



Burnaby **now**

FRIDAY OCTOBER 7, 2016

LOCAL NEWS - LOCAL MATTERS

There's more at Burnabynow.com

A CLOSER LOOK

Walking through grief

By Tereza Verenca
tverenca@burnabynow.com

When Colin Wong lost his wife last year from uterine cancer, he bottled up his grief.

Every time he talked about her passing to friends or family, he'd cry "very badly." He would turn down social gatherings and almost never come out of his "cave."

Things changed a few months ago when a counsellor at the Burnaby Hospice Society suggested he attend the organization's new, weekly bereavement walk.

Since June, volunteer Ron Bahrey, 72, has led a small group of people every Monday around the Burnaby Mountain golf course, teaching them the practice of mindfulness.

"With grieving, you get all kinds of people out there telling you how you should be feeling, where you should be at this point," said Bahrey, a



MOVING FORWARD: From left, Ron Anderson, Ron Bahrey and Colin Wong take a walk around the Burnaby Mountain golf course during a recent 'bereavement walk' led by Bahrey. The weekly, one-hour walks are designed to help those working through grief connect with others facing the same challenges. PHOTO CORNELIA NAYLOR

Continued on page 9

'When they share their grief, I understand their pain'

Continued from page 1

self-proclaimed mindfulness practitioner of 15 years. "With mindfulness, I remind them it's not about that at all. It's about listening to their own experience, noticing their thoughts. It's bringing the tension to the present moment."

For Wong, attending the one-hour walk has allowed him to step out of his shell.

"It's very helpful knowing others have been in a similar situation, and that I can share my healing and they understand. When they share their grief, I understand their pain too. We share tips with each other about how we handle ourselves," he told the *Burna-*

by NOW.

Today, Wong doesn't shy away from talking about death should someone ask.

"It's like an exercise. When I exercise, I become better at it. If I don't do it, it becomes a lost use of my body function."

Ron Anderson, another walker, joined the group for a different reason. He's currently the full-time caregiver for his wife, who suffers from a serious and complex chronic disease, which has made her house-bound.

He said prior to the weekly outing, he wasn't getting out much and was very stressed out.

"It was to a point where I was starting to show symp-

oms that were kind of scary," Anderson said. "I had to change my routine to get out, so this is part of the program of looking after myself. I found that if I don't, I can't successfully look after my wife."

The hospice society's Liina McNeil, the bereavement coordinator and counsellor, adopted the bereavement walk after seeing it in other communities.

McNeil, who is of Eastern European heritage, said her experience is one where family members embrace death and dying, sometimes dropping into the cemetery to have lunch with those who have passed.

She said death is still a

very taboo topic in North America.

"It doesn't need to be. As soon as I say hospice, so many people recoil. But yet, all of us get to the end of life and none of us get out of

here alive," she said. "Being a clinical counsellor, it's so much easier for us to transition in hard places in life when we're able to gather information and talk about things."

The bereavement walk runs from 10 to 11 a.m. every Monday.

Call 604-520-5024 if you are interested in participating.



Burnaby Schools
FALL 2017-18

Burnaby Schools offer a variety of programs to support the needs of all learners, including the following advanced