

LIVE

Eradicating a family disease

■ **Hike 4 Huntington's:** A three-and-five-kilometre hike around the Rice Lake Loop Trail at the Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve, 4400 Lillooet Rd., North Vancouver, Sunday, Sept. 27, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Family activities, including live music, barbecue and crafts, to follow. Info: www.huntingtonsociety.ca/bcc.

Erin McPhee

emcphee@nsnews.com

WHILE any medical diagnosis can affect all those in a family, it's especially the case with Huntington's disease.

The Huntington Society of Canada estimates that one in every 1,000 Canadians are affected, meaning they have a family member or friend with the disease, are a caregiver, or are at risk themselves. Interested in honouring this prevalence and impact on family units, representatives of the B.C. chapter of the society have put together a family fun day, dubbed the Hike 4 Huntington's. The 12th annual event is being held Sunday, Sept. 27 at the Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve in North Vancouver.

According to the society, Huntington's disease is an inherited brain disorder that causes cells in specific parts of the brain to die. Symptoms include emotional turmoil, depression, apathy or obsessive behaviour; mental loss, for example, an inability to focus, think and recall or make decisions; as well as physical deterioration, weight loss, involuntary movements, difficulties with co-ordination, or an inability to walk, talk or swallow.

The society estimates one in every 10,000 Canadians are diagnosed with the disease and at the moment, there are no treatments that slow or stop its progression.

The impact of a diagnosis on a family is something Diane Tullson, public relations volunteer for the hike, knows all too well. Tullson's mother battled the disease for 20 years and passed away a few years ago.

"It really is a lifetime, all-consuming disease — waiting for it, dealing with it, grieving it," she says.

Funds raised from the hike will support research efforts toward a cure and individual and family services.

"We rely on the hike to help fund our resource centre which provides counselling and social support services for patients with



Diane Tullson gears up for next weekend's Hike 4 Huntington's, a family-friendly event being held at the Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve.

NEWS photo Paul McGrath

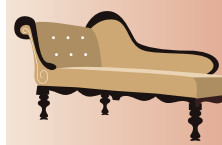
Huntington's disease," says Tullson. "It's at the UBC Hospital and is an amazing resource centre. We have centres throughout the province that we fund as well through this chapter."

The hike comes on the heels of the 2009 World Congress on Huntington's Disease, held Sept. 12-15 in Vancouver. The gather-

ing brought together researchers, clinicians, and members of the Huntington's disease community from around the world.

"The clock is ticking for families all over this province. . . .," says Tullson. "Every step we take on that hike, every dime we raise, goes to eradicating this and stopping it. It's a family story that just has to stop."

on the couch



Helping a family member with a loss

QUESTION:

My grandfather died nine months ago and my grandmother is still really sad and not really doing things to make herself feel any better. They were married for 52 years and really loved each a lot so I know this is really hard for her, but I wish she would start doing all the things she used to do. She is living with my husband and I right now. Is there anything I can do?

Answer:

Let's first try to figure out whether there is a problem here or if your grandmother is simply grieving a husband that she misses terribly. If I were seeing your grandmother for grief counselling, I would want to determine whether she has dipped into some level of depression. I would be looking for the following: Does she have a depressed mood (tearful, sad, empty) most of the day, nearly every day? Does she experience less pleasure in all

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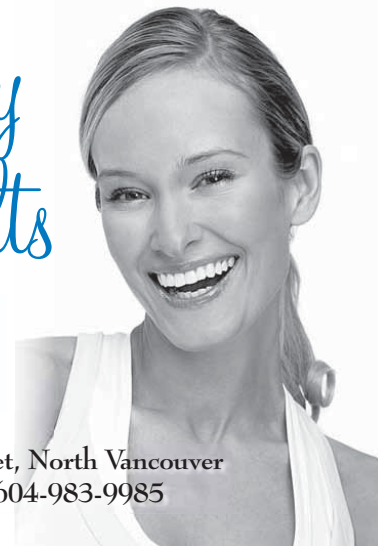
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