

Safe Harbour promotes tolerance

Jhim Burwell, Langley Advance

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Langley Community Services Society (LCSS) is encouraging businesses to step up and get on board with the Safe Harbour (safeharbour.ca) program.

It is an ongoing quest with a special focus on Nov. 16 in honour of UNESCO's International Day of Tolerance.

"LCSS is hoping that involvement will promote diversity, tolerance and education in Langley City and Township," said LCSS Immigrant & Multicultural Services Program Manager Ronnie Law.



Anh Son, an LCSS Vietnamese outreach worker, proudly displayed a Safe Harbour Star application, with the Safe Haven decal in the background.

Jhim Burwell/Langley Advance

The Safe Harbour program is a provincially-funded program, which is currently established in 21 communities, involving more than 300 businesses and organizations.

Law explained, "The goal of the program is to promote diversity and inclusion throughout the community, making it a safer and healthier environment for everyone."

The slogan for this program is "Respect for all".

Participating businesses and organizations are asked to commit to three things: first, simply to treat all of their clients or customers in an equitable manner. Next is to be a Safe Harbour, which means providing a safe place for any community member who has experienced mistreatment or discrimination.

"That may take the form of just a place to sit for a few minutes, a glass of water or telephone to use," said Law, "or perhaps offering information as to how they can seek further assistance."

The third commitment is to prepare employees to welcome diversity and assist those who are seeking refuge from discrimination.

"The program aims at partnership with the businesses and organizations in Langley who support the values of diversity and are willing to make a commitment to them," said Law, adding LCSS can arrange a free two-hour training session on how to better equip businesses or organizations to be a place of inclusion and welcoming diversity.

LCSS also provides a variety of resources and training materials to support Safe Harbour.

Law said, "Safe Harbour locations proudly display a colourful window decal that publicly announces their commitment to understanding the needs of diverse community members and to provide equitable treatment for all.

"These locations also serve as temporary sanctuaries with staff members prepared to assist people who experience harassment and briefly need a safe place to go.

"Right now, we are recruiting volunteers who can help us in promoting the Safe Harbour Program," said Law. They will be named Safe Harbour Stars, meaning they will be enthusiastic role models for understanding and respecting diversity, as well as for creating positive, safer environments within their communities.

"A Safe Harbour Star will assist in recruiting business and organizations to become Safe Harbours and will promote diversity within Langley," said Law.

If you are interested in knowing about the Safe Harbour Program, you can visit www.safeharbour.ca.

If you want to support the Safe Harbour Program or become a Safe Harbour Star, you can contact Law at LCSS 604-534-7810 Local 1405 or email at rlaw@lcss.ca.

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