

## CITY OF SURREY ANNOUNCES COMMITMENT TO AUTISM ACCESSIBILITY AT CANUCKS AUTISM NETWORK BIRTHDAY FESTIVAL



SURREY, B.C. - On Saturday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018, thousands gathered at Surrey Civic Plaza for the first-ever CAN Birthday Festival, sponsored by Coast Capital Savings. The inclusive, outdoor birthday party celebrated Canucks Autism Network (CAN)'s 10th anniversary and featured carnival games, bouncy castles, a vendor market, food trucks and live entertainment throughout the day.

Vancouver broadcaster, Steve Darling, took the lead as event MC and shared the stage with special guests, including CAN Board Member and five-time Olympian, Charmaine Crooks, and City of Surrey Councillor, Dave Woods, who made an exciting announcement on behalf of the Mayor of Surrey.

“In 2012, the City of Surrey established a partnership with Canucks Autism Network,” stated Councillor Woods. “Since that time, the City has been taking vital steps to become more accessible. All City of Surrey staff supporting this event have received autism training from Canucks Autism Network. Today, we are thrilled to be launching the Sensory Friendly Space logo, which identifies a calm zone where individuals who are feeling overwhelmed can enjoy a quiet space to relax.”

Two Sensory Friendly Spaces were offered at the CAN Birthday Festival and used by a number of attendees. The Councillor then confirmed the City’s commitment to continued autism accessibility.

“Accessibility initiatives will not only be implemented at today’s event,” assured Councillor Woods. “The City of Surrey is dedicated to providing sensory friendly spaces, video storybooks, accessibility toolkits and other resources at future events across our community.”

The announcement was followed by an on-stage pledge by Captain Ben Wilson of the Surrey Firefighters Charitable Society. He challenged every festival attendee to post a happy birthday video to Canucks Autism Network using the hashtag #CANBdayFest.

“With every video birthday wish posted, the Surrey Firefighters Charitable Society will donate one dollar, up to \$10,000, to support Canucks Autism Network,” pledged Wilson.

With 1 in 66 Canadian children now diagnosed with autism, the pledge could not have come at a better time. The organization is urging anyone who has a spare minute to post a video to social media wishing Canucks Autism Network a happy birthday with #CANBdayWish. The #CANBdayWish campaign will continue until the end of July when Canucks Autism Network will announce the total funds raised.

For more information about the event, accessibility initiatives or pledge, please email [lindsay.petrie@canucksautism.ca](mailto:lindsay.petrie@canucksautism.ca).

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**ABOUT CANUCKS AUTISM NETWORK (CAN):**

Founded by Vancouver Canucks Co-owners Paolo and Clara Aquilini in 2008, Canucks Autism Network (CAN) provides year-round sports and recreation programs to individuals and families living with autism, while increasing awareness and providing training in communities across British Columbia.

**MEDIA INQUIRIES:**

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