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Richmond News

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Enter the Dragon

Samantha Lee, 3, tries her best to breath fire like her lantern. The shopping centre will be celebrating Chinese New Year with a New Year countdown from 10:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 22.

HYDRO

Arctic air blast blows out power

Demand spike blamed for mass outage which affected almost half the city

By ALAN CAMPBELL
acampbell@richmond-news.com

A spike in demand during the Arctic conditions contributed to the massive power outage which plunged almost half of Richmond into darkness and deep freeze Wednesday.

Just after 5 p.m., BC Hydro customers in the southern half of the city began losing power after a transformer blew at the Stevenson substation.

Within five minutes, more than 36,000 homes and businesses were without light or heat from Highway 99 to the west side and from Blunket Road to the south arm of the Fraser River.

Ironically, at the time of the outage, the same equipment involved in a short outage to the same number of customers in the same area on Dec. 30, David Lebetter, BC Hydro's vice president of field operations and safety, said in an e-mail to the News Thursday.

"Last night's outage was triggered by a built-in system protection which activated due to weather-related high demand on station equipment while the repairs were underway."

By 6:10 p.m. the same evening, BC Hydro said power had been restored to 24,000 homes and by 7 p.m., all affected customers had their power back on.

"Restoring power is a top priority at

"Last night's outage was triggered by a built-in system protection which activated due to weather-related high demand on station equipment while the repairs were underway..."

— David Lebetter

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H-Mart introduces a taste of Korea

By BENJAMIN YONG
Special to the News

The Korean grocery store adapts to its changing demographics

Changing demographics and an ever-increasing Asian cultural amalgamation in the Lower Mainland has prompted Korean grocery store giant H-Mart to officially open its first store in Richmond at Aberdeen Centre today, Friday, Jan. 20, at 11 a.m.

With Chinese people making up nearly half of all immigrants in the Lower Mainland, and a visible trend of less Koreans coming into Canada, it was time for a shift in the company's business strategy, said H-Mart account manager James Kang.

Among 47 stores in North America, the first of now four LM locations (there are also H-Marts in downtown Vancouver and Langley) was built in Coquitlam in 2003.

The flagship store originally catered mostly to people of Korean descent with staff speak-



BENJAMIN YONG/RICHMOND NEWS
James Kang, H-Mart account manager, stands by the entrance of the new H-Mart Korean specialty store opening today at Aberdeen Centre.

ing and signage displaying the native language.

Business boomed, but recent-

ly, an improving economy in Korea, combined with expensive local housing, has meant less of

their target customers moving into the area and coming through the door.

"We noticed we can't just rely on Korean customers, so we decided to have (the text on our price tags) in English, Chinese and Korean," said Kang.

There are now employees that speak the above languages, as well as Japanese, he added.

"We want to move forward to (include) multicultural customers like Caucasians, Chinese, Koreans and Japanese, so we made a team back in May (to expand our market)."

One of the first tasks for the "new business team" was to find a central location in the area that had the biggest mixing pot of people from different backgrounds, and Richmond fits the bill perfectly.

see *New Spot* page 4

City battles sub-zero conditions

By ALAN CAMPBELL
acampbell@richmond-news.com

The snowstorm that's been hammering much of the Lower Mainland this week finally arrived in Richmond on Wednesday morning — just in time for the morning commute.

There was only a couple of centimetres of the white stuff, but it managed to slow the rush-hour journey for many to a crawl.

More of a concern than the snow was the blast of Arctic air, with the mercury dropping to -8 C at the airport with the windchill factor mak-

ing it feel like -12 C.

And with more wet snow forecast for Friday, the City of Richmond has already set into motion its "snow response plan."

City crews were working up to 12 hours in advance of Wednesday's snowfall, laying down anti-icing liquid brine and/or salt on the roads to prevent frost and ice from forming.

According to the city, when a snowstorm hits and if the severity of the storm requires such a response, crews begin working around the clock.

The city's roads and construction services

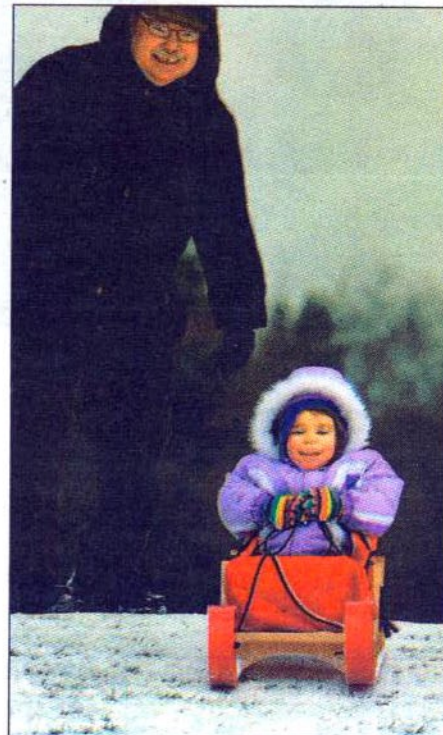
department ensures all major arterial roads are cleared, salted and/or sanded so emergency vehicles (police, ambulance and fire trucks), public transit and private vehicles are able to travel the primary routes.

Ice and snow removal is cleared initially from first and second priority routes.

Last year, the city added third priority routes for snow clearing, with the aim of improving local neighbourhood clearing and accessibility.

Third priority routes consist of designated collector roads and roads of

see *Help* page 6



CHUNG CHOW
RICHMOND NEWS
Emily Brown, 3, takes to the slopes at West Richmond Community Centre. Grandpa Bill Green watches on.

Community

CHINESE NEW YEAR



CHUNG CHOW/RICHMOND NEWS

The Lion Dance dates to ancient China, when it was used to fend off mythical beasts.

Lion Dance wards off evil at Aberdeen Centre

By MICHELLE HOPKINS
mhopkins@richmond-news.com

As a little girl, Joey Kwan remembers being “absolutely terrified of the lion dance.”

Growing up in Hong Kong, the yearly Chinese New Year lion dances happened outside on the streets.

“I was about five when my mom took me to see my first lion dance,” said Kwan, spokeswoman for Aberdeen Centre. “I remember thinking it looked like a vicious unicorn. I couldn’t understand why this big ugly animal was dancing on the street.

“My mom didn’t explain the meaning of the dance to me.”

The lion dance dates back thousands of years and is performed every year on the first day of Chinese New Year.

According to ancient Chinese legend, a mythical beast called Nian (meaning year in Chinese) would come and attack villagers.

Desperate, the villagers asked for the help of a great colourful lion spirit, who came and drove Nian away with its loud roar.

The following year, the villagers were defenseless against Nian because the lion was too busy protecting the Emperor’s Palace.

So, the people created a lion out of colourful fabric and filled it with firecrackers to drive Nian away.

The fake lion was so real looking and so successful at driving away Nian that every year since, the lion dance is performed to frighten away evil spirits and to bring luck, peace and quiet for the New Year.

“That Chinese belief continues today,” Kwan said. “Here in Richmond, the lion dance is becoming more and more similar to what goes on in Asia.

“However, in Hong Kong some lion dances are performed to hip hop music.”

Aberdeen Centre hosts its eyes dotting ceremony (which symbolically awakes the lion) followed by the lion dance on Monday, Jan. 23 at 11 a.m. in the atrium. Local dignitaries will be invited on stage for the eyes dotting ceremony.

“It is said that the eyes dotting ceremony wakes up the dragon and lions,” added Kwan. “We will have one dragon and eight lions and they will dance to traditional Chinese music and drums.

“They will create a lot of the noise to scare the monsters out.”

For more information, call 604-273-1234 or visit www.aberdeencentre.com.