

“Forest of Miracles” Tackles 166% Rise in Turnaways at North Shore Shelter, Funds Increase in Transitional Support Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(November 10 2015, West Vancouver, BC www.dundaravefestival.com) The Dundarave Festival’s Forest of Miracles lights up at dusk on November 28th, raising donations and awareness to tackle the reality of homelessness and housing insecurity on the North Shore. There’s a been a 166% increase in turnaways from the Lookout Society’s North Shore Shelter since 2011/2012: 2,575 instances of people being turned away from the shelter this year, 96% of the time for want of available beds. The demand for shelter housing is increasing. Squaring up against this, since 2008 the Forest of Miracles has raised over \$150,000 in charitable donations directly to the Lookout Shelter funding essential transitional programs to allow permanent solutions to homelessness.

“Homelessness and housing insecurity are very real challenges for West Vancouver, and across the North Shore,” said West Vancouver Mayor Mike Smith. “The Forest of Miracles, with the Christmas Trees at Dundarave, are enjoyed by all West Vancouver residents and visitors. We encourage everyone to get a tree to support the vulnerable people in the community dealing with the lack of a safe and secure place to live.”

The Forest of Miracles consists of over 100 Christmas trees lovingly and eccentrically decorated by families, community groups and businesses displayed at West Vancouver’s Dundarave Beach. Everyone who presents a tree makes a charitable donation directly to Lookout’s North Shore Shelter. For example, North Vancouver’s Burstin’ With Broadway community choir has raised over \$2,000 for the shelter each season over the past two years. The Lookout Society boasts [a four star rating by Charity Intelligence Canada](#). Go to www.dundaravefestival.com to claim a tree.

“The situation would be far worse if the community had not rallied to give meaningful support to our shelter,” said Dundarave Festival spokesperson Michael Markwick. “We see housing insecurity is in fact taking a toll on families of every background in our community. The Forest of Miracles inspires us collectively turn our minds to this reality, and change it for good.”

“The Lookout Society is delighted to be a partner with the Dundarave Festival of Lights. The festival creates awareness while supporting critical programming for those transitioning out of homelessness at the North Shore Shelter and Housing Centre,” said Shayne Williams, Executive Director of the Lookout Society. “Our centre helps homeless individuals stabilize their lives by teaching skills, building confidence, overcoming barriers and dependence as people take the next steps forward.”

“We’ve created the Dundarave Festival to allow all of us to be better neighbours to each other,” said Festival spokesperson Michael Markwick. “Starting November 28th, the Festival takes place over four weekends in the holiday season to make sure no one is left out in the cold.”

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High resolution photos at www.dundaravefestival.com