

# VANCOUVER **courier**

## Mobile market brings groceries to seniors

### Nonprofit aims to provide fresh produce for seniors

[Sandra Thomas](#) / Vancouver Courier

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Westside Mobile Market coordinator Annie Lambla (right) with the help of volunteer Raymonde Jabaji sets up the mobile fruit and vegetable market outside the South Granville Seniors Centre Thursday morning. Photograph By Rebecca Blissett

When Linda Darbey moved to South Granville in the 1970s, she and her mother shopped at a Safeway store once located between West 13th and 14th avenues.

There were two green grocers and some bakeries, but they're all gone, said Darbey. The only place left is Meinhardt [Fine Foods].

The senior, who doesn't drive, used to take the bus and SkyTrain with her mother to a grocery shop at Metrotown, but then the Save-On-Foods opened on Cambie Street, which made the trip much shorter.

Darbey's mother has since passed away, and arthritis has set in, making carrying groceries home on transit more difficult, so the senior was delighted about a new program at the South Granville Seniors Centre. The Westside Mobile Market offers seniors and low-income residents of the South Granville area fresh fruits and vegetables at prices much lower than what's offered at most grocery stores or farmers markets. Darbey shopped at the market last week and was impressed with her purchases. For a total of \$6.50, she purchased lettuce, tomatoes, apples, bananas, red onions and a cauliflower.

It was really fresh and good quality and it's only two blocks from home, said Darbey.

Merrily Tan, program and volunteer coordinator for the centre, said despite preconceived notions that all West Side seniors are wealthy, that's simply not the case.

This might be a more affluent area, but there are a lot of low-income seniors, said Tan, who added besides financial barriers, many seniors aren't physically able to walk or take transit to affordable grocery stores.

Our centre sees a lot of seniors who have problems in accessing affordable produce in our neighbourhood. There aren't many affordable grocery stores nearby and then when they do purchase produce they have problems getting it home.

Those issues make a trip to one of the city's popular farmers markets out of the question for a senior, which is why the seniors centre and Westside Food Collaborative partnered to create the program. Now through Sept. 6, inexpensive produce will be purchased at the Greater Vancouver Foodbank and sold at two locations, including at the seniors centre, 1420 West 12th Ave., every Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and at Marpole Place Neighbourhood House, 1305 West 70th Ave., from 2 to 4 p.m.

Tan said the one-year pilot project was designed specifically to help seniors and other vulnerable residents living in food deserts areas across the city with no affordable grocery stores within walking distance.

She added the prices should be affordable enough for most seniors' budgets: a head of cauliflower will sell for \$1, while two bananas or apples will sell for 25 cents. The project is supported by the Greater Vancouver Foodbank Society and made possible with funding from the Vancouver Foundation and Greenest City Fund.

Jen Pleadwell, administrative development manager for Vancouver Farmers Markets, approves of the plan. The non-profit organization is responsible for eight farmers markets that take place across the city, including the winter and holiday markets.

I think it's a great idea, said Pleadwell. We can't be all things to all people so we support anything that gives people access to fresh food.

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