

For Immediate Release  
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## “Dear Coastal Neighbour” letter-writing campaign aims to increase social connection on the Coast

**SECHELT, BC (May 4, 2020)** – Sunshine Coast Community Services, in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health, School District #46 and Sunshine Coast Division of Family Practice, are excited to launch a campaign to strengthen social connectedness in our community. *Dear Coastal Neighbour* is a one-way letter-writing initiative that will provide a small, but personal gesture of non-digital connection to those on the Sunshine Coast, many of whom are facing increased isolation, stress, and uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Coast residents of all ages are invited to put pen to paper and share their stories, pictures, poems, and support.

Whether following a template or creating their own layout, participants are being asked to write from the heart, sharing positive, thoughtful and kind messages. Letters can be addressed directly to members of a specific group (e.g. General Neighbours, Seniors, Frontline Workers, Children & Youth, New Mums) or written more generally to community members at large. Participants are then being asked to mail their letter directly to Community Services at P.O. Box 1069, Sechelt, BC, V0N 3A0, or hand-deliver to one of several designated *Dear Coastal Neighbour* community ‘mailboxes’. Once collected, the Dear Coastal Neighbour team will ensure that each letter finds the right recipient, bringing joy to those who could use a little extra right now.

**Where are community mailboxes currently located?** Currently, we have 4 community mailbox locations, where you can grab a hard copy of the letter template, or drop off your finished letter for delivery. They are:

- Gibsons IGA – 1100 Gibsons Way, Gibsons
- Persephone Brewing Company – 1053 Stewart Road, Gibsons
- The Gumboot Restaurant – 1041 Roberts Creek Road, Roberts Creek
- Sunshine Coast Community Services Society – 5638 Inlet Avenue, Sechelt

Social connectedness is a basic need for everyone and is as important as food and shelter. Studies that show that a lack of social relationships is equivalent to smoking as a risk factor for poor health and mortality. At a time when we are being asked to keep a 6-foot physical distance from each other, it seems more imperative than ever to be putting in extra effort to increase social connectedness. A more connected Coast is a more resilient Coast. SCCSS Program Lead, Anna Verspoor, who is part of the team behind the campaign, says she is excited to be able to offer letters and drawing to seniors in the community, many of whom are currently more isolated than usual and are unable to connect digitally. “We recently delivered a child’s hand-drawn picture to a 95-year client. Every time we connect with her on the phone, she talks about the joy she gets from looking at a child’s drawing made especially for her, it’s remarkable,” says Verspoor.



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**Want to learn more about the campaign details?** Please visit [www.sccss.ca](http://www.sccss.ca) to download templates and samples, and get up to date information on community mailboxes, safety protocols and more.

**Do you know somebody who would like to receive a letter?** Please get in touch and let us know. Call Sunshine Coast Community services at 604-885-5881 or email [reception@sccss.ca](mailto:reception@sccss.ca) with Dear Coastal Neighbour in the subject line.

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*Sunshine Coast Community Services, the largest nonprofit on the Sunshine Coast, has been making our community stronger, safer and more resilient since 1974. Our organization supports over 5000 community members through 35 programs in four main areas: Community Action & Engagement, Child and Family Counselling, Child Development & Youth Services and Together Against Violence. To learn more about SCCSS or its programs, visit [www.sccss.ca](http://www.sccss.ca)*