

MEDALLION HOUSING SOCIETY FOR IMMEDIATE REALEASE

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Medallion Housing Society and Local Realtor Assist Deaf Couple To Obtain First Home

When Tanya and Guennadi Kamaev showed up for the first Home Buyer Seminar for people with special needs, organized by the Medallion Housing Society in April 2005, organizers were not ready for them. Their registration had got lost in our on-line registering system. In addition, the young couple were profoundly deaf and required sign language interpretation. None of these arrangements were in place. We apologized profusely and suggested in hastily scribbled notes that they register for a future seminar when we would have sign language or captioning in place. But the Kamaevs stayed, getting information only from the PowerPoint presentations and from some notes passed to them by a volunteer. A little while later, the couple called Medallion and requested mentoring by a realtor. Fortunately, we had the contact for Park Georgia Realtor, Dawn Dutrizac – Larose, who is familiar with sign-language. She had earned a degree in Special Education from a Quebec university and taught in an institution for mentally disabled and deaf persons for several years. When she moved to Vancouver some years ago and found out that her credentials were not accepted in BC without extensive further studies, she decided to become a Realtor instead, establishing a successful business with Park Georgia's Cocquitlam office.

When she became a volunteer Mentor with the Medallion Housing Society, we noted her special skills as one of the few known realtors on the Lower Mainland with sign language capability. Medallion was able to make the connection between the young deaf couple and Ms Dutrizac - Larose and early in 2006, the Kamaevs indicated they were ready to purchase a home. Dawn got out her sign language textbook and boned up on skills she hadn't used for years. After the first meeting with the couple, Dawn says, there followed hundreds of email messages (the only efficient way of communicating with them, replacing cumbersome and slow TTY telephone conversations). The couple had questions about every minute detail of a real estate transaction. "Things that hearing people take for granted, were unfamiliar to them" says Dawn. "In addition, the couple had immigrated to Canada from Russia only seven years ago and had to learn not only English but a new sign language - American Sign Language, which is vastly different from the signing used in Europe and Russia". The couple knew exactly what kind of home they wanted and stayed totally focussed on their goal. By June of last year Dawn and they had found a brand-new condominium near Simon Fraser University and the Kamaevs were able to move into their first home. "Fortunately, both have well-paying jobs and they scrimped and saved until they had an appropriate down payment and the credit to get a mortgage for the kind of place they wanted", explains Dawn.

But Dawn is quick to point out that there were a lot of other hard-working 'heroes' in this story, like the professional sign language interpreters, supplied by the Western Institute for the Deaf for the closure of the deal, a bank staffer at their bank who also had sign language skills since her parents were deaf, who helped out with the mortgage details, the TTY operators, who translated phone messages and many, many others. "In terms of the number of hours I spent on this transaction, this could be dubbed a 'tough sell'. But in terms of job satisfaction and knowing that I had a part in getting a wonderful first home for a dynamic and determined young couple, this experience was absolutely great", says Dutrizac – Larose. This story has a wonderful coda; - Tanya and Guennadi are the proud parents of a five month old baby boy named Gabriel.

The Medallion Housing Society is a non profit organization committed to providing educational seminars to marginalized potential home buyers, - seniors, persons with disabilities, single parent families and persons living in subsidized housing. The Society is also involved in developing low price, affordable housing. Two more housing seminars are planned for this year; one in late April and another in October.

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For more information about this Media Release, the Medallion Housing Society and the planned Home Buyer Seminars for 2007, please contact:

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