**Nanoose Community Services (NCS)**

**Some background ….**

Over fifteen years ago, Ginny Brucker, a passionate, caring local elementary school teacher, noticed that some children were coming to school hungry and without a lunch. Some were not looking forward to Christmas because their parents couldn’t afford to buy them gifts. She launched into action, supplying meals and soliciting Christmas gifts for the kids. Eventually she and her husband initiated stocking shelves at the Nanoose Community Centre with donated food for families in need.

In 2010, a volunteer board was set up and Nanoose Community Services was registered as a non-profit society. While the basic purpose (Neighbours Helping Neighbours) has not changed, programs have evolved from serving a few local individuals and families to the present suite of services. The most significant change was the transition from a food bank model to distributing gift cards, in partnership with Quality Foods, so that clients can choose their own groceries.

**Our key services …**

The primary purpose of NCS is to support individuals and families facing economic hardship. The Food Program is the single largest expense ($90,000 per year). NCS distributes grocery store food vouchers equivalent to one week's food to approved clients monthly, comprising fifty or more households depending on the season. The number of households served and resulting food expenditures continue to grow. Our volunteers meet individually with recipients each month to distribute food cards, also to update them on other available services (such as community dinners, referrals to career and community counselling).

**Other Services …**

NCS also provides much-needed help at Christmas through the annual Elf Program, which is quite visible in the community with the Elf trees at eleven different locations, and the Elf team working to put together hampers and gift packages at Nanoose Centre. This last year, hundreds of people had a better Christmas due to the incredible generosity of our community and sponsors.

NCS also provides financial support to two local schools, Nanoose Bay Elementary and Pass-Woodwinds Alternate School, to assist low-income Nanoose Bay students with expenses such as school supplies, field trips and other special but costly opportunities.

NCS sponsors the popular Sunday@4 winter lecture series, held at the Fairwinds Golf Clubhouse, with support from Fairwinds and Fairwinds Community Association.

**Our relationship with St. Mary’s …**

We are very blessed to have such wonderful support from St. Mary’s Anglican Church. As some of you likely know, NCS has an office in the Church Hall. We keep our files and support materials there, and hold our monthly meetings with clients there. The Annual General Meeting and occasional team meetings are held in the Church Hall. This year the AGM had been scheduled for April 7th but will be postponed to a later date now.

The NCS Board and volunteers are very grateful to St. Mary’s for allowing us this office/meeting space free of charge. We also appreciate the community dinners that St. Mary’s offers, which benefit so many in the community, and from 2017 to 2019 NCS helped raise funds for the updated kitchen through Thrifty’s Smile Card program. There are definitely synergies between our two organizations!

**How we operate …**

NCS has a seven-member Board of Directors, and a Clients Services team of fifteen. Many other volunteers come out to help us fundraise at various special events during the year. We do not have any paid staff, so our administrative costs are very low.

NCS is funded through numerous local fund-raising activities, partnerships with local businesses and groups, the generosity of individual donors, and occasional grants from foundations and regional government.

We always welcome volunteers, and our April e-Newsletter will highlight some of the different volunteer opportunities. If you wish to be on our mailing list, please go to the NCS Home page at <https://nanoosecommunityservices.org> and sign up to receive it. Subscribers receive a Newsletter every couple of months, and the occasional news flash or update on the Sunday@4 series.

My thanks to Rev. Selinde for inviting us to tell you about our organization and what we do. If you have questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me at [pambjornson@shaw.ca](mailto:pambjornson@shaw.ca) or by telephone at 250 228-4553.

Sincerely,

Pam Bjornson

Chair, Nanoose Community Services

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