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Serving Surrey and North Delta

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Black

# The Leader



BY ANNE HALL / THE LEADER

MaryAnne Connor, founder of Nightshift Street Ministries, gave up a real estate career to help feed the city's hungry.

## Four years of food, faith

Nightshift Street Ministries hosts fundraiser to continue helping the poor

by Kevin Diakiv

As light rain begins to fall as a crowd gathers in a vacant lot in Whalley Monday night. While many are familiar regulars, several are newcomers.

It's been going on every night for the past four years. They're here to be fed, hear some caring words, and share in prayer.

Pat is one of the regulars. With a weathered face and infectious smile, he's one of Nightshift Street Ministries' many success stories.

He was baptized in the ocean waters of White Rock last year, and now considers himself one of the ministers of the message - to love the group until they can love themselves.

The group Pat refers to are Whalley's downtrodden; many mentally ill, others battling drug addiction, or both. Those two factors reflect the majority of those coming for Nightshift's services.



Pat, a Nightshift client.

But new faces are arriving: the young and newly poor.

Anthony is 14 years old and was kicked out of his home four months ago. He's lived with his buddies on the street since. He doesn't want to go home, and isn't sure what he'll do when winter sets in.

Anthony hasn't been out here long enough to be ground down by this gritty lifestyle, but he will be if he stays.

Larry finishes his plate of chili and goes back into the line-up for seconds. The well-groomed, 50-something man looks out of place.

Five months ago, Larry was making \$32 an hour as an electrical technician, then for reasons he doesn't provide, he was terminated.

With no income, he now waits for a meal along with many of this city's homeless.

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### Gala of light:

■ Sat. Oct. 27

■ Northview Golf and Country Club, 6857 168 St.

■ Tickets: 604-953-1114

■ Event (dinner, silent auction, live band) benefits Nightshift Street Ministries

## Worst incident in theatre's history Vandals damage Bell Centre

by Dan Ferguson

**INSURANCE WILL COVER** the cost of repairs to the Bell Performing Arts Centre at 6250 144 St. after vandals ripped out seats, damaged light fixtures and destroyed a toilet during a family-oriented concert by Indian folk singer Mohammad Sadiq on Saturday, Sept. 15.

Theatre technical operations manager Steve Goodman said damage is estimated at \$10,000 to \$12,000.

"The promoter (of the concert) has to carry \$3 million in liability insurance... so our insurance company will be talking to his insurance company."

It's the worst incident of vandalism at the centre since it opened in 2002.

"The promoter has to carry \$3 million in liability insurance..."

Steve Goodman

Goodman said trouble started because the promoter printed passes without telling the centre, which is supposed to be the only venue selling admissions. It also appears some people were sneaking into the theatre without tickets. The result was a crowd above the legal maximum of 1,100 people.

When the event was ordered closed down, some irate patrons damaged seats and lights.

Police were called to help on-scene security disperse the crowd. There were no arrests and no reported injuries.

A call by The Leader to the concert promoter had not been returned at press time.

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# Delta district supports Victoria teacher

## Local instructors back colleague who refused to test students

by Sheila Reynolds

A HANDFUL of educators from Surrey and Delta headed to Vancouver Island yesterday (Tuesday) to support a teacher facing discipline for refusing to give her Grade 3 students a standardized reading test.

Val Windsor, president of the Delta Teachers' Association (DTA), will add her voice to the dozens of teachers backing Kathryn Sihota.

Sihota, a Grade 3 teacher in the Sooke School District, refused to give a district-mandated reading assessment test to her students last spring, arguing the tests cause undue stress to children and take away valuable teaching and learning time.



Val Windsor

Windsor agrees with her Island colleague, saying students are being tested more than ever and for the wrong reasons – mostly to satisfy the Ministry of Education's demand for data.

Teachers are not opposed to assessment, Windsor clarified, but believe the results should be used to plan and help students in their progress.

"If we're spending an incredible amount of time testing and preparing kids for tests, we're losing out on instructional time,"

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EVAN SEAL/THE LEADER

People line up for food in a vacant lot in North Surrey Monday night, a scene that has occurred each evening for the last four years as part of Nightshift Street Ministries' program to feed those in need.

# Hungry in Whalley: Nightly crowd has quadrupled since 2003

From page 1

MaryAnne Connor, founder of Nightshift Street Ministries, said Larry and Anthony are part of an disturbing change in the demographics of the poor. The reasons for the change are unclear. However, the need for her service is growing, with nightly crowds four times the size of four years ago. Attendance can be as high as 150 people.

Along with the increase in demand has been a huge growth in the size of Nightshift, now with 437 volunteers and an 8,000-square-foot office in the 10700-block 135 Street in Whalley.

Connor, a former realtor representing high-end clients, recalls the ministry's humble beginnings in 2003. She was called here by God, she says, and while tempted to ride out the skyrocketing real estate world for a few more years, she dismissed it.

"I was afraid God wouldn't call again," Connor says. "So here I am."

At the beginning, her aim was simply to give people suffering poverty a solid meal, as much love as she could offer, and a ray of hope through a spiritual message.

After a rough start due to community and city resistance, the idea gained momentum, with several groups including churches, residents and busi-

nesses, signing on to help. She now offers lunch in Whalley with the help of restaurants including McDonald's, Ricky's and Burger King. All recognize the huge need, Connor says, and all want to be part of the solution.

Her Ministry includes an outreach van, which brings meals, clothing and groceries to those who can't access the park. The office space will include a 4,000-sq-ft. retail space known as "Sisters Marketplace," which will sell higher end donated products.

The remainder of the office space will include a warehouse, counselling area, mentorship and life skills training, and an area for at-risk youth.

Connor's five-year plan includes "Hope Cottages," a recovery facility for men and women; "Nightshift Campus" for long-term recovery and "Hope Cottages 2," private Christian homes with employment support and supervision. She knows this vision will have a hefty price tag, and is planning a fundraiser next month to help make the dream become reality. The fundraising goal is \$100,000.

"I was afraid God wouldn't call again. So here I am."

MaryAnne Connor

The First Annual Gala of Light, involving a dinner, silent auction and live band, will be held at Northview Golf and Country Club on Saturday, Oct. 27. Tickets are \$200 a person or \$1,500 for a table of 10 and can be purchased through Nightshift Ministries at 604-953-1114.

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Rob Sleath

# City tests new crossing technology

## Municipalities snap up Newton firm's pedestrian product

by Kevin Diakiw

AN INTERSECTION in Newton chirps and the pedestrian-activated button vibrates when it's safe to walk, giving those with sight or hearing problems a safe signal to cross the street.

Known as the Navigator 2, the system is being hailed by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) as a revolutionary way to provide safe passage for the

visually impaired.

In 2005, the makers of the Navigator 2 won the CNIB's Winston Gordon Award, which recognizes advances in technology that improves the quality of life for Canadians living with vision loss.

The Western Canadian distributor of the device is Newton's Astrographic Industries Ltd., which has sold about 300 to Burnaby, 50 to Delta, several to Langley and has provided a test model for Surrey at the Newton Wave Pool in the 13700 block of 72 Avenue.

While pleased that Surrey is exploring accessibility options, Rob Sleath, vice-president of the CNIB's B.C.-Yukon division, says this city needs to pick up the pace.

"Surrey has some (audible crossings), but they're way behind," Sleath said Monday. "The leading municipality in the Lower Mainland is Burnaby, no question."

Calls to the Surrey's engineering department were not returned by Leader press time Tuesday.

Coun. Bob Bose, who sits on the city's transportation committee, said he knew Surrey's road rehabilitation program was "woefully underfunded" but the accessibility issue is just recently coming to light.

"We certainly have a lot of catching up to do," Bose said.

As in most cities, the argument against

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