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BC Hospitality Foundation
by Renee Blackstone

After a full and busy year, the BC Hospitality Foundation is gearing up for an even busier 2010.

One of the most gratifying events in which the BCHF participated was a fundraiser held in October for Wendy Collins, a single mom of two sons in their 20s and an 18-year employee of the Muddy Waters Pub in Nanaimo. Collins is a pancreatic cancer patient who needs 24-hour care, which is being provided by her sons who moved back in with her. The BCHF provided the family with a cheque for \$5,000 under its "matching funds" program, bringing the total raised for her care to just over \$16,000.

Collins' son, Tyler, said in a letter to the Foundation that his mother was "overwhelmed and very surprised when presented with the money from the fundraiser." The money, he said, has "allowed us the freedom to focus on her health and not have to worry about finances."

The Foundation - initially created to help those in the food, beverage and hospitality industry deal with medical expenses beyond traditional insurance coverage - expanded its mandate to include scholarships for young people wanting to further their education in the industry. The scholarship fund was created in 2009 when the BCHF board welcomed representatives from the Alliance of Beverage Licensees and the BC Hotel Association. BCHF Scholarship Committee Chair Bing Smith announced there were 11 scholarships given out at the Hospitality Industry Conference Gala Dinner held November 24th at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel.

"The scholarship component came about primarily due to ABLE, the BCHA, and BCRFA agreeing to forego their individual golf tournaments in favour of one large industry tournament in 2009, with all proceeds going to the BCHF. For many years, the hotel association had used the golf tournament to raise funds for charity as well as scholarships and the three associations agreed that a portion of the monies raised by the combined golf tournament would go to scholarships each year," Smith said.

Among the students receiving a \$2,000 scholarship was April Erickson, a third-year hospitality and tourism major at Okanagan College in Kelowna. Following receipt of the scholarship, Erickson wrote: "It is a huge relief for me to know that there are companies and foundations out there who want to see students succeed and become the best. I will try to do everyone at the foundation proud."

Erickson's goal is to build a career in sport and event marketing for a destination marketing organization. "For example, Kelowna focuses a lot on wine festivals, family festivals, and sporting events, and I'd like to be a part of the team that markets the area and brings people in for sports in particular," she says.

In other BCHF news, Business Development Manager Alan Sacks says the foundation will step up its fundraising efforts with an Industry Day as well as an online auction. Both events are in the initial planning stages. For more information or to volunteer time, please call 604-984-8649 or email asacks@bchospitalityfoundation.com.



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