”

As I reflect on my visits to Blueridge over the last four decades, I realize how lucky I am to have such a special place to call home. It's where I feel most at peace and where I can connect with my family's past and present. The memories I've made here will last a lifetime and will always bring a smile to my face.



Barbara's Bread: Instant energy in a loaf

By Michael Bernard

I got this wonderful quick-bread recipe about 10 years ago from a friend (then 65-years-old) who swears by its miraculous energy-generating powers. She needed it: she was getting up at 5:30 a.m. three mornings a week to take one-on-one skating lessons at a rink in Albuquerque, NM. (Quick bread uses leavening agents like baking soda and baking powder rather than yeast or sour dough starters.)



Barbara's Bread

Ingredients

- 3 cups whole wheat flour
- 2 cups rolled oats (non-instant variety)
- 1 cup ground flax seed meal
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 2 tsps baking soda
- 2 tsps salt
- 2 tsps ground cinnamon
- 1 litre buttermilk
- Two large handfuls chopped pecan halves (Can substitute walnuts)
- Three large handfuls dried cranberries or dried sour cherries
- 1/2 to 2/3 cup of honey

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
- Grease two bread pans with butter and dust with flour
- (Skip above step if using non-stick bread pans)
- Combine and mix all dried Ingredients, except nuts and fruit
- Add buttermilk and honey until barely combined
- Add nuts and fruit until barely combined
- Pour mix into pans and bake one hour (15 minutes longer if you bake in one bread pan)
- Cut around bread, remove bread and cool

Serving suggestion: Almond butter on a toasted slice tastes great (and is healthier than butter).

Hosting students yields unexpected pleasures

By Lesley Brooks

I am fortunate to live in Blueridge where I am able to accommodate students who come to Canada to study at Capilano University. I've been doing this for more than 20 years, with a small break during COVID. I can thoroughly recommend this to anybody who enjoys the company of hard-working and focused young people. The experience has rewarded us with many unexpectedly positive experiences.

Because of our proximity to Cap, there are other homestay students living on our street. I usually advertise with the Capilano U Student Union in July or August for the upcoming academic year with a description of our house. When I receive replies, from both young men and women, I explain what I provide for my students. These young people have come from different cultures and are moving in to live with a family which probably has different customs. It must be pretty scary for them! I tell them that our students are treated as part of our family, but if they would prefer a more impersonal boarding house experience, then our home is probably not for them.

We all eat dinner together every day but for breakfast and lunch we select what we want to eat and when we want to eat it. I have no rules about what they can eat from the fridge or cupboards, with one exception—our liquor cupboard is out of bounds! Overall, I try to keep house rules to a minimum but insist that they must tell me before 5 p.m. if they don't want dinner.

The student has a private bedroom and bathroom downstairs. When my son is here from Ottawa, however, the student shares the bathroom with him, an arrangement that has never posed a problem. The student is welcome to use our home's common areas such as the kitchen and living room.

Our students usually stay for extended periods: the longest stay was for five years. Currently, we have a young woman, Jordan, from Bahrain, who is in her second year at Cap, and she tells me she plans to stay at least one more year.

We have taken vacations while students have stayed with us. My daughter and her family live close by and are available if problems come up. We live in a small cul-de-sac and have neighbours who are very supportive while we're away. Fortunately, we have never had to call on them to respond to anything. We get to know our students well before we plan vacations and have never had any serious problem. In fact, it has proved advantageous for us to have someone living in our house when we're absent.

Of course, our students are young people and we have had some interesting situations to deal with, but

nothing we would not possibly experience with our own kids.

Now to share some of the unexpected and delightful events we've been fortunate enough to experience over the years. We were invited to a huge wedding of one of our students from China. We were the only Caucasians there and were treated like stars by our student's family. When Venezuela was more accessible, we were invited there and given a tour of the country. We have been given many beautiful items, including a string of pearls from a Japanese student's dad, who was a jeweler. I imagine that it must be quite stressful for parents to send their offspring into the unknown. I hope that their concerns have been alleviated by their children living with us.

I know I under-charge for their stay but I am not doing it for the money. I like to have young people around!

Some of our students have since taken residency and citizenship in Canada and are married with children. We are still in contact with them—an all-around rewarding experience for us.



Host Lesley Brooks with her current Homestay student, Jordan, who has come from Bahrain to study at Capilano University. Lesley has hosted students from around the world for more than 20 years.



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Blueridge Cares: businesses and residents make Christmas better in Blueridge

The final count is in and by all measures the Blueridge Cares initiative was a resounding success, thanks to an energetic army of volunteers and many generous Blueridge residents and businesses who donated to help less fortunate families in our community.

More than \$6,000 in cash was collected, including \$500 from purchases of Purdy's Chocolates from that company's ongoing community support initiative. The campaign helped 14 adults and children in four families to have a more festive holiday season. For a complete list of people, businesses and social organizations who contributed, please go to: www.blueridgeca.org/blueridgecares-2022.



Dates to remember

Blueridge Community Sharing Garden box rental deadline:
Saturday, March 11

Application deadline for Blueridge Scholarship:
Sunday, April 30

Blueridge Community Association AGM:
Tuesday, May 9, 7 p.m.
United Strangers

Tentative date for Blueridge Good Neighbour Day:
Sunday, June 11

Deadline for submissions to Blueridge Community News:
Saturday, May 6

BLUERIDGE
Community Association

PLEASE STAY IN TOUCH!!

Web: www.blueridgeca.org

Email: info@blueridgeca.org • newsletter@blueridgeca.org

Twitter: @BlueridgeCA

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