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An exclusive magazine for the neighbours of Edgemont

NEIGHBOURS OF EDGEMONT



Holly Choi

**Passionate Advocate
for Child Safety &
Injury Prevention**



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Cover photo by Myshsaël Schlyecher, Myshsaël Schlyecher Photography



Holly Choi

Passionate Advocate for Child Safety & Injury Prevention

By Janine Tasaka

“My childhood memories of growing up in this neighbourhood are so wonderful that I had a hard time imagining raising my children anywhere else,” says Holly Choi, local entrepreneur and mother of two.

After completing her Bachelor of Business Administration at SFU, Holly worked at a local software company for five and a half years, training clinicians and their staff on electronic medical record software. “I honed my love of teaching while working there, but I knew that the required travel that came with the job wasn’t conducive to the lifestyle I wanted to have as my husband and I were planning on starting a family,” she says.

Holly met Chris while she was completing university and working in retail. They were married in 2012 - on their 4th dating anniversary - at the Capilano Suspension Bridge. “I grew up in Canyon Heights and jumped at the opportunity to be married ‘in the neighbourhood,’” Holly smiles. “We feel so lucky that we were able to be married there, as they no longer host weddings.”

After the birth of their daughter Sadie in 2015, Holly’s sister Jill approached her about starting a business together. “Jill wanted to build a first aid business with a focus on training new and expecting parents,” says Holly. “I loved the idea and spent the next year upskilling and acquiring the necessary certifications.”

Keeping her position at the software company as a safety net, Holly continued to work full time for another eight months. At this point, the sisters’ business had grown and could now support Holly in a full-time role. “Chris and I received possession of our home the same day that I left my job at the software company, and I think many people were skeptical that I was making a good life choice,” she says. “In hindsight, taking a leap of faith and believing in my ability to be an entrepreneur was the best choice I ever made. My sister and I have since grown our small-but-mighty business, Safe Beginnings First Aid, to be Canada’s leading provider of infant and toddler-focused safety courses.” Throughout the pandemic, Safe Beginnings has offered a mix of socially-distanced, in-person workshops, live Zoom webinars and video-based e-courses.

“If you told me a few years ago that I would spend every day living and breathing baby and toddler safety, I would have laughed, but here I am. And I love it,” smiles Holly. “When I’m not teaching a class, I’m posting easy tips for parents on how to keep their babies and toddlers safe. Using Instagram (@safebeginnings) as an educational tool has opened new doors for our business, and many of our online students log in from all over North America.”

Since 2015, Holly has been an infant and toddler safety educator, first aid instructor, and certified Child Passenger Safety Technician-Instructor (CPST-I). “Until COVID hit, I was helping numerous families each week, ensuring that their car

Photo courtesy of Myshsael Schlyecheer, Myshsael Schlyecheer Photography



seats were installed and used correctly. I’ve also been training new car seat technicians since 2017, and I can’t wait to get back to teaching when we’re on the other side of this pandemic,” she says. In the meantime, Holly works alongside a fantastic team of peers in Greater Vancouver and sits on the National Board of Directors for the Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada (CPSAC). Holly was twice featured in Forbes over the past few months, initially in an article about baby gear safety for Baby Safety Month, and more recently in January 2021 as an expert on car seat safety.

In 2017, the Choi family moved from Edgemont to Canyon Heights as a family of three, and by 2018, daughter Riley was born, and they became a family of four. “Maybe I’m nostalgic, but I love that my children get to experience the same things I did as a child when I grew up in Canyon Heights. Everything from grabbing candy at Hardy’s Grocery to getting take-out from Capilano Heights (now CC’s) Chinese Restaurant,” says Holly. “I also love that it’s quiet up here while being only minutes away from everything we need.”

Continued on next page...

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A self-proclaimed Disney family, Holly and Chris love taking the girls to Disney theme parks. “I can’t believe how lucky we were to sneak in one last vacation, blissfully unaware that it was going to be our last one for a while,” she reflects. “We spent a week at Walt Disney World in January 2020, and after this past year, it feels like that was a decade ago. Sadie and Riley had the absolute best time.” Their favourite vacation destination close to home is to head up the coast to Powell River and stay with loved ones on their rural property. “It’s such a beautiful spot, and we love being able to disconnect from the world for a few days.”

Holly’s dad was born in Germany, and her family has always loved travelling there. “My sister and I both completed student exchanges to Germany back in Grade 10, and I’ve been to Germany with Chris twice since we’ve been together. In 2019 I had the opportunity to go there with my mom, dad, and sister for a wedding,” she says. “It was such a fun experience to have an ‘original family’ trip to Germany as adults. I think it had been about 20 years since we’d all been on vacation together. I’d do it again in a heartbeat – but I also can’t wait to bring my kids along next time.”

Reflecting on words she tries to live by, Holly says, “I always aim to lead with kindness, because we never know what battle someone is fighting. I lived with an invisible respiratory illness – Idiopathic Tracheal Stenosis for the first half of my 20s, and very few people knew.” Her scar tissue-lined trachea had narrowed to the diameter of a coffee straw, and Holly’s health care team couldn’t determine the cause. “While I looked fine on the outside, I would struggle to breathe, and it was hard for me to keep

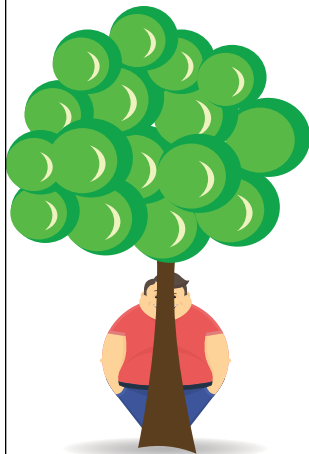


up with my friends because I was always out of breath. I was fortunate to have a tracheal resection surgery, in 2013, that increased my trachea’s diameter to roughly that of a child’s. While my breathing isn’t perfect, I got my life back. I can’t imagine being able to build our business, teach workshops, or chase after my kids had I not received the surgery.”

“It’s a reminder to not judge a book by its cover, and I’m very grateful for the lesson in empathy that this experience taught me.”

For more information on infant and toddler injury prevention, first aid, car seat safety and childproofing, please visit www.safebeginnings.ca.

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