

St. Stephen's Community House
Youth Arcade – Reclaim and Replay
Final Report

August 2005 – July 2006

Program Description

The Youth Arcade at St. Stephen's Community House offers alternative and creative lunchtime and after-school activities for youth ages 12 to 19. Open five days a week during the school year, the Arcade receives 40 to 70 youth daily who come to "hang out" with their peers, attend workshops, receive referrals to other services, volunteer in the community, and develop a variety of skills through specialized activities.

Mission

The Arcade's mission is to provide a range of youth services that:

- Meet emerging and critical social, health, recreation and education needs of youth
- Empower youth to speak, advocate, and lead youth programming that positively impacts their lives
- Assist youth facing a range of barriers and life experiences through the transition to young adulthood safely and confidently
- Encourage youth to think critically about themselves and the community in which they live

Program Overview

This year, The Arcade celebrated its "**Sweet Sixteen**"! New and exciting activities were introduced to address issues of violence, poor academic achievement, unhealthy lifestyles and physical inactivity; newcomer adaptation and youth isolation in our community. It was a busy year with **2,075 youth visiting the Arcade**, and many playing an important role in determining new pursuits for this year's programs. These include: **Reclaim and Replay 2006, Youth in Action, Venus Girls Project, and Unzipped: Little Black Book for Boys.**

Program Goals

- To promote healthy lifestyles
- To encourage and support youth in academic achievement
- To reduce conflict, violence and alienation through awareness and leadership development
- To create safe schools and neighbourhoods

The following is a breakdown of activities, participation and outcomes for Reclaim and Replay 2005/2005.

Reclaim and Replay 2006

Now in its third year, Reclaim and Replay is our anti-violence prevention program, which continues to address violence and safety issues in our community.

Reclaim

At the beginning of the program, a community needs assessment was conducted by youth and parents to identify violence and safety issues in the community. This information was used to develop a Community Safety Action Plan that was presented at the ***Speak Up! Speak Out! Conference*** in May 2004.

A follow-up conference, ***Speak Up! Speak Out! 2006***, was held on May 18, 2006 at Scadding Court Community Centre. A joint initiative of St. Stephen's Community House, Scadding Court Community Centre and the Toronto District School Board, the conference focused on the accomplishments and outcomes of the implemented Community Action Safety Plan. Emerging trends and next steps were identified, especially as they relate to youth.

This year, **Reclaim** focused on addressing two key recommendations from the Community Action Safety Plan:

- Improve community and police relations
- Increase awareness of youth about homeless issues

Reclaim Recommendation Outcomes

Improving Community and Police Relations

- Had the first community meeting between youth and local police to discuss ways to improve relations
- Local police visited the Arcade more often in order to increase opportunities for youth to get to know the local police and talk directly to them, thereby reducing tension between the groups
- Worked with local police involved in charging youth to increase communications

Homeless Issues

- After meeting with our partner school, the creation of talk and tours with Scott Mission were created
- Over 193 grade seven and eight students participated in this tour
- Youth Arcade staff witnessed first-hand the effects of these tours by observing the change in the youth's understanding of the issues of homelessness

Replay

One of our most innovative projects, Replay is our response to the growing numbers of youth that are suspended and expelled from school. **Last year, 26,000 students in Toronto were suspended or expelled!** This is a serious problem for families,

communities and the future labour force. Replay supports youth on suspension or expulsion from school with daytime programming, such as creating individual action plans identifying goals, helping students to stay on top of homework, use of the Arcade space to complete exams and coordinating placement meetings with new schools. It is also involved in developing the ***Replay Alternative to Suspension Program Protocol*** with a coalition of community partners.

They include:

- Justice for Children and Youth
- Safe Schools
- Toronto District School Board (TDSB)
- Scadding Court Community Centre
- St. Stephen's Conflict Resolution Service and Youth Arcade
- Community parents

The program continued to provide referrals for youth to social, legal and employment services, and acted as an advocate for suspended and expelled youth in dealing with the schools. Art expression groups and rap sessions were also added to the program, which encouraged youth to share their experiences with each other. With greater parent participation, increased referrals from schools, and greater collaboration with Safe Schools, Replay is now poised to present the protocol to the Safe Schools Committee, Toronto District School Board, and our family of neighbourhood schools at the beginning of the Fall school term.

Reclaim & Replay 2006 Program Outputs

Reclaim

- **Nine** parents/guardians attended a 3 ½ hour meeting to elicit support for their concerns regarding safety and violence in the community
- **150** youth, parents and community members attended ***Speak Up! Speak Out! 2006*** – Collective Community Voices in Action Conference. It was held at Scadding Court Community Centre to discuss accomplishments, identify trends and develop creative solutions.
- Arcade staff members sit on **two** school councils
- **63** youth participated in violence prevention workshops during suspension hours
- **Eight** monthly meetings with the **6** community partners
- **One** specialized training session facilitated by Justice for Children on the legalities of school suspensions, expulsions and youth rights
- Conducted **12** Violence prevention workshops

Replay

- **56** youth received **1,000** hours of support services
- **50** individual action plans identifying goals were created and completed

- **40** youth successfully returned to school, **9** youth will begin school again in September 2006, **6** youth are in transition and **1** youth is two course subjects short of graduating from High School.
- **Three** meetings were held with Safe Schools Advisors regarding school placements and planning
- **13** placement meetings with new schools
- **Eight** youth completed **18** exams on-site at the Youth Arcade
- **40** parents/guardians have received over **300 hours** of supportive counselling, referrals and advocacy
- Arcade staff attended **7** Community Action Committee meetings addressing the issues of truancy and parent support
- Arcade staff sit on 2 school councils
- In September 2006, the St. Stephen's Community House Youth Department and the Toronto District School Board will be creating a video featuring youth, parents and school administrators and their perspectives on absenteeism.

Program Evaluation

The Youth Arcade is currently in the process of developing and implementing an evaluation process with EVIDENCE Consultants. This will help us to realistically measure outcomes of our programs and enhance our program planning and implementation skills. It will also provide us with a customized evaluation tool that can be utilized annually. We have created a committee that will be responsible for the creation and implementation of the research evaluation process. Committee members include: a parent, Arcade youth, Arcade staff, City of Toronto Project Officer, Arcade Manager and the Director of Programs. The Committee will review Arcade programs, projects, goals, objectives and practices to determine its impact on youth, parents, funders, the community and the House. We have reached the stage in the process where we have developed evaluation questions and are now in the process of designing evaluation tools.

Evaluations Tools:

1. Workshop evaluation forms
2. Community partners impact survey
3. Two Youth Community feedback 'town hall' forums
4. Individual feedback
5. Workshop evaluation forms
6. Venus group feedback
7. Individual feedback
8. Pre and post test
9. Anecdotal feedback from youth and parents
10. Training evaluation forms
11. Exit interviews with each youth

The evaluation is funded by the Counselling Foundation of Canada. We will be sending out Evaluation Reports to all our funders once the process is complete.