



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 1, 2020

Neighbours complete 90,000+ volunteer acts for vulnerable seniors during COVID-19

As Seniors Week is recognized across Canada, over 8,500 B.C. volunteers step up to help isolated neighbours

Vancouver, B.C. Over 8,500 local volunteers from across the province are helping out isolated seniors in their neighbourhoods and communities during the global pandemic. At the end of March, the 211 phone line matching seniors who need help with volunteers who want to help was expanded across B.C. in response to COVID-19. Since then, British Columbians have performed over 90,000 acts of volunteerism, including holding more than 50,000 virtual visits and check-in phone calls, preparing and delivering 14,000 meals, and making almost 11,000 grocery drop offs to seniors.

The program is a new partnership between United Way's Better at Home program, bc211 and the B.C. Government through the Ministry of Health. Through bc211, volunteers who want to help and seniors who need help can register by dialing 2-1-1 or filling in an online form at bc211.ca. Seniors can request volunteer help with grocery shopping, meal prep and prescription pick-up or receive friendly check-in call.

"Through the bc211 expansion and our Better at Home partner agencies and all community-based seniors serving organizations, we are able to make sure seniors who are struggling with isolation can receive the basic necessities and support they need," said Kahir Lalji, Provincial Director, Population Health, United Way of the Lower Mainland. "Because we're asking everyone to keep close to home, neighbours helping neighbours have been critical during COVID-19. We have been overwhelmed by the incredible support for seniors during this difficult time."

Quotation: Isobel Mackenzie, B.C.'s seniors advocate

"Throughout the province, we saw an outpouring of support from friends, neighbours and families as they rallied to get groceries and medications to the elderly. As this program continues, it will be one of the positive lasting legacies that will come from the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has shown us that we really do care very deeply about our elderly."

Quotation: Anthony Kupferschmidt, Executive Director, West End Seniors Network

"Community-based seniors' services like seniors centres are essential in supporting older adults at home, both under normal circumstances and under extraordinary circumstances, like a pandemic. The West End Seniors Network is proud to be a COVID-19 community response hub

agency in B.C. We've ramped up our existing services, added new services and worked with our partners to meet the need of older adults staying safe at home during COVID-19."

Quotation: Deborah Hollins, Executive Director, Nanaimo Family Life Association

"Working with the Safe Seniors, Strong Communities program has been a privilege as I have been able to witness firsthand what we can do collectively to help those in need. I'm so proud of my fellow colleagues, staff and volunteers who stepped forward to ensure the older adults in our community are cared for, physically and emotionally. We're not alone and together we are getting through this."

-30-

About United Way of the Lower Mainland

United Way of the Lower Mainland serves the needs of our local community and ignites the desire in everyone to improve this place we call home. Through United Way you can mobilize to address a local issue in your neighbourhood, collaborate with a network of partners to solve a problem, or donate to support our programs that create life-saving connections for local kids and seniors. To learn more visit uwlm.ca.

About Better at Home

Better at Home supports the non-medical needs of older adults in B.C. Better at Home is a program that helps seniors with simple day-to-day tasks so that they can continue to live independently in their own homes and remain connected to their communities. The B.C. government funds the program, United Way of the Lower Mainland manages it, and local non-profit organizations provide [the services](#). Its unique 'seniors planning for seniors' approach means older adults contribute to the design, operation and evaluation of their local program. To learn more, visit betterathome.ca.

About bc211

bc211 is a Vancouver-based nonprofit organization that specializes in providing information and referral regarding community, government and social services in BC. Helpline services include 211, the Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service (ADIRS), the Gambling Support Line BC, the Shelter and Street Help Line, VictimLink BC, and the Youth Against Violence Line. To learn more, visit bc211.ca.

Interviews are available with:

Kahir Lalji, Provincial Director, Population Health, United Way of the Lower Mainland

CONTACT

Vashti Singh,
Public Relations, Marketing & Communications
United Way of the Lower Mainland
vashtis@uwlm.ca
604-839-7710