

# SUCCESS

TO SUCCEED, WE MUST FIRST BELIEVE THAT WE CAN.

2010 - 2011



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## CHANGING GEARS

How Brian Souter went from shipping cargo to caring for seniors

## “YOU GOTTA HAVE HEART...”

Cardio-Tech Sukhdeep Khangura finds inspiration close to home

## FINDING FORRESTER

Ian Forrester uses his illness to help others get well

## NEVER GIVE UP

Giovanni Borrelli discovers a passion for education through volunteering

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## NEW IMMIGRANTS SUCCEED AT STENBERG COLLEGE

## OUT OF THE BOX

Lesley McKay moves from freight to hospital administration



STENBERG COLLEGE



## Calling for Nominations ...

# Student of the Year 2010 - 2011

The Student of the Year Award is full reimbursement of one student's tuition, a value of anywhere from \$7000 to a maximum of \$20,000\*! We encourage every instructor and staff member to nominate the student that they feel is deserving of this honour.

The Student of the Year Award is presented to the student who best embodies Stenberg College's values of excellence, caring and community spirit. In addition to a minimum academic record of 80% and an attendance record of no more than 7 absences, we are looking for the student who best exemplifies the following attributes:

- Excellence – as a student, a professional, and a person
- Leadership and Responsibility
- Positive, Caring & Proactive Attitude
- Community Service & Volunteerism (both within and outside the classroom)
- Campus Spirit

### Who is eligible for nomination:

All students in good standing who attended class after September 1, 2010 and have or will graduate by the September 2011 grad are eligible.

There is no limit on how many students can be nominated per instructor/staff member.

Nomination forms are available from reception.

\*Students who received ELMS funding or other grants will be eligible for nomination. If they win, the tuition reimbursement will go to a recognized charity of their choice.



## STENBERG COLLEGE

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# Celebrating Success



## Cardiology Technologist Diploma program earns CMA Accreditation

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) has granted the Cardiology Technologist Diploma program at Stenberg College its highest accreditation status, a 6 year accreditation. The CMA believes that relevant educational preparation is critical to ensuring competent health professionals who can contribute to effective and safe patient care as a member of the health care team. CMA accreditation is an external validation of program quality. Graduating from a CMA accredited program means:

- your educational institution has met national standards;
- the program has patient care and student welfare at the forefront;
- the education is relevant to current medical practice;
- graduates have access to professional registration;
- graduates have attained the competencies required for entry into practice;
- your educational institution is recognized by employers and the public;
- graduates have greater mobility as a health science practitioner

For more information on the CMA go to [www.cma.ca](http://www.cma.ca)

## Stenberg Grads receive top marks on the Canadian Society of Cardiology Technologists (CSCT) Exam

Congratulations to Stenberg Cardiology Technologist graduates Johanna Ebarvia and Tony Kwok for receiving the top marks on the April 2009 CSCT exam. They will be awarded for this achievement at the upcoming CTABC AGM. Way to go!



## Stenberg College receives EQA Designation

Stenberg College has received the Education Quality Assurance designation from the government of British Columbia. BC's EQA Designation is Canada's first and only provincial brand of quality for post-secondary education.

EQA provides one standard provincial seal that can be recognized globally as a symbol of quality education and consumer protection. EQA is a quality assurance designation that identifies and promotes public and private post-secondary institutions that have met or exceeded government recognized quality assurance standards and offer consumer protection mechanisms. It is a voluntary designation available to BC public and private post-secondary institutions.

## Stenberg College has the best prepared Practical Nursing students in the Lower Mainland!

In the past 12 months, Stenberg College's Practical Nursing students have achieved an unprecedented 100% pass rate on the Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Exam (CPNRE). In the last 4 consecutive sittings of the exam (May 2009, September 2009, January 2010, May 2010), all Stenberg College's Practical Nursing graduates who wrote the exam passed! The CPNRE is a national exam that BC and most other provinces use for provincial registration of Licensed Practical Nurses.

# Mission Statement STENBERG COLLEGE

*It is Stenberg College's mission to offer exceptional career-oriented programs. We achieve excellence in education through our sustained commitment to program quality, outstanding student services and the professional development of our faculty, staff and alumni. We strive to develop caring and competent graduates who excel in their chosen disciplines and contribute meaningfully to their professional communities and society as a whole.*

# Contents

2010 Student of the Year Winners .....	2
Reward & Recognition .....	3
<b>Changing Gears</b> How Brian Souter went from shipping cargo to caring for seniors.....	4 - 5
<b>"You Gotta Have Heart ..."</b> Cardio-Tech Sukhdeep Khangura finds inspiration close to home .....	6 - 7
<b>Finding Forrester</b> Ian Forrester uses his illness to help others get well.....	8 - 9
<b>Never Give Up</b> Giovanni Borrelli discovers a passion for education through volunteering.....	10 - 11
<b>Out of the Box</b> Lesley McKay moves from freight to hospital administration.....	12 - 13
<b>New Immigrants Succeed at Stenberg College</b> .....	14 - 16

## CREDITS

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## 2010 Student of the Year Winners



**Winner (\$7400)**  
Brian Souter, *Resident Care Attendant*



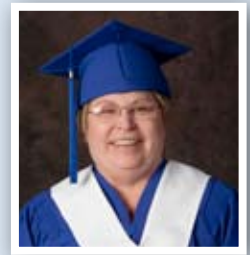
**First Runner-up (\$10,000)**  
Sukhdeep Khangura  
*Cardiology Technologist*



**Second Runner-up (\$5,000)**  
Ian Forrester  
*Community Support & Outreach Worker*



**Third Runner-up (tie) (\$2,500 each)**  
Giovanni Borrelli  
*Special Education Assistant*



**Third Runner-up (tie) (\$2,500 each)**  
Lesley McKay  
*Nursing Unit Clerk*

## Student of the Year Nominees

Celina Abad  
Jiwanjot Adamson  
Harvinder Brar  
Kelley Gossen  
Linda Hilland

Lisa Kee-Knudson  
Carrie La Roue  
Tina Pawar  
Harjinder Rayat  
Emily Schat

Ralph Soriano  
Jennifer Sun  
Jaclyn Watkinson  
Tameka Wilson

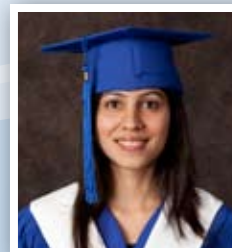
## Student of the Year ESL Award



**Winner (\$1000)**  
Jimin Qi  
*Cardiology Technologist*



**First Runner-up (tie) (\$250 each)**  
Hong Chang  
*Resident Care Attendant*



**First Runner-up (tie) (\$250 each)**  
Manpreet Gill  
*Resident Care Attendant*

# Stenberg's Student of the Year Award Reward and Recognition

By Sean Condon

**W**hen Brian Souter first arrived at Stenberg College, the Student of the Year Award seemed like an impossible dream.

"The first day I walked into the college I saw the trophy and thought, 'There's not a chance in hell that I'll win that,'" says the recent Stenberg Resident Care Attendant (RCA) graduate. "It just seemed like this lofty, important thing that I didn't think I had a chance of winning."

But Souter's dedication to his studies and fellow students quickly made him a standout pupil and after an intense year of schooling, the 51-year-old former truck driver was declared Stenberg's 2010 Student of the Year. And what once seemed so unattainable is now an indelible mark of his remarkable determination and compassion.

"To be picked Student of the Year by this college that I have so much respect for is really important to me," he says. "And I'll have this for the rest of my life. It's a handle that I will always be able to carry."

Started in 2006, Stenberg's Student of the Year awards are given out annually to the students who not only achieve top marks in their academic studies and near perfect attendance, but who also show a strong commitment to their campus and community. Along with the winner, Stenberg chooses a number of runner-ups.

To be nominated for the award, students must have a minimum academic record of 80 per cent and no more than 7 absences during their entire program; they must also display strong leadership and spirit in the classroom, have a positive and caring attitude and prove their excellence as a student, a professional and a person. The award exemplifies the kind of well-rounded students that Stenberg helps train.

"It's not just about graduating and getting a job here," says Jeremy Sabell, Stenberg's Executive Director. "We really believe that people coming out of Stenberg can make significant and positive contribution to their community and to society as a whole. It's the type of education and training that we focus on."

The award comes with a full-year's tuition reimbursement, which can be anywhere from \$7,000 to \$20,000. Runner-ups can also have a portion of their tuition reimbursed. The financial reward goes back to the student if they paid for their tuition themselves or through a loan. But if the government funded the student's education, as was the case with Souter, the student then donates the money to the charity of their choice.

Souter decided to split his \$7,400 award with the BCSPCA and the Langley branch of the Red Cross, which provided his father with a number of free and essential mobility equipment after a surgery.

"I'm just starting out with new work, so the money is pretty slim," says Souter. "To be able to make

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***Stenberg's Student of the Year awards are given out annually to the students who not only achieve top marks in their academic studies and near perfect attendance, but who also show a strong commitment to their campus and community.***

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a donation far beyond what I can afford makes me feel great knowing I have the opportunity to make a little bit of a difference."

Last year's winner, Special Education Assistant (SEA) graduate Maricar Smith, donated her \$9,990 Student of the Year award to the B.C. Cancer Foundation. Having lost her sister-in-law to brain cancer 11 years ago, the award gave Smith a chance to not only celebrate her own personal achievement, but commemorate the life of a loved one and support others who are bravely fighting through the disease.

"Words cannot express how grateful I am to be recognized and to be given this amazing award," said Smith. "I have proven that with hard work and determination anything is possible. This award is special to me because I will have the opportunity to give back for all the blessings and wonderful experiences that I have enjoyed."

For this year's First Runner-Up award winner, Sukhdeep Khangura, the \$10,000 tuition reimbursement allows him to repay his father, who made so many personal and financial sacrifices so his son could attend Stenberg.

"My father paid for my tuition at Stenberg and has helped me with my student loans," says Khangura. "This award is important to me because now I get to pay him back."

While the Student of the Year awards may seem out of reach to some at first, it can help act as a motivator. Many of Stenberg's students have overcome a number of personal obstacles just by returning to school and the promise of the award can help give them that extra bit of focus they need to succeed.

The award was the culmination of Smith's transformation from a shy, former fast-food worker to the confident Special Education Assistant she is today, while it helped Souter, who was changing careers after getting laid off as a delivery driver, maintain his focus on his education.

"It not only inspires our students, it actually gives them additional drive and encourages excellence as they strive to be nominated," says Jacquie Stene Murphy, Director of Faculty and Student Affairs.

But the award does more than just transform the Stenberg student body; it also has a profound impact on the school's faculty and staff. After being nominated by an instructor, the nominees are interviewed by a selection committee, which gets the opportunity to hear, firsthand, each of the student's incredible stories.

Whether it's Brian Souter's impassioned journey finding a new purpose assisting seniors, or Ian Forrester's heartbreaking and harrowing tale of channeling the discrimination he faced from having a mental illness to helping people with similar barriers in the Downtown Eastside, each of the award winners have made a profound impact on Stenberg itself.

"The finalists inspire and energize the work that we do as educators," says Sarina Corsi, Stenberg's director of education. "We draw from their stories in the work that we do and it inspires us to be better." ❖



*“The thing that keeps me coming back is the thing that brought me here in the first place: I find seniors so fascinating. They have such a rich history ... If I can warm the hearts of a few people a shift, then I have done what I wanted to do.” – Brian Souter, 2010 Student of the Year / Resident Care Attendant grad*

# Changing Gears:

## How Brian Souter went from shipping cargo to caring for seniors

By Jackie Wong

If Brian Souter was asked five years ago what his life would be like today, he never would have guessed he'd be wearing blue medical scrubs. The Port Coquitlam resident now divides his time between two casual jobs at seniors care facilities in Surrey—a major departure from his former career as a truck driver.

For over two decades Souter worked in trucking—a reliable job with good pay that he figured he'd always have. “For 25 years I punched in – 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. – went home, enjoyed my evenings and weekends, took my holidays, and carried on year-after-year-after-year ... I thought I'd always have a job because delivery's everywhere,” he explains. “You're never going to get rid of the delivery of stuff; people will always need stuff. So I didn't upgrade my education ...”

However, everything changed when a major government contract with his employer fell through last year. The company had relied on the contract to sustain many of its employees, and the downturn in business forced the company to make cuts. He, along with several others, was laid off in June 2009.

But the contract that ended Souter's trucking career also introduced him to his most life-changing years of work. The government contract involved delivering oxygen tanks to senior citizens in Metro Vancouver, and over the five years that he made deliveries, powerful kinships formed.

“I found that a lot of the seniors I delivered to never saw anybody day-to-day,” he recalls. “They lived alone in their home and were quite lonely. So when I showed up, it was an opportunity for them to connect with another human being.”

It's easy to see why people would connect so immediately with Brian. His gentle compassion and big-hearted sense of humour are immediately detectable and easily dispensed. As time passed, Souter developed what he calls “magical” relation-

ships with the seniors he'd see on his oxygen delivery routes. They would tell him about their families, their lives, and their struggles. Many lived in isolation, and Souter's visits presented a rare occasion for conversation and friendship.

“I might only be there for 10 or 12 minutes every two weeks, but it was an amazing window [into their lives]. No time was wasted,” he says. “They were definitely the best five years of driving I ever did. Everything else was boxes and stuff, but this was human beings. I looked forward to going to work every day.”

Souter's oxygen delivery work coincided with the start of his own personal connection with senior care. Over the last two years of the oxygen contract, he regularly visited his elderly uncle in a care facility.

“He was slowly deteriorating and needed more and more care. I would visit him, take him on outings, dress him, help shave him,” he says. “It started to dawn on me that there was an opportunity to look into that line of work because I was really good at connecting with seniors.”

After Souter lost his trucking job, he started researching possible avenues to jobs in seniors' care. He spoke with people who ran care homes and they recommended the Resident Care Attendant (RCA) program at Stenberg College. At the time, Souter was on employment insurance (EI), and he discovered there was government funding available through EI to build skills by going to school.

He worked diligently on an application for government funding, and registered for Stenberg courses in September. His courses in the RCA program were scheduled to begin in November 2009; after much anticipation, Souter was approved for government funding.

Receiving the funding was a tremendous accomplishment and took a significant financial burden off his shoulders. Souter stayed on EI during his time at Stenberg so he could dedicate himself fully to

school. Even though he hadn't had formal education in 25 years, Souter was determined to give college life his best shot.

“I didn't really apply myself while I was driving trucks. It was easy work, good money. Why should I bother?” he asks. “So there was a real question mark for me: am I going to be able to fit back in and get into some heavy studying and juggle projects, assignments, quizzes, and reading?”

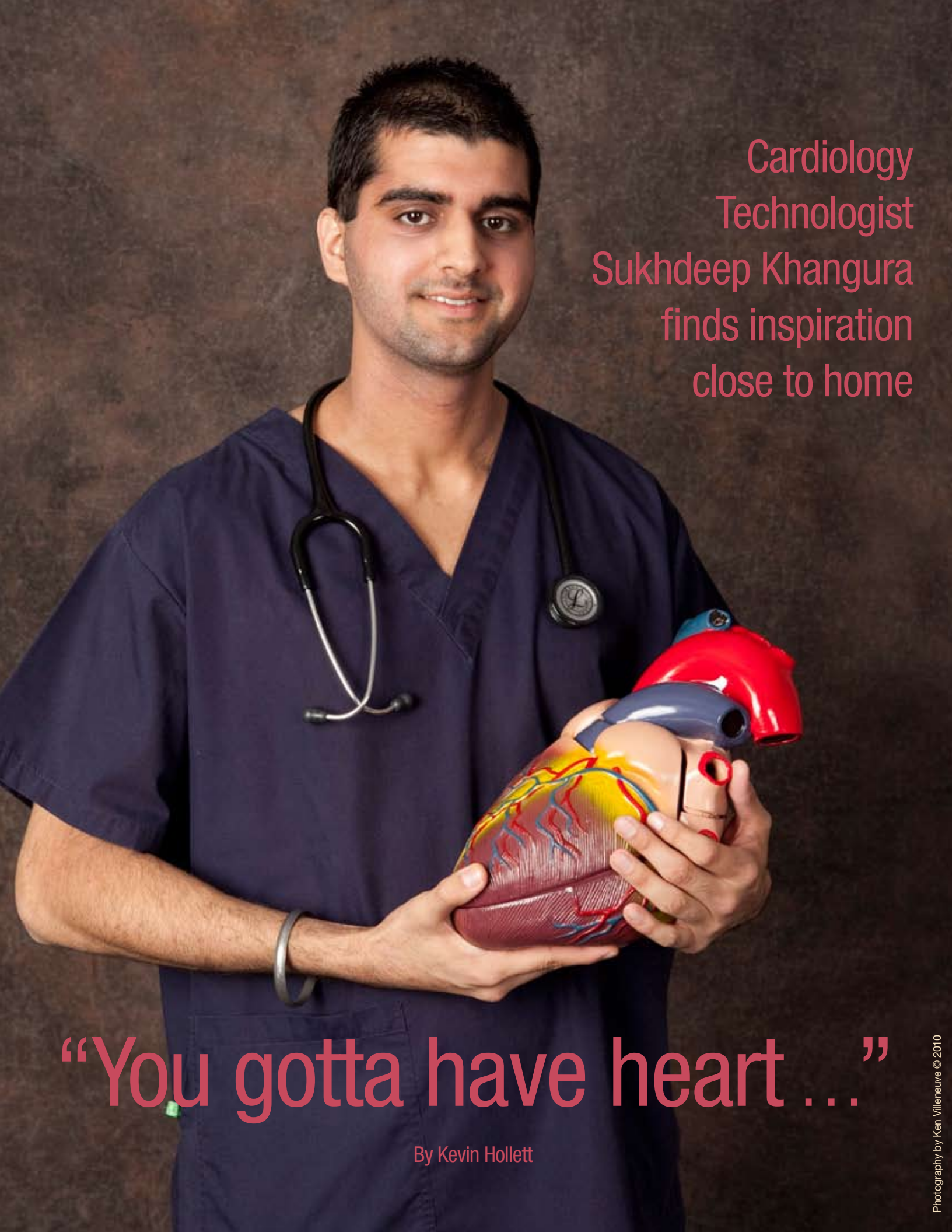
He did. With flying colours. Souter was among the top students in his program, making at least an 80 per cent average on all his courses.

“He was incredibly diligent,” says Stenberg College program advisor Jandy Sertic. “This and nothing else mattered in his life when he was here. He was so determined to do well.”

Sertic fondly recalls Brian's sense of humour, work ethic, and unique dedication to his coursework, classmates, and college faculty. “He made a point of trying to get to know every staff member and he was at school early every day, studying,” she says.

Sertic also remembers the care Souter took to drive two classmates to and from their practicum site after finding out they were spending several hours on transit everyday to get there, even though it added another 45 minutes to his already long commute from Port Coquitlam. “He's just that kind of guy,” she says. “There are certain people you never forget in your life. He's one of them.”

Souter's new work at two seniors care facilities is a far cry from his former life as a trucker, but he now feels more at home than ever. “The thing that keeps me coming back is the thing that brought me here: that I just find seniors so fascinating. They have such rich history,” he says. “If I can warm the hearts of a few people a shift, then I have done what I wanted to do.” ❖



Cardiology  
Technologist  
Sukhdeep Khangura  
finds inspiration  
close to home

“You gotta have heart ...”

By Kevin Hollett

**W**hen Sukhdeep Khangura's father immigrated to Canada from India just over 20 years ago to be with his wife, he had no idea the sacrifices he would end up making for the sake of his family. He was young and just wanted to experience other parts of the world.

But when his wife gave birth to Sukhdeep, their first child, his priorities quickly changed. From that moment on his family would always come first, no matter what sacrifices had to be made. These were the values he brought with him from his home country and that were passed onto their son.

"In the South Asian community, parents will sacrifice everything for their children," explains Khangura. "I've been very fortunate. I have a very strong support system. Family has always been there for me."

That meant his father had to put in 14 hour days, six days a week, driving a taxi cab to help his son pay for school. Even at the expense of his own health.

"There is a very strong family history of heart problems, including my father," says Khangura. The long, late hours in the cab coupled with a poor diet that is characteristic of life on the road means that his father suffers from high blood pressure and diabetes. No small matter, considering that his own father passed away in India after suffering a heart attack.

While studying sciences at Simon Fraser University, Khangura learned how heart disease was prevalent not only in his own family, but in the East Indian community as a whole.

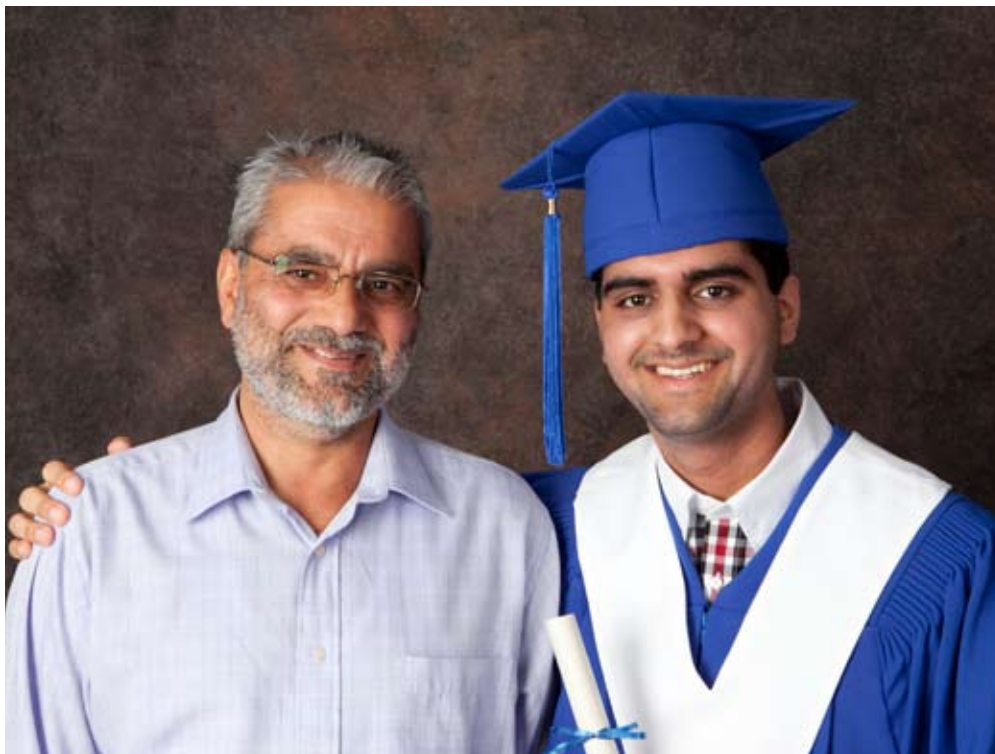
So when it came time for him to settle on a career path, Khangura didn't have to look very far for inspiration; it was right there in front of him: his family. There was no question as to what he wanted to do. He would devote himself to educating his family and his community on becoming healthier and living longer.

"Nearly 60 per cent of East Indians have incidences of heart problems, and they're more likely to suffer heart attacks or become diabetic," says Khangura. "There are a lot of factors that contribute to it, from the diet to the community, but the statistics were overwhelming to me.

"I wanted to help make changes in my family and my community. There's so much more that I can do to educate the East Indian community."

He decided to enrol in Stenberg College's Cardiology Technologist Program in 2009. The decision to pursue this career path came together one day when commuting home. His neighbourhood retirement centre posted a call for volunteers to help with the residents, an opportunity that Khangura leapt at.

"I noticed that they had a need for Punjabi speak-



*Sukhdeep's father, Sukhdev, put in 14 hour days, six days a week, driving a taxi cab to help his son pay for school.*

ing volunteers, so I went there to help out," says Khangura, who still volunteers at the centre. It was a great opportunity for him to begin raising awareness within his community.

"When he was working in the retirement home he saw all these people in his community with the same health problems," says his father, Sukhdev. "He really wanted to help them."

***"Nearly 60 per cent of East Indians have incidences of heart problems, and they're more likely to suffer heart attacks or become diabetic," says Khangura. "There are a lot of factors that contribute to it, from the diet to the community, but the statistics were overwhelming to me."***

Mahsa Saeedi, Marketing and Public Relations Manager at Stenberg College, witnessed Khangura's devotion to his community when the two worked together on student council. She recalled how committed he was to his volunteer work.

"One of his goals volunteering at the nursing home was to share knowledge about heart disease in his community," she says. "They have a really high risk of heart disease, and older people aren't aware of the risk factors. Because he speaks Punjabi, he can

speak directly to the residents about how to take care of themselves."

Khangura's devotion to his community is just another one of the values passed down by his parents.

"Money is worth nothing if you don't value the more important things in life," says Sukhdev, repeating his parents' advice. "My wife and I always said to get a good education first, then a good job, and then you can go out and help the community."

Now that Khangura has completed the program, he's able to raise awareness about heart disease and health with the patients who need it the most. He's working with patients at Vancouver General Hospital, but he knows that this is just the first step.

"People develop these problems before they're taught how to do anything about it," he says, his voice filled with passion. "If more can be done to educate my community on prevention, then generations to come will benefit. Awareness must be raised."

But despite his burgeoning professional success, Khangura's own priorities lay at home. His father's struggles with health remain a concern.

"I tell him that his health is important," he says, before explaining how he's trying to help his father make improvements to his lifestyle to improve his health. "He's making changes. It's a start."

A start not only by improving his father's health, but to repaying him for all his sacrifices. ❖

# Finding Forrester

A man in a blue graduation cap and gown is smiling and holding a rolled-up diploma. The background is dark and textured.

Ian Forrester  
uses his illness  
to help others  
get well

By Jackie Wong

**W**hen Ian Forrester disclosed his bipolar illness to his managers last year, the 10 years of trust and friendship they'd built were erased. Even though mental illness affects people from all walks of life, individuals who experience it continue to be stigmatized, stereotyped and misunderstood—especially in the workplace.

“They became cold, distant,” he recalls. “There wasn't the same trust given to me, even though I had been capable for the past 10 years with the same illness.”

The Burnaby resident worked for the past decade as a supervisor in a manufacturing facility that made frozen desserts. He says he's always struggled with mental illness, but suffered a particularly difficult period that resulted in four months of stress leave.

“When I came back, everything had totally changed in the company. They made it really hard for me,” he says. “I guess they were afraid I was going to be a risk with my illness. That really hurt deeply. In three months, I was let go.”

Forrester's dismissal came as a hurtful surprise. He'd formed close bonds with coworkers he'd come to trust as friends. “I loved working there,” he says. “I had a great record, great reviews, very few sick days. I felt like I was a really good supervisor and part of the company family.”

Shocked by management's sudden hostility and what he felt was a betrayal, Forrester experienced a relapse after his dismissal. But this time he started attending support groups organized by the Mood

Disorders Association. “I was hearing the same stories, people going through mental illness,” he says. “I said, ‘Hey, I'm not alone here.’”

Inspired by the healing potential of peer support, Forrester started volunteering with the Mood Disorders Association as well as with Coast Mental Health, where he spoke with staff about possibilities for paid work in the field. They recommended Stenberg College, and within a few months Forrester started coursework in Stenberg's Community Support & Outreach Worker program. While the the

*“A year ago, I wouldn't have wanted to speak too much about this sort of thing ... but now people can say, ‘Look, he's been through it. I can actually go through this too and be successful.’”*

transition to starting full-time courses in a new field was fast, he says the speed was necessary to prevent him from spiraling further into his illness.

He was offered two other jobs in his old field before starting classes at Stenberg, but turned them down in favour of his newly chosen path. “It was pretty tempting because the money was pretty good, but I really didn't want to go back to that again,” he says. “It's all about profit. Here it's all about people. To me, that's just so much more important.”

Despite initial reservations about returning to student life after 20 years out of school, Forrester

excelled in his Stenberg coursework. “I really cared about what I was studying this time around,” he says. “Compared to university, when I was a young kid just trying to get out of university with a BA.”

Forrester completed a four-week practicum at the Living Room Drop-In Centre in the Downtown Eastside as part of his coursework.

“The clients really liked him,” says Tom Jensen, Forrester's supervisor and an outreach worker for the Lookout Emergency Aid Society. “He was really sincere without being condescending.”

Of the students he's supervised at the Living Room over the past 12 years, Forrester ranks among the top 10, Jensen adds. “He was terrific. He was totally gung-ho from day one. I gave him the highest recommendation that I could when he was applying for work.”

Forrester now works for Coast Mental Health as a Community Transition Worker on the Riverview Hospital grounds in a pilot project for individuals with concurrent disorders. He works closely with 20 individuals who have mental illnesses

and addiction issues. Forrester immediately found himself enjoying his new job.

“I never thought I could do something like this,” he says humbly. “About a year ago, I wouldn't have wanted to speak too much about this sort of thing ... but now people can say, ‘Look, he's been through it. I can actually go through this too and be successful.’”

Forrester's message to others struggling with mental illness is don't give up. “You've got the strength within you to be what you want to be.” ❖

You want a better life. Job satisfaction. Financial security. Respect. You want to help others.

## Community Support & Outreach Worker

Community Support and Outreach Workers assist individuals with a developmental disability and/or mental health issues, encouraging and supporting them in their daily lives. They model, teach and support all functions of home life, daily living activities, leisure and recreation for improved quality of life for their clients. Starting entry wages range from \$18.03 to \$19.72 per hour.

*“I can't thank you all at Stenberg enough. My experience was positive in every way. From encouragement and direction to inspiration and friendships ... Thank you for making a difference in my life. I will always value my time spent with such exceptional people.” – Debbie D., Community Support & Outreach Worker grad*

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*Over 94% of our grads are employed in their field of study within 6 months of graduation.*



# Never Give Up

## Giovanni Borrelli discovers a passion for education through volunteering

By Jackie Wong

**G**iovanni Borrelli held down a job at a paper mill for years, but as time passed and his family grew, he found himself in need of more meaningful work. “I didn’t feel like the mill was a fulfilling job,” he recalls. “I asked myself, ‘What am I doing this for?’”

So the Coquitlam father started volunteering at his son and daughters’ elementary schools on his days off. He volunteered as a driver for field trips and read aloud to his daughter’s kindergarten class once a week. Those days at school, he says, were transformative. “When I started volunteering at my son’s school, I felt like I was doing something better with my life than just making paper.”

Health issues eventually pushed Borrelli to leave his job at the paper mill and concentrate on volunteering at his children’s school, where he would help students in grades one to four with reading, writing, and math exercises.

“I liked volunteering with the kids and helping them out,” he says. “It’s hard to explain how you feel when you see someone achieve a goal they were struggling with.”

As Borrelli spent more time at school, he became acquainted with the teachers whose students he assisted. Interested in pursuing a new career in education, he asked for their advice. A teacher at his son’s school recommended Stenberg College. The efficiency of Stenberg’s nine-month Special Education Assistant (SEA) program was appealing, he says.

“Being a father with a mortgage and everything, I had to try to get back in the work field as soon as possible,” he explains. “I couldn’t really sacrifice

two more years [like at other colleges]. Stenberg fit my needs perfectly.”

The transition to classroom life after 20 years of being out of school was daunting at first, but Borrelli’s passion for the work kept his nose to the grindstone. “It was pretty frightening, the first month or two—getting back into the study mode, getting your routine going,” he says. “But after a while, it came

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***“Give students a bit of confidence and show them, ‘you can do this,’” Borrelli says. “The main thing is to not give up. I think too many people give up on these children. It’s one reason why I want to help. I think you really can make a difference in someone’s life.”***

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naturally because I wanted to do this job. When you have a passion for something, it becomes easier.”

Borrelli was heartened to see that many of his classmates shared his background despite initial reservations that the return to school would mean a new environment with much younger classmates.

“A lot of them were single parents. Others were married with kids,” he says. “It’s a tough juggle, school plus family and part-time jobs. Thankfully, we all completed the course.”

After finishing coursework at Stenberg, Borrelli almost immediately turned his hours of volunteering into paid work. He was hired as a casual SEA

by the Coquitlam school district just one week after completing Stenberg courses. He spent the last month of the 2009/2010 school year working with special needs students in Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody, and he’ll return to work for the district in September 2010.

Borrelli’s students face a range of barriers including learning disabilities, social issues, and developmental disabilities, so every day is different. He says he enjoys the variety and is excited about learning as much as he can. “I want to get my feet wet before I decide what school I want to permanently work at,” he says.

Borrelli’s passion for learning was immediately apparent at Stenberg College, says Lisa Shaw, Borrelli’s SEA program instructor. “He was somebody who struck me right from the start as someone who consistently strives to improve whatever he puts his hand to,” Shaw says.

She fondly remembers his strong interest in the course material and his unique interpersonal skills—skills that likely had a hand in his current employment at the schools where he used to work as a volunteer. “I think the world is Giovanni’s oyster,” Shaw says. “He’s a really personable guy. He creates these real symbiotic relationships.”

Building self-esteem and self-sufficiency in his students is one of Borrelli’s top priorities.

“Give students a bit of confidence and show them, ‘you can do this,’” he says. “The main thing is to not give up. I think too many people give up on these children. It’s one reason why I want to help. I think you really can make a difference in someone’s life.”❖





# Out of the Box

## Lesley McKay moves from freight to hospital administration

By Kevin Hollett

**W**hen, in the wake of the recession, Lesley McKay's employer shut the doors to their B.C.-based office in early 2009, she found herself thrust amongst the growing population of the unemployed. As a 52-year-old who had worked in the same company for the past 28 years, the harsh reality of joblessness hit McKay harder than she could have foreseen.

"Losing my job was more devastating to me than I think I realized at the time," she admits. "I knew it was coming. I had been under stress for months knowing it was coming, but not when it was coming.

"You don't realize what kind of stress that can put you under, when you really don't know what your future's going to be and it's something you can't control."

McKay had been working for an international shipping company almost from the day she arrived in Canada from her native England, but found that the skills she had accumulated as a route administrator weren't transferable in an increasingly competitive job market.

"I realized that I had no qualifications," she recalls. "Even though I had a lot of experience and responsibility, I had nothing to take with me to another company."

The anxiety from facing an uncertain future weighed heavily on McKay, leading to countless sleepless nights. "Suddenly there was all this new stress," she explains. "I just thought, 'What am I going to do now?'"

It wasn't until she took a job suitability test through an employment resource centre that she found the answer: Nursing Unit Clerk. The prospect of returning to a hospital environment was appealing to McKay. When she completed school back in

England, her first job as a new graduate was as an assistant in the oral surgery department.

Doing work that involved helping other people was attractive, but pursuing a new career involved another terrifying obstacle—returning to school after decades in the workforce. It wasn't an easy decision for her to make when she signed up for Stenberg College's Nursing Unit Clerk program.

"Going back to school was very intimidating for me," McKay admits. "I was concerned that maybe I was too old. I can recall when I first started the course thinking to myself, 'Oh my God, I'm going

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***"It's so fulfilling to know that you're out there helping people," McKay says. "It's so much more rewarding than putting a piece of freight on an aircraft."***

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to be the oldest one there. I'm a grandmother."

"As it turned out, I wasn't the oldest one there. We had a real mix of ages in our class, but everyone had the same mix of fears and frustrations. It felt good to not be on my own. We were all going through the same thing. That's when I was able to relax and get into the class."

Those shared fears and frustrations would become the inspiration for McKay to reach out to her classmates.

"She became friends with everybody in the class and when she saw others struggling her response was to help," recalls her instructor, Tammy Quan. "She stayed every day after school, studying with her classmates."

For McKay, the after-school study group was a natural response to the strain of an intense program.

The best way to overcome a challenge was to work together and support each other.

"It wasn't just about learning the material, but a way of supporting each other to get through," explains McKay. "It was a fairly intense program. It was stressful. There was just so much information that had to be comprehended over a very short period of time." McKay laughs at the memory. "I thought, 'I can't remember what I had for breakfast, how am I going to remember this material four days from now?'"

Quan says that McKay's unique humour made her a natural to help others. She often used her wit in class to diffuse negative situations and turn them into a positive. As a result, other students gravitated to her for support.

"She has this magical capability to put people at ease," Quan says with amazement. "She would stand at the board every day after class and help the people that weren't doing so well."

"She became their tutor after school and she would help anyone who required assistance. Everyone who stayed and worked with her made it through the program!"

McKay and her classmates can now count themselves as successful graduates, and she's about to start a new job in ER at Richmond General Hospital.

"It's so fulfilling to know that you're out there helping people," she says. "It's so much more rewarding than putting a piece of freight on an aircraft."

Now that McKay has begun her new career, she can look back and see how everything has turned out for the best, despite the stress and fear from being laid off.

"My husband's favourite saying is, 'It'll work out' ... I hate it when he's right," she says with a laugh. "But he is right. Things do have a way of working out." ♦

# New Immigrants Succeed at Stenberg College

By Jackie Wong

Immigrants new to Canada have a difficult time finding work and face unemployment rates twice as high as those among Canadian-born citizens, according to Statistics Canada. The federal agency suggests that language barriers, a lack of Canadian work experience, and unrecognized foreign credentials pose the largest barriers to integrating new immigrants into the workforce.

And while English as a Second Language (ESL) classes can help improve basic language skills they do not address the lack of Canadian work experience nor unrecognized foreign credentials. Successful communication in a new country also requires a more nuanced understanding of a country's culture, norms, and peculiarities than most grammar textbooks provide. Plus, building the confidence and assertiveness to use a new language in your new country takes time, and, importantly, a broad network of support.

Enter Lisa Semenoff, Stenberg College's faculty and student support coordinator who has led Stenberg's ESL program since 2008. Semenoff's infectious optimism, compassion, and enthusiasm for her work are easily dispensed from the moment she begins to speak. As a TESL-certified instructor with a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology, Semenoff's approach to ESL is rooted in building community and trust with her students.

Confidence, she says, is a major barrier for many immigrants looking to become fluent in the language of their new home. "Too often people make the assumption that because someone doesn't have strong language ability that they're not smart or they're shy or they lack confidence. I want my students to have the knowledge and power to overcome that." Assertiveness, adjusting to a new culture, and personal development are central focuses in Semenoff's classes. Tackling practical matters beyond the basics of ESL may seem like common

sense, but it doesn't happen enough in most ESL programs, she says.

"I think a lot of ESL programs just deal with reading and writing, with an over-emphasis on grammar," Semenoff says. "They're not actually looking at the individual as a whole person and what challenges that person needs to overcome before they can successfully move on. We do that right from the beginning." Semenoff focuses on giving students tools to make a successful transition into Canadian society. Her classes equip students with a skill set that empowers them to clarify information, to not be ashamed to ask questions, and to deliver information clearly and properly.

It is Semenoff's uniquely holistic approach to ESL that makes the Stenberg College program so

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***Language barriers, a lack of Canadian work experience, and unrecognized foreign credentials pose the largest barriers to integrating new immigrants into the workforce. – Statistics Canada***

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successful. The classes, free to all who plan to enroll in a Stenberg program after completion, are held daily. Semenoff and co-teacher Steve Paras lead students in discussions and exercises that strengthen their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. The main goal, she says, is to help students improve their language proficiency and confidently use it in real-life situations.

"Part of it is speaking in public, being able to deliver and clarify information," she explains. "A lot of our students have amazing backgrounds—doctors, nurses, lab technicians: they have medical backgrounds already. The barriers facing them are not simply language-based but include acceptance into our culture as well as understanding the dynam-

ics of our culture and the nuances that are part of our healthcare industry."

Students participate in the ESL program for three months or more, and even after completion they are welcome to return to the program at anytime to refresh their skills and catch up with old classmates. "We're focussed on the long-term success of our students," Semenoff says. "We don't just want them to be successful in our program, we want them to succeed in their careers and their lives and become fully participating members of society." To that end, Semenoff and the ESL staff provide ongoing support to all students experiencing ESL difficulties during their time at Stenberg and beyond. They help the students address an array of issues that can include family, financial, academic, and personal matters, often advocating on their behalf when language abilities present barriers to personal and professional growth. "Many of our students, particularly those who are relatively new to Canada, aren't part of a large network in their communities ... I encourage them to create networks here ... I find that a lot of immigrants are on their own," Semenoff says. "They need people to speak to who are in similar situations and experiencing similar difficulties ... Just to hear that it's okay makes a huge difference."

Semenoff's belief in the abilities of her students and her encouragement have had a tremendously positive impact. Nelson Bautista moved to Canada from the Philippines in 2008 and attended Paras and Semenoff's ESL classes for a year. "We're just like a family," he says, describing Paras and Semenoff as parental figures. "It was a tremendous adjustment for me, just to make friends. But through Stenberg's ESL program, I have made a lot of friends."

Bautista recalls the difficulty of building up the confidence to speak English with native speakers. "I knew what to say, but when I talked to native speakers, I just couldn't speak," he says. "Every time they talked to me, it felt like they were criticizing me or something." His teachers, he says,

helped him build confidence and alleviate his fear of speaking in public.

“Sometimes I wanted to give up,” Bautista says. “But Lisa [Semenoff] and [Program Advisor] Jandy [Sertic], always encouraged me to keep going.”

Bautista has completed Term I of his Practical Nursing studies and is closer to his dream of working with children. For him, the best part about the ESL program was the confidence building. “Confidence was big for me,” he says. “The instructors push you but they also take care of you.”

When Jimin Qi immigrated to Vancouver, Canada from Guangzhou, China in 2005 with his wife and teenage son, he found himself at a loss for words. He had worked as a doctor in his home country, but, like many immigrants, was faced with the daunting challenge of transferring his professional skills to his new life in Canada. “I worked in a hospital and a medical college. I was a doctor and a medical instructor,” Qi says of his life in China. “It was very difficult for me to live here, especially in the beginning when I came to Canada. I was very, very frustrated. I didn’t even know how to ask for directions or talk on the phone.”

Qi and his wife started ESL classes at Vancouver Community College shortly after their arrival. Eager to continue his work as a medical professional in Canada, Qi was intent on enrolling in Stenberg’s Cardiologist Technology program but did not pass the English entrance exam. In the hopes of improving his English and being accepted into the program, he dutifully attended Stenberg’s ESL classes for six months, four days a week—no easy feat for someone living on the west side of Vancouver and commuting three hours each day to get to Stenberg’s Surrey campus. In total, Jimin attended ESL classes at Stenberg College for a year and a half and his commitment paid off when he graduated as a Cardiology Technologist, with flying colours, in July 2010. Qi’s life now marks a huge contrast from when he arrived in Canada. “My English started at almost zero. I couldn’t imagine what my future was in Canada at the time,” he recalls of his first years in the country. But Qi’s perseverance helped him gain confidence as a new citizen, increased language proficiency, and, importantly, a sense of place, belonging, and support in a new country.

“Lisa helped me a lot with my personal problems and questions,” Qi says. “She knew my English was not so good but she understands me very well.”

Qi’s future is bright. He was recently hired to work as a Cardiology Technologist at Vancouver General Hospital, his wife is finishing an education program at UBC (she was a teacher in China), and their son is starting courses at Langara College.



ESL Instructor Lisa Semenoff working with Resident Care Attendant students Manpreet Gill and Hong Chang.

“My next goal is to be a teacher here [at Stenberg],” Qi says. “I really appreciate Stenberg College!”

For Manpreet Gill and Hong Chang, success at Stenberg College meant more than letter grades and exams. For both women, it meant a bold start to a

***“We’re focussed on the long-term success of our students. We don’t just want them to be successful in our program, we want them to succeed in their careers and their lives and become fully participating members of society.”***

– Lisa Semenoff

new life in Canada, new professional horizons, and a powerful friendship. Gill and Chang both immigrated to Canada—from India and China, respectively—last year. They met in Stenberg’s Resident Care Attendant (RCA) program and took ESL classes together. Both have recently graduated and are currently looking for work.

“I remember the first time my friend took me here [to Stenberg], I was so nervous. I couldn’t talk,” Chang recalls. For her, the RCA program at Stenberg also meant the dawn of a new career: Chang had previously worked as an accountant in China, and the RCA classes marked her first foray into the healthcare industry. “I like to take care of people. That’s why I chose this program,” Chang says. She fondly recalls her time in the ESL program. She had never previously spoken English in public, but the public-speaking component of the ESL classes helped build confidence, she says. Even so, learning a new language takes time. “English is our second language. It’s still very hard for us. I still feel like it’s very difficult sometimes,” she says. “But

we try, we try our best. And we graduated from the RCA program! I can’t believe it.”

For her part, Gill is glad to have completed Stenberg’s RCA program with newfound language proficiency. As a former nurse in India, she hopes to go back to school for her bachelor’s degree in nursing after gaining some work experience in Canada. To

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*Jimin Qi was a doctor and medical instructor in China but language prevented him from working in healthcare in Canada.*

go from a nursing career in India to starting over in Canada was frustrating, she says—a common experience for many immigrants. “It was hard for me, because in India, I was doing injections, oxygen administration, medications, stuff like that,” she says. “And here I was beginning over again ...”

Even though she had professional experience as a healthcare worker, Gill’s English comprehension was holding her back from fully realizing her potential in the RCA program. But as a result of her hard work and dedication and the ongoing ESL support she received, the situation shifted in Gill’s favour. “Before [I started] ESL classes, I was very down,” she says. She made the jump from not being able to finish assignments to having her work used as an example of excellence for other RCA students. “Now, I feel very strong inside,” she says.

Stenberg’s ESL program and the success of Qi, Hong and Manpreet are testament to the college’s commitment to the success of its students. “We care about our students and want them to be successful. They deserve that opportunity,” Semenoff says. “My reward is seeing their progress. Not only in their language skills, but as individuals; individuals who make the successful transition into Canadian society.”

According to Stenberg College’s Executive Director, Jeremy Sabell, integrating the College Preparatory program and ongoing ESL support with Stenberg’s Diploma programs gives new Canadian students the four things they require in order to get employment: an occupational level of English; Ca-

***Stenberg’s ESL program and the success of Qi, Hong and Manpreet are testament to the college’s commitment to the success of its students. “We care about our students and want them to be successful. They deserve that opportunity,” Semenoff says.***

nadian work experience in the form of on-the-job practicums; credentials that are recognized and well respected by industry and confidence. “We provide an opportunity, a pathway for people who’s English hasn’t had time to evolve yet to the point where it’s at the level for employment in a Canadian setting ... We are committed to helping our students improve their circumstances and change their lives. Time and time again, our students’ commitment is rewarded with success. The success of Qi, Hong and Manpreet is very gratifying and is a reflection of the extraordinary people we have at Stenberg – our faculty, our staff, and, of course, our students.” ❖

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