



Every Step Counts... Especially the First Step

For Immediate Release

February 18, 2010

Victoria, BC – Today marks a year of success and the first anniversary of Every Step Counts, a unique running program founded by the Victoria Foundation and hosted at the Victoria Cool Aid Society.

Drawing on the benefits of running and team work to foster self esteem, confidence, energy and positive growth, the program is for individuals experiencing challenges with addiction, mental health, poverty, homelessness and other social issues.

“By committing to pilot Every Step Counts, our Board was confident it would be an excellent fit for Victoria,” says Sandra Richardson, Victoria Foundation CEO. “Today’s gathering not only demonstrates the support we have from our community partners but the faces around the room are proof of the positive impact we are having within our community.”

The program has provided a wide range of physical and mental health benefits to the participants, including weight loss, decreased body mass index and decreased waist size. As Dr. David Bell, a physician of several of the runners, put it:

“I have patients involved in the Every Step Counts program. Their involvement in this program has had a very positive impact on their mental and physical health. I believe this program has done more to improve self-esteem and integrate these people into society than most of my medical interventions and will result in lower costs to the medical health system in general and the mental health system in particular.”

Almost two years ago, the Victoria Foundation brought forward the idea of Every Step Counts and with the support of Frontrunners, Vancity, United Way, The Jawl Foundation and the TELUS Victoria Community Board, funding was secured. Victoria Cool Aid Society was then approached to develop, house and run this dynamic and positive health and wellness program.

Participants mark running milestones after demonstrating their commitment to keeping with the program. Upon joining they receive gently used running shoes. After five runs,

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they earn a water bottle, after 10, they receive a certificate and a technical shirt. After 15 runs, they are outfitted with brand new running shoes and at the 25 run mark, they earn two running hats; one to keep and one to gift to an individual who has helped to make "every step count".

"This program draws its strength and dignity from each individual who comes out to run or walk," explains Gillie Easdon, Every Step Counts Program Coordinator. "We are all equals in our running gear which means we can leave our histories, diagnoses and financial situations at the door. That is powerful."

Total individual runs have reached 2,500 by over 120 participants as Every Step Counts enters its second year. Participation growth levels have been steady and the program seeks to add value to participants through things like monthly wellness talks. Both refreshing and empowering, Every Step Counts continues to inspire other communities and enrich its own mandate and potential. Some runners are now unable to attend, as they are in training programs or employment. But they, like the rest of the crew, now have a deeper appreciation of just how Every Step does Count.

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For more information, please visit:

www.CoolAid.org/esc and www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca

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