

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 20, 2012**

**From: Lookout Emergency Aid Society – North Vancouver**

**Dundarave Festival of Lights funds bring Christmas to the North Shore Housing Centre year round**

*West Vancouver's Citizen of the Year helps double support for North Shore residents transitioning out of homelessness, raising over \$30,000 through Dundarave's forest of Christmas trees*

**NORTH SHORE — June 20, 2012**

Every winter, the Dundarave Festival of Lights in West Vancouver lights up Dundarave beach with a forest of donor-decorated Christmas trees. The six week-long event provides an opportunity to build community spirit, celebrate local arts and culture, and – as the festival's slogan indicates – to “end homelessness beautifully.”

Last week, Dundarave Festival of Light's executive director Mary Markwick was awarded West Vancouver's Citizen of the Year award. "This award shines a spotlight on the 'citizens of the year' who have sponsored a Christmas tree, given generously to the shelter, and funded the Festival," Markwick said, "together we are creating meaningful solutions to homelessness in our community, a labour of love that's truly worth celebrating."

This past season, the festival raised an astounding \$30 351.50 for the Lookout Emergency Aid Society's North Shore Housing Centre. The housing centre provides 45 emergency shelter beds and 25 transitional beds to those in need on the North Shore, as well as meals, case-planning, and community outreach services. The funds raised from this year's Festival of Lights went towards local transitional housing programming.

“Lookout's transitional housing on the North Shore receives no operational funding from governments, so resources to hire support staff for this program must come entirely from donations,” says Linda Fox, “The money raised by the community through the Dundarave Festival of Lights' this year made it possible for the Housing Centre to effectively double our on-hand support staff by hiring a second full-time Tenant Support Worker.”

Having a second support worker means that the administrative and residential caseload can be divided in two, creating significantly more opportunity for the kind of one-on-one time that will help tenants attain success and independence faster. Having staff available more often means higher levels of support can be offered to each and every resident, and more issues can be addressed proactively, greatly increasing chances for a successful transition. The effects are already noticeable, and the extra staff time has made a number of life-skills and active living programs possible for the summer months.

“The donations from the Dundarave Festival's Christmas trees,” says Lookout's Executive Director Karen O'Shannacery, “have nothing short of a miraculous effect on the lives of some of the most vulnerable citizens on the North Shore.”

In order to qualify for the transitional housing program, applicants must be from the North Shore, ensuring that when you donate to the Dundarave Festival of Lights, your dollars are going towards helping homeless North Shore residents gain the skills and confidence required to move towards independent living.

The Dundarave Festival of Lights is at work now, with the goal of placing 100 Christmas trees on Dundarave Beach to cap West Vancouver's Centennial Year. “We're finding very strong support right across the

community, and the trees are in demand,” said Mary Markwick. “West Van’s Mayor Mike Smith and Council claimed the first tree this year, back in January. Families, businesses, community groups use these trees to celebrate the best spirit of our community, and help us bring new hope to the most vulnerable members of our community.” She encourages potential donors to claim their tree before the summer holidays by visiting [www.dundaravefestival.com](http://www.dundaravefestival.com).

**About Dundarave Festival of Lights – [www.dundaravefestival.com](http://www.dundaravefestival.com)**

The Dundarave Festival of Lights lines West Vancouver’s picturesque Dundarave Beach with donor-decorated Christmas Trees every year in an effort to celebrate the season, build community spirit, and raise money for Lookout’s North Shore Housing Centre. With four Saturdays of fabulous, festive and absolutely free concerts, the Dundarave Festival of Lights is West Vancouver’s signature celebration of arts and culture during the holiday season. Our forest of Christmas trees - the only one like it in coastal British Columbia - raised \$30,351.50 this past year for the North Shore Shelter. That brings the total money raised by the festival to \$105,351.50 over four Christmases.

**About Lookout Emergency Aid Society – [www.lookoutsociety.ca](http://www.lookoutsociety.ca)**

Lookout Emergency Aid Society is a non-profit, charitable organization, BC Society #11,042. We are a “social safety-net” providing minimal-barrier housing and a range of supportive services to assist adults with low or no income who have few, if any, housing or support options and who are challenged in meeting personal needs and goals. Lookout has been providing solutions to homelessness since 1971.

**We:**

- Respond to local needs
- Open 24/7 through our minimal-barrier shelter
- Offer case planning, referrals and linkages to other resources
- Have caring, flexible and responsive staff
- Recently celebrated 40 years of solutions to homelessness

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**For more information the Dundarave Festival of Lights, Lookout Emergency Aid Society, the North Shore Housing Centre or to inquire about interview or photo opportunities, Please Contact:**

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