



GVCSS DELIVER HOLIDAY CHEER TO MENTALLY ILL IN DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE

VANCOUVER, BC (Dec. 15, 2008) – Mentally challenged residents of Vancouver's downtown eastside will receive some much needed holiday cheer this week with the delivery of holiday hampers by the Greater Vancouver Community Services Society (GVCSS).

The GVCSS is BC's largest non-profit provider of home support and community living services for the elderly, the physically and developmentally disabled and other socially disadvantaged people in the community. Throughout the year, their professional staff provides thousands of British Columbians with complex care, palliative care, Alzheimer and dementia care, respite services, life-skills support, convalescent care and household assistance such as meal preparation, shopping and laundry.

Throughout the year, the staff, board and volunteers at GVCSS also collect food, clothing and personal care items for their most vulnerable mental health home support clients, many of whom live in the Downtown Eastside.

Each December, they visit their mental health home support clients to deliver holiday hampers which include: canned goods and other food, clothing; items for warmth such as socks, fleece blankets, scarves, toques and gloves; toothpaste, hand soap and shampoo donated by Shoppers Drug Mart; and other items. For the families on the list, there's also extra food and a gift for each child.

"Many of the people we visit don't have a Christmas present to open and some not even food to eat," said Ron McLeod. "They're always deeply moved that someone cared about them enough to make sure they had something for Christmas."

Last year, one client who spends the majority of her year barely able to afford food, unpacked her goodie box, gleefully organizing the food into little meals and enthusiastically planning what items would be eaten together. When she saw the Purdy's chocolate that was part of her hamper, she exclaimed that she had only heard of Purdy's but never tried it. The Christmas card in the hamper was the only one she received that year.

"All Metro Vancouver residents deserve to enjoy the festive season," said McLeod. "We encourage Metro Vancouver residents to make donations for its most vulnerable residents through us or other organizations, and invite media to join us as we deliver our hampers to see what a difference those donations make, especially at this time of year."

- 30 -

Contact: Diana Hill
Director, GVCSS Home Support Program
604-714-3502
dhill@gvcss.bc.ca

Ron McLeod
Executive Director, GVCSS
604-714-3500
rmcleod@gvcss.bc.ca