

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Presenting the 6th Annual SOS Children's Village BC Run/Walk in Partnership with the Rotary Club of Richmond

Surrey, British Columbia On the morning of Sunday, May 25, the beautiful, natural setting of Richmond's Olympic Oval Plaza will be alive with athletes, families, and a host of volunteers gathering for the sixth annual SOS Children's Village BC Run/Walk to benefit children in foster care.

Beginning about 8:30 am, everyone will gather on the river side of the plaza for the 9 am opening ceremonies followed by the Run/Walk kickoff. Festivities include special guests, entertainment, and refreshments.

"This event is proof that a community can have a wonderful time while contributing to a worthy cause," according to Run/Walk founders Lois and Gilles Bouchard.

For the long-time Richmond residents, the annual event is a dream come true.

The Bouchards have devoted over three decades to helping children in crisis find a new start when they move into a SOS Children's Village home in Surrey or are helped through SOS BC programs in the community.

This year's Run/Walk is expected to be bigger and better than ever, Lois explained, because more and more people are stepping up to make it a success.

"This includes the Rotary Club of Richmond who, for the very first time, are partnering with our SOS BC team to share their exciting and effective expertise in a successful hosting of the run and walk. We are so grateful for their enthusiastic assistance and hope that the relationship between SOS BC and Rotary will continue to grow into the future."

"We are also very thankful to those who have faithfully assisted us in the past including our sponsors, individuals and groups who give so generously of their time and talents, and the great team at SOS Children's Village BC.

To the retired Bouchards, the secret to enjoying life is pretty simple – get involved in helping others! It was back in the 1970s that they learned through a family member about the challenges of children placed in foster care.

“We were saddened to find that foster kids often move from family to family many times, a recipe for lifelong instability. Only 25 percent graduate high school, and family fracture is common because siblings can go to different homes and even different provinces!” said Lois. **“Recent attention has focussed on the fact that 700 B.C. youth leave foster care every year at age 19, often facing homelessness and despair.”**

Shortly after she began to research how foster care is handled in this country and beyond, SOS Kinderdorf International came to her attention.

“In the early ‘80s, I began to correspond with SOS International Secretary-General Dr. Hans Reinprecht. Through the work of SOS founder Dr. Hermann Gmeiner many children had found temporary and/or permanent care in SOS Children’s Villages after the Second World War.”

The Bouchards rolled up their sleeves.

Help from many volunteers and organizations made it possible in 1999 to open the first of five SOS Children’s Village BC homes in Surrey, each with a full-time surrogate parent or parents so youth can grow up in a stable family environment.

Therapies are provided so kids can heal from traumas suffered along the way and now SOS BC outreach therapeutic programs are also helping children and youth with challenges in the larger community, explained Lois.

While there have been many fundraisers to benefit SOS BC programs, thus far the 5-10 K and 2K Family Walk on the Middle Arm dyke trail has raised close to \$75,000. **“We have something for everyone,”** Lois said. “Grandparents bring their grandchildren to enjoy the fresh air and fitness and the kids love the children’s crafts and games. Those doing the longer distance enjoy the scenery and the flat course.”

The popular Silent Auction will again feature children’s wooden fold-up stools and other items hand-crafted by Gilles Bouchard’s buddies from the Richmond Seniors’ Centre carpentry shop.

“This is just one example of how SOS BC is bringing out the best in community involvement,” said Lois. “Everyone can pitch in and donate goods and services and our volunteers show up faithfully each year to help us help the children.”

For all Run/Walk information and to pre-register, go to www.sosbc.org/Run

Donations over \$20 to SOS Children’s Village BC are tax receipted. Participants can also register on race day prior to the event start.

About SOS Children's Village BC

SOS Children's Villages is the world's largest non-governmental, non-denominational child development organization for orphaned and abandoned children. It has existed for over 60 years with presence in 133 countries and over 550 villages. British Columbia is home to the only SOS Children's Village in Canada. SOS Children's Village BC provides community-based family care services to improve and sustain the quality of life for foster children and foster families through a variety of programs that address social development and healing. Headquartered in Surrey, the organization actively creates opportunities, programs and services to increase stability and continuity for foster children and their foster parents.

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