

Rescuing food, reducing hunger**B.C.'S ONLY FOOD EXCHANGE A FINALIST FOR CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD QUEST OUTREACH SOCIETY RECOGNIZED FOR "RESCUING FOOD AND REDUCING HUNGER"**

VANCOUVER - Vancouver's Quest Outreach Society - the only B.C. food exchange rescuing food and reducing hunger - is a finalist for a 2006 Canadian Environmental Award from Canadian Geographic magazine and the Government of Canada. Winners will be announced on June 5 in Vancouver.

Quest was recognized in the Sustainable Living category because of its unique approach to feeding Lower Mainland families. Working with surpluses from grocery stores, wholesalers and bakeries, Quest collects and distributes overstock, mislabelled or near-expired products that would otherwise go to waste in the Lower Mainland, and diverts that food to people who need it.

"We are a fully functioning food exchange," says Shelley Wells, Quest's executive director. "We connect people who have the food with the people who need it. It's as simple as that."

Last year, with the help of nearly 600 volunteers, Quest handled food worth in excess of \$7 million from a 575-metre warehouse on Vancouver's Eastside. Quest then supplied bulk food, grocery hampers and hot meals to 72 social service agencies in the Lower Mainland - women's shelters, hospices, youth street programs and AIDS clinics. A zero-waste policy ensures that Quest's own excess and spoiled perishables are shipped as livestock feed to local farms or sent to compost bins in community gardens. The program diverts 37 tonnes of surplus food from landfills each week.

"We are at capacity, and we're still only capturing less than one per cent of the existing food surplus," Wells explains. The rest goes to landfill. We're limited only by our resources. We need more trucks and more warehouse space."

Quest believes that reducing hunger does not require more food production, but the redistribution of high-quality food already produced so it doesn't go to waste. Rescuing quality food and redistributing it is an action-based solution that enables resources to be used wisely for the benefit of individuals, communities and the environment.

For more information visit, www.questoutreach.org.

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The Canadian Environment Awards: A Celebration of Community Achievement is a national program that recognizes individuals and groups of Canadians who have made outstanding contributions to the protection, restoration and preservation of the Canadian environment. For more, visit www.canadiangeographic.ca/cea2006.