

Coquitlam Foundation looking to grow with addition of first staffer

By Lara Gerrits

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A non-profit foundation dedicated to improving the quality of life in Coquitlam will hire its first paid staffer this fall thanks to a short but successful campaign that raised more than \$100,000 for the cause.

The Coquitlam Foundation — which aims to respond to the unmet needs of residents by attracting, managing and distributing financial contributions — hopes to have a part-time executive director in place by November.

The candidate should have a good knowledge of the community, excellent communication skills and an understanding of financial processes to fulfill the role of managing volunteers, providing guidance to the board of directors and guiding a strategic plan.

"It takes us to the next level in that we can assist more groups with local projects," said Colleen Talbot, chair of the foundation. "It's something that we've been hoping to do for several years, just because we're building the foundation and have almost \$1.4 million of funds set aside. We are a totally volunteer board at this time and we just felt that we need to get to the next level."

In June, foundation members sat down with three development company representatives to ask for their support in a letter-writing campaign dubbed Kick Start. The developers agreed to write letters endorsing the campaign and the cheques started flowing in.

"We felt they would have an interest," Talbot said of why the development community was approached with the campaign idea. "Coquitlam is growing so quickly and they're bringing new people to the community."

The Coquitlam Foundation was established in 1992. It passed the \$1-million capital milestone in July 2005 and its policy continues to grow capital while addressing the needs of residents.

The foundation has collected more than \$300,000 in community grants and scholarships since its inception. [The figure is actually now \$475,000.]

Recipients of its 2008 grants are: Children of the Street Society, the Dogwood Dragon Boat Team, PoCoMo Youth Services Society, Banting Parent Advisory Council, BC Wheelchair Basketball Society and the Society for Community Development. Three students were also awarded bursaries.

The foundation's holds its annual general meeting Sept. 11 beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the McGee Room at the Poirier community centre (630 Poirier St., Coquitlam). For more information, email colleen_talbot@hotmail.com.

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