

## **Dundarave Festival's Christmas Trees Have "Miraculous Effect" on Homeless** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011 WEST VANCOUVER, BC [www.dundaravefestival.com](http://www.dundaravefestival.com)

The Dundarave Festival of Lights, West Vancouver's premier celebration of arts and culture through the five weeks of the Christmas season, is gearing up again to tackle the reality of homelessness on the North Shore one Christmas tree at a time. Festivities start at noon on November 26<sup>th</sup> with the Dundarave Christmas Fair, with the official tree lighting at dusk.

With one third of its trees already claimed, many by first time participants, the Festival is on a seven day sprint to see all of its remaining trees in the hands of local businesses, faith communities, services organizations and families.

Set on spectacular Dundarave Beach, the Festival's forest of Christmas trees attract an estimated 65,000 people and hundreds of performers through the holidays. The Festival's trees have also become a central part of Christmas in Dundarave Village.

"Our mission is to make sure, especially at Christmas, that no one is left out in the cold," said Gwendoline Allison, Chair of the Dundarave Festival of Lights Society. "Through the generosity of the Department of Canadian Heritage, we can present again this season a series of four Saturdays of absolutely free concerts for families at Dundarave Beach. Culturally, in our music and our dancers, this will be a bright and fresh Christmas as you may not have seen it before."

This festive forest means business, raising a total of \$75,000 over the past three Christmases in charitable donations to the Lookout Emergency Aid Society's North Shore Shelter.

"The donations the Festival's Christmas trees," said Lookout's Executive Director, Karen O'Shannacery, "have nothing short of a miraculous effect on the lives of some of the most vulnerable people on the North Shore. This funding allowed us a state-of-the-art culinary training program, to give people who were homeless or insecure in their housing the means to make a decent living and to house themselves."

With a least 1,215 seniors at imminent risk of homelessness on the North Shore, and a thirty-eight percent increase in the homelessness of youth 25 and under on the North Shore since 2008, the Festival is continuing to spark a fresh look at the reality of homelessness in our community.

For the first time in its twenty years, in partnership with North Vancouver's own 2M Events, the Festival is also using twenty-first century tools to allow secure online tree registrations and donations to the Lookout Shelter at [www.dundaravefestival.com](http://www.dundaravefestival.com). All charitable donations will receive an instant tax receipt.

"We're putting this technology to work now," said Gwendoline Allison, "to help make sure this season we cross the threshold into a six figure donation overall to the Lookout Society's North Shore Shelter. This will be a hard winter and it will place lives at risk. But we have the power to answer this need by standing together this Christmas as a community."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gwendoline Allison, 778-847-1426