



# THE CAPITAL AND VANCOUVER ISLAND

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## A feast of cultural connections

**At Our Place, Sikh youth will be serving a Christmas Eve dinner with an Indian twist**

**KATIE DeROSA**  
Times Colonist

Plates filled with fragrant chick pea curry and chewy roti pass between a row of volunteers and then into the hands of hungry people at Our Place Society.

As tables fill and people tuck into their dinners, it might look like any other meal at the shelter.

But for the Sikh youth who organized it, it's a way to connect people across cultures and give back to a community in need.

The youth have been sponsoring a dinner at Our Place once a month since June, preparing the food the day before at the Gurdwara, or Sikh temple. The group will be back on Dec. 24, serving a Christmas Eve dinner with an Indian twist.

Upon hearing that news, Charlie Stanfield's eyes widened and he brought his hands to his mouth.

"That's fabulous," said the 64-year-old, who lives at Our Place. "I'm a vegetarian and this is just wonderful for me." He said it can be hard to get meat-free meals at the shelter.

A year ago, Stanfield could be found drinking at the corner of Main and East Hastings in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. He was the victim of a violent attack.

Now, with a stable place to sleep, "it's the first time in my life I feel safe," he said.

Stanfield said his 91-year-old mother died in his arms three years ago. In his time at Our Place, the staff has become his family, as have regular volunteers like those from the Sikh community.

"For us, it's very humbling and an honour to be able to do this [also on Christmas Eve], because that's the time it's needed the most," said Peter Gill, a Victoria police officer who is heavily involved in the Sikh community.



Preet Parha, right, and Priya Baines, second from right, hand out chick pea curry and roti, with help from other volunteers. TIMES COLONIST

"People who are vulnerable and might not have anything, we're there to provide them a hot meal."

Alexis Dumaresq has been volunteering with the Sikh youth since June and looks forward to serving at Our Place.

"Every time we come, people say this is their favourite meal," Dumaresq said. "They look forward to us coming."

Priya Baines said food is often the most accessible way to share one's culture.

"I think it's really nice," Baines said. "It's teaching them about

Indian culture and the food."

The society has an average of 12 sponsored breakfasts and four sponsored lunches or dinners a month, but in December, there will be 28 sponsored meals, said Our Place spokesman Grant McKenzie.

"We serve three meals per day, seven days per week, but when a group sponsors a meal, it helps with our food budget and also offers the family members more variety and something new, such as a curry, that they might not otherwise get," McKenzie said. kderosa@timescolonist.com



Our Place is among the organizations that benefit from the Times Colonist Christmas Fund, which raises money to help people in need in Greater Victoria. Last year's fundraising total was close to \$294,000.

To donate:

- Go to timescolonist.com/donate. The site is open 24 hours a day and provides an immediate tax receipt.
- Mail a cheque, payable to the Times Colonist Christmas Fund Society, to the Times Colonist Christmas Fund, 2621 Douglas St., Victoria V8T 4M2.
- Use your credit card by phoning 250-995-4438 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m., Monday through Friday. Outside those hours, messages will be accepted.



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## The week that was, and advice for partygoers

**The week in news:**

**Item No. 1: Actor Jim Nabors died.**

Admit it: You saw Gomer Pyle's picture flash up on the TV news and automatically assumed he was the latest celeb outed for sexual impropriety. That's how common it has become to see trusted public figures accused of predatory behaviour. And the nicer they seemed, the worse it feels when they're exposed (as it were). Feet of clay, and all that.

Swear to God, if I see Tom Hanks' photo on the screen, it better be because he was hit by a dump truck.

**Item No. 2: British Prime Minister Theresa May chastised Donald Trump for reposting a U.K. far-right group's racist videos online. Trump lashed back on Twitter, but accidentally targeted the account of another Theresa May, a young mother in the south of England.**

Britons are now treating Trump's planned trip to the U.K. as the greatest invasion threat since Dunkirk. Don't worry, if he can't locate the right Theresa May (let alone Puerto Rico) what are his chances of finding Britain?

**Item No. 3: Trump threatened retaliation after North Korea tested another ballistic missile.**

Given Trump's grasp of geography, North Dakota, North Carolina and North Saanich should all be worried.

**Item No. 4: It rained all but two days in November. That's a new record for Greater Victoria.**

This place sucks.

**Item No. 5: Greater Victoria has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, just 3.3 per cent.** This place is awesome.

**Item No. 6: A poll of Canadian office workers found fewer than 30 per cent find company Christmas parties to be fun.**

The good news: More than 70 per cent of Canadian office workers are quite bright.

The bad news: You're going anyway because, just like jury duty or family funerals, people will get all fussy if you don't show up.

Some employees actually go overboard, not to get crazy but to get ahead: They see the office party as an opportunity to impress the brass. "Like it or not, bosses can use Christmas parties to do an informal evaluation of whether you're future advancement material or not," the

*Vancouver Province* once wrote.

Suit-and-tied publications offer tips on how to tiptoe through the social minefield. "Your attire needs to be suitable for a business event, not a nightclub," *Business Insider* quoted etiquette expert Barbara Pachter as saying. "Don't wear anything that is too short, too tight, too low, or too anything."

*Business News Daily* chimed in with: "Be sure to thank your boss and/or owner of the company for the party. Expressing gratitude is a great way to make one last positive impression."

And, of course, watch the booze. "One drink, maybe two, is probably more than enough," advised *Forbes* magazine. "You want to relax and have a good time, not end up on YouTube with a lampshade on your head."

But that brings us to another truth: You might not want to go viral on social media, but your co-workers have other ideas. They would be thrilled to see you on Trump's Twitter feed.

That is, office parties are like hockey games. No one would go if there wasn't a pretty good chance of seeing a few good scoring attempts, some tripping, some action in the corners and at least one fist fight. Jeez, your colleagues see you all the time. Why would they waste another evening with you unless they were pretty sure of getting to watch you do something inappropriate, like barf on your supervisor while trying to pull his underpants over his head?

With that in mind, I'd like to drag out my own Rules of Office Party Etiquette:

- Dance like nobody's taping you.
- Don't spend too much on alcohol. Steal it from other guests.
- Compliment your boss: "Your spouse is totally hot. No, I mean it, I even posted pictures."
- Drop your drink on the dance floor. And your pants.
- Climb over the bar and show the bartender how to make a real Old Fashioned.
- Climb up on the stage and help the singer with the lyrics. The drummer could use some assistance, too.
- Be the last to leave. It shows you have stamina.
- Why pay for a taxi when the police will drive you for free?

This is what your co-workers — at least the 30 per cent who find Christmas parties fun — will be talking about on Monday, or whenever they call up Facebook.

## It's not too late for a flu shot, as cases rise

**This season's primary strain is particularly hard on older people, health official warns**

**JEFF BELL**  
Times Colonist

The number of influenza cases is expected to rise this month, so a flu shot is still strongly advised by health officials.

"We typically tend to see the rates really go up closer to the end of December, into January," said Dr. Dee Hoyano, a medical health officer with Island Health.

She said demand for the vaccine is high in Island Health's jurisdiction. There were 260,000 doses of vaccine ordered for the current flu season, and more can be obtained if needed.

"We've distributed a ton of flu vaccine this year and the demand from pharmacists and physicians has been very high," Hoyano said.

Last year saw 231,354 doses of vaccine taken.

The primary strain of flu this year appears to be H3N2, which can be particularly hard on the elderly.

A flu shot is always a good idea, she said, adding that it is unusual for it to cause any major side-effects.

Hoyano said people should try to make the time for a shot, despite this being a busy time of year.

"The sooner you get a shot, the better. Now is the time to get prepared," she said. "With Christmas coming up, lots of people have other things on their mind, so it's a good idea to get it done before you get caught up in the holidays."

Frequent hand washing is also important in fending off the flu, Hoyano said.

Each year in Canada, influenza



**Flu shots don't usually cause side-effects, a health officer says.** ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

leads to more than 12,000 hospitalizations and kills 3,500 people. Among the most vulnerable are young children, older adults and people with chronic illness.

The flu season has not yet brought any surprises, Hoyano said.

"We're definitely seeing some increased activity, but it's kind of normal for what we expect this time of year," she said. "So we have seen some cases but ... we don't have a lot of people in hospital, for example, with flu at this point."

Hoyano said there was a spike in respiratory illness about a month ago, "but that wasn't primarily the flu." A North Island care home had an outbreak of influenza B, but it did not spread beyond the facility, she said.

For details on where to get a flu shot, go to the Island Health website at [vha.ca/flu](http://vha.ca/flu) or the Immunize B.C. website at [immunizebc.ca/clinics/flu](http://immunizebc.ca/clinics/flu). jwbell@timescolonist.com