



**United Way**  
British Columbia

Working with communities in  
BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland,  
Central & Northern Vancouver Island

NEWS RELEASE  
July 15, 2024

## **United Way BC Enhances Emergency Preparedness in West Kelowna with DIY Air Filter Workshop for Seniors**

*Research shows older adults have a higher risk for health effects from exposure to wildfire smoke*

**Kelowna, BC** – United Way British Columbia (United Way BC) - working with communities in BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland and Central & Northern Vancouver Island invites seniors in West Kelowna and Westside to build their own air cleaners and prepare for wildfire season at a free upcoming workshop.

The first session takes place Tuesday, July 16, 3 to 5pm. Registration is necessary through [this link](#), and space is limited.

Created in partnership with the City of West Kelowna, Interior Health, and Simon Fraser University, the "Do it Yourself" workshop will highlight information on emergency preparedness, tailored specifically for seniors.

"Research shows that older adults are one of the highest risk groups for health effects from exposure to wildfire smoke because of their higher prevalence of pre-existing lung and heart issues, as well as lower defence mechanisms which decline with age," says Naomi Woodland, Regional Community Impact & Investment Coordinator, United Way BC.

Additional events, including an emergency preparedness workshop for pregnant women, will take place in August.

"Public health recommends that people go inside on smoky days, but smoke can also be a problem indoors, particularly if people need to keep windows open to stay cool," says Anne-Marie Nicol, Associate Professor of professional practice in SFU's Faculty of Health Sciences. "Air cleaners can reduce exposure to the fine particulate matter (known as PM2.5) in smoke. When inhaled, these particulates can harm lungs and the cardiovascular system, making existing conditions such as COPD and asthma much worse. Air Cleaners can be purchased at big box stores, or people can build a unit on their own using simple materials from a hardware store."

Inspiration for the air cleaners DIY comes from Corsi-Rosenthal or "CR" boxes. Jim Rosenthal, CEO of Tex-Air Filters and co-inventor of the device, came up with the design with Richard Corsi, a friend of 20 years and engineering professor at the University of California Davis. The design includes a 20-by-20 filter on a box fan, using duct tape around the edges to create a shroud to focus incoming air into the filter so it becomes an efficient cleaning device, as opposed to a cooling device. This design garnered attention from across the world and became popular in our community last year during the McDougall Creek Fire when there was heavy smoke in the area.

To register for this Tuesday's workshop, access [this link](#) or scan the QR code:



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**About United Way British Columbia – working with communities in BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland, and Central & Northern Vancouver Island**

United Way BC supports healthy, caring and inclusive communities by strengthening vital connections that support people in need. Representing the five regions of Central and Northern Vancouver Island, Lower Mainland, Southern Interior, Thompson Nicola Cariboo, and Northern BC, our organization serves a population of more than 4.5 million people, with a focus on urgent response, kids and youth, seniors, poverty, mental health and food security. [www.uwbc.ca](http://www.uwbc.ca)

Interviews are available with Naomi Woodland, Regional Community Impact & Investment, United Way British Columbia.

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