



Media Release

VIHA grant will help at-risk teen girls through power of dance

Monday, April 24, 2017, Nanaimo, BC – A generous grant from the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) will give 12 teen girls in Nanaimo a unique opportunity to experience the healing and expressive powers of dance. Between September 2017 and April 2018, the Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) Harbourfront branch will host 22 dance sessions for girls aged 13 – 18 years, led by Hannah Beach, founder and director of the Ottawa-based [Dandelion Dance Company](#).

“This program will impart leadership skills and teach self-expression to teen girls facing challenges in their lives,” says VIRL librarian and program cofounder Jason Kuffler. “The transformative power of dance and creation has the capacity to change lives. I have no doubt that this program will have positive outcomes for these 12 girls.”

Kuffler and colleague Sheila Hammond-Todd were asked to brainstorm a program idea that would engage hard to reach teens in Nanaimo. Todd had previously attended a professional development session that featured a presentation by Hannah Beach, an experience that set the wheels in motion for this program that promotes self-expression through dance, and that takes advantage of resources available at the Harbourfront Library.

For the program participants, no previous dance experience is preferred. The girls are encouraged to share their ideas and interests, and to develop them together. No matter their experience or ability, the program will focus on building skills and confidence in these young girls.

As part of the program, the girls will also receive instruction at the library's Creativity Commons on writing, photography, photo editing, videography, sound recording and editing, and book printing. At the end of the eight months, the girls will host a dance performance, and use the library's Storylab to produce a book about their unique journey.

In addition to partnering with Dandelion Dance Company to administer the program, VIRL has also partnered with the Nanaimo Boys and Girls Club to help identify and select the 12 program participants. The selection process is slated to begin in late spring or early summer and a waitlist will open once the program has filled.

The total amount awarded for the grant is \$12,000. VIRL would like to thank VIHA for its generous support of this important program.



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About Hannah Beach

Hannah studied dance through the Professional Ballet Programs at the Alberta Ballet and Royal Winnipeg Ballet. She is an award-winning educator, and the author of seven books on movement and expression. Now based in Nanaimo, she travels frequently to speak at national and international education conferences.

About Dandelion Dance

Dandelion Dance is a non-profit registered charity based in Ottawa. They offer life-changing programs that bring girls of all backgrounds and abilities together to use their "lived" experience in the collective creation of dance works. They believe that every person is creative and that creating together is a powerful tool for individual and collective growth. Their programs help students discover their own creativity and celebrate that of others.

About Vancouver Island Regional Library

Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) is the fifth-largest library system in British Columbia. We serve over 430,000 people on Vancouver Island, Haida Gwaii, and Bella Coola on the Central Coast through 39 branch libraries, a virtual branch, and a books-by-mail service. VIRL's holdings number one million and include books, magazines, CDs and DVDs. Administrative offices are located in Nanaimo.

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Librarian Jason Kuffler, program cofounder