



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 12, 2011

HO, HO, HO! MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Vancouver Island - The holiday season is upon us, full of joy and laughter. It's a time when family and friends gather together to enjoy meals and holiday spirit. Holiday movies play constantly on the television in which every story line has Santa working his magic making everything work out just right, where everyone wakes up to find presents around the Christmas tree and a piping hot turkey meal on the table. What a glorious time of year!

BUT for some the reality is that they will not be waking up to presents or a hot meal. There are people right here in our community who don't have a family to be with this Christmas, some don't have a home to decorate or the money to take part in Christmas gift giving. What do you do if you are all alone, broke and every day is a struggle - no matter what day it is on the calendar?

It's not something we like to think about as we plan our holiday schedule, but there are more people in need this year than any previous year. The food banks are straining under the pressure. The extreme weather shelters are overflowing with people who have nowhere to sleep and who are just looking for a little warmth. We can all get caught up in those stories of countries overseas that are struggling and looking for help from empathetic people willing to support their less advantaged. It is also important to realize that there are people right here living in poverty, some on our own streets. It seems almost unbelievable that it exists in a country like Canada where there is so much opportunity. The problem is that things like accidents at work, illnesses, cutbacks, and the recession can put such a strain on families that they may not be able to recover.

This holiday season let's ask ourselves how we can make this community a happier, safer place to live. Can you spare some warm blankets for the shelter, an extra grocery shopping trip to help the food bank, some extra toys donated to local churches? There are groups in each community helping those who are struggling this holiday season. Why not search them out and offer some of your time? If we all did a little extra this year, we can make a difference for our less fortunate citizens.

Most of all, it's important to know that if you are struggling this holiday season there is always somewhere to you can reach out. The Vancouver Island Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-888-494-3888. Our empathetic, non-judgmental workers care about what's

going on for you, no matter what your circumstance we can provide resource information. You are never alone. There are people who care about you. Christmas blessings can come in many forms and wear many hats. We encourage everyone this year to ensure every person on Vancouver Island has a safe and warm Christmas holiday.

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For additional information, please contact Heather Owen, Promotions & Community Relations Coordinator, at 250-753-2495, 1-877-753-2495, or heather@cvics.ca

