

HomeStart Foundation: A Vision for Rebuilding Lives

Imagine living in a small apartment where you eat, sleep and sit on the bare floor. Day after day. The children complain and don't sleep well on the hard linoleum. Maybe there is a dirty and broken chair scrounged from the garbage, maybe an old mattress. With almost no money because you are new to the country, out of work, or starting life over, it is all you can do to pay the sky high rent, take the bus to work and buy a little food for your kids. Furniture is just too expensive and will have to wait.

It doesn't have to be this way.

HomeStart recycles used furniture so that families in need can live in dignity. Our goal is to provide basic household furnishings so that families and individuals who are starting up or starting over can set up a home and move toward self-sufficiency more quickly.

We pick up clean, good quality household furniture like beds, couches, kitchen sets, TVs and chairs from families and businesses that can no longer use them. This donated furniture is then delivered to families in need throughout Vancouver, Burnaby and Richmond. All furniture is picked up and delivered at no cost to either the donor or the recipient.

HomeStart works with more than 70 Community Partner Agencies that deliver social services to people who are homeless, fleeing domestic violence, suffering from mental illnesses or AIDS. Many partner agencies work with refugees, new immigrants, aboriginal people and street youth. (See our website homestart.ca for a complete list.) By working with these community partners, HomeStart Foundation is supporting some of our most vulnerable citizens to improve their quality of




Staff Freddy and Simon get furniture ready to deliver.

life and move forward.

Since our community partners know their clients best, they decide which ones are most in need of household furniture based on their clients' history and home visits. Our partners make requests to HomeStart and we do our best to deliver the furniture needed. In 2006, we were able to furnish 290 households through these referrals.

Our service model means we can meet the immediate and practical needs of families in transition. By filling a gap in community services, our work also allows our community partners to focus on what they do best without getting into the furniture moving business themselves.

Established in 2002 as a Christian humanitarian agency, HomeStart made its 1000th household delivery in June 2006. Working on a shoestring budget with three part-time staff and many volunteers, we depend on the generosity of our community to keep going. 

Nikki's Story



When Nikki fled with her two children from an abusive relationship in the interior of British Columbia, she didn't realize how expensive life in Vancouver would be.

"I didn't have anything. The kids were all sleeping on one mattress that had been left in the apartment. I slept on the floor for weeks. My back ached all the time and I was feeling really, really bad for being stuck like this."

Picking up the pieces of her life, she made ends meet by working at two minimum wage jobs and asking a neighbour to watch her children when they got home from school. Paying the rent, buying food and paying for a bus pass didn't leave any money for furniture.

A local crisis centre connected Nikki and HomeStart. We provided three beds, a couch, some chairs, some lamps, a TV and a kitchenette set. That made all the difference.

"Having good furniture lifted our spirits. We all had somewhere comfortable to sit and sleep. We didn't have to go to bed when it got dark because we could do things together as a family. My kids are a lot happier and I'm feeling ready to get out and work each day instead of being depressed by all that has happened. I feel like we can move ahead in life."

Helping Refugees Start Over in Vancouver

A note of thanks for everything you folks do to support those who come through Kinbrace. I was impressed with the gift HomeStart is in our community: You have allowed us to focus on the housing and support of refugees and been a fundamental support in helping to transition refugees into permanent housing. [Before] HomeStart, we would piecemeal furniture donations together for refugees, storing them on back balconies and sometimes in the rain, just so we had some of the basics for startup. HomeStart has freed us from this chaotic and tiresome process. You have not only liberated us as an organization, you also provide in one truck load far more for refugees in their new homes than we ever did over the span of months. Thank you.

- Loren Balisky, Salsbury Community Society

The SCS has been providing affordable housing in the context of intentional Christian communities since 1997. Among other initiatives, SCS runs Kinbrace House to provide supportive transitional housing in East Vancouver for refugee claimants. HomeStart provided furniture for 4 SCS families in 2006.

Donating is Easy!

Costs for part-time staff, renting warehouse facilities and operating a delivery truck add up. It costs HomeStart \$250 for every furniture delivery to families in need. Your support would be gratefully appreciated.

Tax receipts are provided for financial donations of \$20 or more. We accept cash, cheques and donations made online through Canada Helps. We also accept gifts of stocks & bonds, RRSPs, insurance policies, annuities and other forms of planned giving.

Charitable Registration Number:
872814504RR001

Going Full Circle

Ask Rod Spendiff why he volunteers so much of his time with the HomeStart Foundation and he responds with a story.

“One day I was out delivering furniture with Freddy. We were in a really rundown area of the Downtown Eastside, in the East Hastings area. It was really hot and we had to take a lot of furniture up three flights of stairs in a falling down old building. There was no elevator and it really wasn’t fun. We had nice furniture, but it wasn’t great. The woman we gave the furniture to looked really rough. Maybe she was an addict, I don’t know. She said to us, “This is the best Christmas I ever had.” It was the middle of summer and really hot, but she was just so grateful to get that furniture. That’s why I do it.”

Normally, Rod dislikes moving furniture. But he has volunteered with HomeStart since we began in 2002 “because you know you are helping. My grandmother immigrated from the Ukraine when she was 12 and spoke no English. She raised 14 kids. I feel like things have gone full circle. I want to help other people have a better life too.”

When not busy with HomeStart, Rod runs two companies: an energy conversion company that helps large companies save electricity and one that markets espresso machines. Rod and his wife Elaine live on the North Shore, but he is “happy to go out with the truck whenever there is a need.”



Rod Spendiff

HomeStart Policies

Pick Ups

- We pick up household furniture free of charge.
- Furniture must be in good to excellent condition - clean, functional and in good repair. HomeStart staff and volunteers can refuse to take any furniture that is in poor shape or poor quality.
- We prefer to pick up more than one item at a time to use our limited staff and resources most effectively, but will make exceptions for large or much needed items.
- Donors who wish to deliver furniture to our warehouse must make arrangements to do so. Dumped furniture that is poor quality or ruined by the weather needs to be carted to the dump. Please spare us this unnecessary expense so we can focus our resources on getting good furniture to families in need.
- We cannot accept small items like portable kitchen appliances, linens, or decorative items because of our focus on household furniture. If you wish to donate these items, contact Gather and Give at Tel: (604) 637-2250 or info@gatherandgive.org

Deliveries

- Everyone receiving furniture must be referred to HomeStart by a community partner agency. We rely on our partners to determine who is most in need. Individuals may not request furniture for themselves or their friends.
- We provide items household furniture to families that have none or only a little. We do not upgrade furniture or fill in pieces for families who already have furniture.

Privacy

- The identity of our clients is protected in all publicity. The HomeStart Foundation does not sell, share or lend its mailing list. Donor names are published only with written consent.
- If you wish to unsubscribe to this e-newsletter, please let us know at info@homestart.ca

The Voice on the Phone

The cheerful voice on the HomeStart phone line belongs to Emma Baldwin. Emma has worked part-time as HomeStart's Coordinator for the past year. She keeps the place running by coordinating furniture donations and deliveries.

"I speak with the furniture donors, the families getting things and the workers of our member organizations. I make up the schedules," she says.

What does she like about the job? "I get to tell everyone what to do, which I enjoy. You – lift that!" she says mischievously. More seriously, she says: "I like the variety of what I do and speaking with people. I enjoy the thanks and gratitude we get from families we've helped. I try to make follow-up calls. One guy was almost in tears, he was so happy with what he received."

When not working mornings at HomeStart, Emma works for a pet care services company. Juggling two jobs, she usually works 7 days a week. "I enjoy reading, dog walking and exercise but. I don't have a lot of time off."

If you have furniture to donate, you can contact Emma Monday to Friday 9:30 am – 12:30 pm.

We Need Volunteers!

With 3 part-time staff and a very small budget, the HomeStart Foundation depends on volunteers to make sure furniture is picked up and delivered to needy families efficiently. We need regular volunteers who can:

- Drive our pick up and delivery truck
- Move furniture
- Clean our office/warehouse
- Help with administration
- Do graphic design

Online Shopping

Looking for an easy way to help HomeStart Foundation? Go shopping!

Join iGive.com/HomeStartFoundation. Every time you shop at one of the over 680 name-brand stores in the iGive.com Mall, we'll receive a donation of up to 26% of each purchase you make, at no cost to you.

Contact Us

To donate furniture, funds or your time, contact:

Emma Baldwin
Coordinator
604.708.9556
604.708.9560 fax
info@homestart.ca

HomeStart Foundation
c/o Kitsilano Christian Community Church
1708 West 16th Avenue
Vancouver, BC.
V6S 2M1

Note: This is a mailing address only. Please do not drop off furniture or other items at this address.

Thank You!

We are grateful for the generous support of the following donors so far in 2007:

Diamond \$15,000 +

Anonymous
Roff Corporation
StanJean Foundation

Platinum \$10,000 +

Kitsilano Christian Community Church

Gold \$5000 +

Gerry Nemeth & Katri Ulmonen
CKNW Orphan's Fund

Silver \$2000 +

Teekay Shipping

Copper \$1000 +

Anonymous
Radcliffe Foundation