

A gateway to healing

>> BY STACEY CURTIS

On 11.11.11, at 11 p.m., Andrea Mattson announced the opening of the Red Gate Healing Space. "The choice of name was obvious," says Mattson, "there's a big red gate outside." Numerologically speaking, the name adds up to 33, which is triple 11: Mattson's favourite number. "Eleven signifies the coming together of humanity through community. Brother and sisterhood." In Japanese, the red gate, or torii, may have acted as a bird perch; it signifies an entrance to sacred space. "Birds," says Mattson, "are messengers of the soul."

Mattson is all about community. Her objective: to provide an affordable space for practicing healers and resources for those seeking healing. "There's a waiting room where there will be a library for people to borrow books. This will also be a social area, providing information about what's available within the community and contacts for healers."

The space comprises three rooms: the waiting area, the main room and the office. The main room holds 15–20 seated people and 5–10 where the healing or workshop

is movement oriented. The office space is available for spiritual counselling: tarot and tea leaf readings, for example.

Mattson shares the grand and tranquil building with two other spiritual havens: the Buddhist meditation Shambhala Centre and the Victoria Miracle Centre. "I'm giving this space a facelift right off the start. It's such a serene place, being right between the two centres celebrating their own spirituality. The energy in here is right and now it's just a matter of making the place look how it feels."

This past October, Mattson hosted the first of a now annual Island Intuitive Arts Festival at the Orange Hall, here in Fernwood. To Mattson, "healing arts is a lot to do with self discovery, personal development and embracing holistic health." The two-day festival afforded individuals connection to their community by combining myriad healers from the intuitive arts field—tarot, crystal ball and star-trek card readers, sound healers, reiki, massage, shamanism and laughter yoga. The success of this festival certainly played a part in Mattson opening the centre she'd always dreamed of.

After a six-year hiatus from living in



Andrea Mattson stands in front of the Red Gate Healing Space. Photo by Stacey Curtis.

Fernwood, Mattson is returning to house both herself and her business in the area. "Fernwood chose me," she says of having stumbled into her new abodes. "Fernwood is so creative. Everybody is very open, very free and very relaxed...I think that this is the start of a really big healing journey for me and I'm excited to embrace the community, to meet like-minded people and to join together with people who want peace and love in their life."

The centre's grand opening—a social gathering to view and learn about the space over tea—is set for December 10, from 7–10 p.m. While Mattson is also a musician, her intuitive art is as a psychic. She offers 15-minute drop-in readings Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3–7 p.m. in synchronicity with massage in the centre. To learn more, drop by the centre at 2033 Belmont Avenue or contact Mattson through her website: www.psychicsong.com.

neighbourhood non-profit:

Boys & Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria

A good place to be,
right here in Fernwood.

>> BY SARAH HANCOCK

Many Fernwood residents will know us as a 'club' based out of the old fire hall on Yates Street, but we're doubtful they know the full extent of our work throughout Greater Victoria. Our 'club' is actually a family of services, held together through a common purpose—to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life. Our services encompass social and recreational programming, programs for parents, care homes (supported living environments) and intensive support systems that address issues such as youth homelessness, youth pregnancy, mental health and addictions and youth justice. Whether they are preventative programs or responsive interventions, all of our programs are positive, strength-focused, and build capacity based on where that individual is at and what they need.

Our community clubs are at the heart



BGC participants take a ride outside the society's Fernwood office. Photo courtesy of BGC.

of our philosophy to provide youth with a 'good place to be'. The downtown community club offers after-school drop in programs for youth from Monday to Friday and is an important resource for many families whose children attend the Central Middle School. Run by friendly and supportive staff and volunteers, the program gives youth an opportunity to engage in a

range of recreational activities, prepare and eat healthy snacks and have free time to hang out in a positive environment. Once a week the club makes out-trips to our Wilderness Camp in Metchosin or other places such as the museum or the ice rink.

Investing in our youth should be a priority for all of us—it is essentially an investment in the future of our community. Boys

& Girls Clubs believes community-based approaches hold the greatest potential for building the capacity of our youth. We have expertise and experience in doing this, but the support of local families, businesses and other organizations is a vital piece of the puzzle. We are facing critical funding challenges to keep our four community clubs running as they are now. If you feel, as a resident or business in Fernwood, that you could contribute in some way, we would be delighted to hear from you. Likewise, if you would like to know how our programs and services could help you and your family, please get in touch.

With our 50th anniversary coming up in 2010, we are looking for people to join us in celebrating our legacy and our future. Also, if you have memories or stories about Boys & Girls Clubs, please share! With regards to anything mentioned above, please contact Kate Mansell, Director of Development at 250-384-9133.

Do you know of a great Fernwood non-profit organization (society, club, church, service group, etc) that is doing amazing things in our neighbourhood? Tell us about it! Email us at vibe@fernwoodnrg.ca.



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