



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 4:00AM
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**Coast Mental Health Announces
Fifth 2009 Courage To Come Back Award Recipient
VIVIAN GARCIA named as recipient in PHYSICAL REHABILITATION category**

VANCOUVER, B.C. April 20, 2009 – Coast Mental Health announced the fifth of six award recipients of a 2009 Courage To Come Back Award. **Vivian Garcia of New Westminister** has been named as the 2009 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Physical Rehabilitation category. The final recipient will be announced Monday, April 27, leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, April 30th.

Vivian Garcia is a familiar figure at boardroom tables in the Lower Mainland. As a volunteer with the New Westminister Special Services and Access Committee; TransLink's, Accessible Transit Committee and their "Access Transit" User Advisory Committee; the BC Rehab Foundation; and the BC Paraplegic Association Peer Program, Vivian has worked to facilitate accessibility for all in her community, sharing her time and knowledge to ensure that citizens with a disability are welcomed everywhere. Her commitment doesn't end there: she has volunteered at her housing co-op, her children's school, a local theatre and PAWS International Resource Centre. Vivian exemplifies two cornerstones of the Courage To Come Back Awards: "inspirational value" and "contribution to the community/society."

On a hot sunny day in 1988, Vivian was carrying her young baby in the forest surrounding the house she and her husband Peter shared, when a large tree fell on her back. It severed her spinal cord, paralyzing her from mid-chest down – at 22, she was in a wheelchair, with continuous nerve damage pain that Vivian likens to, "being splattered with burning oil 24 hours a day." That nerve pain has never left her, yet Vivian has never let it stop her from reaching out to others.

Caring for their child at home and Vivian in hospital, Peter struggled to keep his business afloat. Soon their vehicles were repossessed and they were turned out of their home. The couple's belongings were put in the yard for strangers to pick over. Understandably, the marriage began to fall apart, and Vivian left the rehabilitation hospital much sooner than she should have to look after the baby and try to salvage their life.

Wheeling a manual wheelchair and being a wife and mother was a challenge. The difficulties were many, as integration was just beginning to take hold in the Lower Mainland – there were few curb cuts, and there were shops and restaurants Vivian simply couldn't enter. She persevered, however, and by 1995 she and Peter had a second child. Unfortunately, she was soon a single parent with two young sons to house, feed, dress, get to school and sports lessons. Still, she volunteered her first-hand knowledge to organizations who could positively impact the lives of her family, friends and neighbours. As one dear friend says, "Vivian's paralysis may have sat her down, but it certainly hasn't slowed her down."

Perhaps Vivian's greatest contribution is an unofficial one: her open heart and home. Many neighbourhood children and teens have spent hours there, receiving support and caring, a place to sleep, help with homework, a meal, advice, the chance to vent and play, or simply getting away from the world. It is a haven for those who are misplaced, displaced and trying to escape the pressures of their lives. It is living testimony to Vivian's caring and positive outlook on life.

Vivian says, "I am honoured to be recognized by Coast for a Courage To Come Back Award. To all people who support and embrace the goals of others, I say thank you. A dreamer, supported, can do great things!"

Congratulations, Vivian. Coast is proud to have you as our 2009 Courage To Come Back recipient in the Physical Rehabilitation category.

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Vivian Garcia named as recipient in CTCB Physical Rehabilitation category

Vivian will receive her Courage To Come Back Award at the 11th Annual Gala Dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver on Thursday, April 30th. For tickets, call 604-675-2328 or purchase online at www.coastmentalhealth.com

About Courage To Come Back:

The Courage To Come Back Awards celebrate people who have inspired others as they have courageously battled back from illness, adversity or injury. Through Courage, British Columbians are acknowledged for their accomplishments, positive attitudes and willingness to give back to their communities. Awards are given in six categories including: mental health, physical rehabilitation, medical, addiction, social adversity and youth.

About Coast Mental Health:

Since 1972, Coast Mental Health has been providing high-quality housing, employment programs, social opportunities and other community mental health services for people with serious and persistent mental illnesses.

Through presenting the stories of six amazing recipients each year at The Courage To Come Back Awards, Coast Mental Health strives to offer hope to all those suffering from illness, adversity or injury and demonstrates that all people have value and dignity regardless of the illness, adversity or injury they have faced.

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