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## **Season's Greetings**

**Happy holidays from the board and staff of the BC Epilepsy Society. This year we celebrated 58 years of supporting, strengthening and empowering people living with epilepsy and their families.**

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## **December 2017**

*Inside:*

- **Welcome our new ED**
- **Raffle Thank You & Winner Announcements**
- **A Personal Story**
- **2017 Chalet Lights Display, 33% of Donations to BCES**
- **5 Tips For Managing The Holidays**



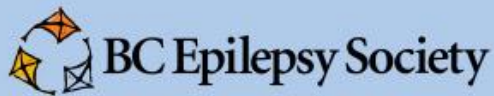
## Welcome our new ED

The BC Epilepsy Society is pleased to welcome Kim Davidson as our new Executive Director.

Kim brings 25 years of counselling, community building and executive leadership experience at local and provincial levels in three sectors; education, social services and healthcare. She has dedicated her professional and volunteer life to empowering and advocating for children, youth and families in a variety of contexts. Kim is a passionate leader that possesses the 'lived experience perspective' of having epilepsy when she was younger.

To reach Kim please call (604) 875-6704 press 3 or email: [kim@bcepilepsy.com](mailto:kim@bcepilepsy.com)

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The BC Epilepsy Society is the voice of people with epilepsy in BC.  
All our services are free and confidential.

## Thank you for supporting our November 17th Charity Raffle.

### THE WINNERS HAVE BEEN CONTACTED & ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- GRAND PRIZE West Jet:** Lynn Ketcheson, Armstrong BC.....Ticket #0437
- PACKAGE 1 Wall Centre:** Heather Fraser, West Vancouver BC..... Ticket #0250
- PACKAGE 2 Boulevard Kitchen:** Audrey Moore, Victoria BC..... Ticket #0178
- PACKAGE 3 Sutton Place:** Anita Hessler, Surrey BC ..... Ticket #0421
- PACKAGE 4 Fairmont:** Kaelan Skinner, Abbotsford BC..... Ticket #0433
- PACKAGE 5 Westin:** Doris Meyer, White Rock BC..... Ticket #0065
- PACKAGE 6 Vida:** Irene Maciagowski, Surrey, BC..... Ticket #0104

Your support allows the BC Epilepsy Society to offer children and adults, and their families much needed support at diagnosis and throughout life. Our professional staff offer a wide range of services to assist with answers to questions and practical solutions to challenges people with epilepsy may face. Some examples of our services include:

- our staff Social Workers, onsite at BC Children's Hospital (BCCH), Surrey Memorial Hospital (SMH), Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) to meet in-person and provide information and connect to our services,
- in-person support group in Vancouver and an online support group for people throughout the province,
- Partners in Teaching program that educates teachers and students about epilepsy and seizure first aid which we deliver across the lower mainland and provide DVD's to schools further afield,
- a robust website with information reviewed by our Professional Advisory Committee.



## A Personal Story

My name is Monica Pietramala. I am 35 years old and have been living with epilepsy all my life.

When I was 5 years old in grade 1, I had my first seizure in front of all the kids at school and the teacher. They did not know what to do - they just stood there and watched as a 5-year-old twitched her arms, and on the ground having a seizure. The teacher called my parents and the ambulance and they took me to the hospital to get checked. After the doctor came to see me, he told my mom and dad the results that I have EPILEPSY. My parents were in shock and scared. Then they told me the news and I didn't understand because I was still very young.

After elementary school, I went to high school. This is where things went downhill for me with my seizures, and medications, surgeries, and so on. While in high school, my neurologist prescribed me lots of new medications, so


I spent this period of time trying them slowly and going on and off different medications, trying to find something that worked for me. I would have a seizure, clusters, blackouts, drop attacks, and falling down while at school or with my friends and people would stare at me and wonder what is wrong with this person? I didn't have many friends in high school so I faced my epilepsy almost alone. I was in a Learning Assistance Class that helps people who have disabilities learn school subjects slowly and I had to take a year off from high school due to the disruption caused by my epilepsy.

In high school, I also had two surgeries to see if it could help slow down some of my seizures. The first one called the Left Temporal Lobe I had done in 1997. This surgery didn't help stop my seizures. The second surgery, the Vagus Nerve Stimulator – was in 1999. It's a device that is implanted to send mild, electrical energy to the brain via the vagus nerve, like a pacemaker for the brain, to prevent seizures. It also didn't work. Now, 17 years later, it's still inside me but turned off, in case I have to try it again, I can avoid another surgery.

[Click here to read full story](#)  
to be continued

## The Ribalkin Team presents 2017 Chalet Lights Charity



Take the Westview Drive Exit off the Highway  
Head North up Westview Drive, which becomes Delbrook Avenue  
Turn Left on Montroyal Blvd  
Turn Right onto Skyline Drive which becomes Chalet Place  
Take last right and End at 4967  
Put on Sunglasses  in Preparation for the Lights ☺

**What:** Christmas Lights for Charity  
Collecting food and money donations for:

*The Harvest Project: "Extending a hand up, not a hand out!"*  
The project reaches out to individuals and families across Metro Vancouver's North Shore who are challenged by family breakdown, illness, job loss and poverty.

*The BC Epilepsy Society* is a provincially incorporated non-profit, and federally registered charitable organization dedicated to serving British Columbians living with epilepsy, and their families.

*The Shriners Care for Kids* provides access to exceptional pediatric care based on medical need, not a family's ability to pay.

In 2016 Chalet Lights Charity raised \$18,472.22 and 182 bags of groceries. Since 2010 Donations total: \$65,252.38 and 769 bags. Goal for 2017 is \$25,000 and 250 bags.

**When:** December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 - Lights on from 6:30 pm – 11pm.  
Until January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 - Lights on daily from 5:30 – 11pm.

**Where:** 4967 Chalet Place, North Vancouver  
Top of Skyline Drive

**Questions:** [rv@wemortgagecanada.ca](mailto:rv@wemortgagecanada.ca)  
(604)985-9511 Ask for John Ext. 224, Aurore Ext. 222,  
Ethan Ext. 226, or Felicity Ext. 225.

Online donations can be made at  
<http://chaletlightscharity.ca>

2017 Chalet Lights



Chalet Lights, North Vancouver are open from

The Ribalkin/Viau family are at it again – covering their roof, gardens, gutters, railings and driveway in thousands upon of lights, blow-up displays, Christmas decorations and holiday cheer.

“Last year, the display raised \$18,472.22

“This year, we hope to raise \$25,000 for charity.”

Donations are accepted for BC Epilepsy Society, Shiners Cares for Kids and Harvest Project.

[chaletlightscharity.ca](http://chaletlightscharity.ca)

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## 5 Tips For Managing The Holidays

The holiday season can be an overwhelming time for many people. This is particularly true when you or your loved one lives with the challenges of epilepsy. Being self-aware, avoiding your triggers, and planning ahead can help make the holidays happier.

### Plan Ahead

Start early and plan ahead, last minute rushing around is the norm for many people, but can be very stressful for someone with epilepsy. Learning to say “no” as it’s ok not to take on everything.

### Keep a regular sleep, meal, and exercise schedule

While it’s fine to occasionally indulge in eggnog and late nights, don’t use the holidays as an excuse to compromise your health. It is also very important to limit or avoid alcohol use, since this can make some people more likely to have seizures.

### Transportation

Consider your energy levels and pace yourself. Public transport can be in great demand at this busy time so try to avoid rush hour in order to get a seat.

### Relax

Take breaks from group activities to do what relaxes you. This may include going for a walk, chatting with a friend, or meditation.

### Limit or skip alcohol

Whether at parties or in the home everyone is potentially more exposed to alcohol over Christmas. Your doctor may have advised you on what is a safe limit for you. Stick to this advice, keep your intake moderate and avoid binge drinking.

**Keep your expectations for celebrations realistic and enjoy the simple things!**

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**Have a Great Holiday from all of us at BC Epilepsy Society!**

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