

## **Volunteer Grandma makes a Difference in Family Life**

Written by Cherise Louie from *Burnaby Community Connections*, September 2008

Sitting on the floor of the boys' playroom, Diana appears to be completely at ease with the energetic hubbub surrounding her. Yi-An, 6, and Yi-Van, 3, call out "Grandma! Grandma!" while they scramble to the top of a home-made jungle gym and drive toy cars around Yi-Chun, their mother, tells them to be careful in Mandarin, and quickly repeats it again in English.

Even though the boys call her 'Grandma', Diana is not their real grandma. Yi-Chun and her husband Andrey knew it was fate when they wanted to look for a grandparent figure for their boys and found Volunteer Grandparents. It is a program that matches families with older adults who want to be a part of another family's life. The objective is to help create long term extended family relationships.

"My father is in Taiwan, and Andrey's mother is in Russia," explained Yi-Chun. "We wanted the boys to have a good experience with a grandparent."

Diana, on the other hand, heard about Volunteer Grandparents through a friend. She wanted to do something to help a family and to foster a relationship with children even though she has her own twin granddaughters who, unfortunately, live in Ottawa.

After a long application process, the family was introduced to Diana, who conveniently lives within a couple of blocks away from their house. She quickly bonded with the entire family and they were soon going kayaking and attending concerts together on Granville Island.

"Often in the evenings, Andrey and I take Yi-An and Yi-Van for a walk to the ball park and we watch baseball games together," says Diana. The boys got so involved in baseball that Yi-Chun bought some baseball games on DVD which they now avidly watch.

Volunteer Grandparents and the Florio family offer bursaries each year and Diana nominated her new family. To their delight, the family was granted a \$200 bursary that will be used to send Yi-An and Yi-Van to art classes at Arts Umbrella on Granville Island, giving them the opportunity to participate in courses that they would normally not be able to afford.

Yi-Chun is also very grateful for having Diana there to give her some time to herself. "I stay at home with the kids all day, so when Grandma comes over, it's my downtime when she and Andrey take the kids out," she says. She is a stay-at-home mother and can often feel overwhelmed from teaching them how to read Mandarin and going on long bike rides with them to Metrotown. Whenever she needs help, she calls Diana for some wisdom and advice.

Diana is a friend not only to Yi-Chun and Andrey, but also to Yi-An and Yi-Van. Together, they have fostered a relationship that can match that of blood relatives.

*If you are interested in welcoming a Volunteer Grandparent to your family, or becoming one, call Volunteer Grandparents at 604-736-8271*