



**REGENT PARK FOCUS
YOUTH MEDIA
ARTS CENTRE**

SPRING 2009

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



March Break MADNESS

From March 16th to March 20th, 2009 Regent Park Focus ran March Break Madness, a fun filled arts program for 20 children in the neighbourhood. The full day offering was coordinated by Pat Whitaker with the assistance of youth volunteers Safiqr Akon, Shantelle Hewitt and Denis Gayle. The program featured games, drama, arts and crafts activities, story tellers, healthy lifestyle workshops, skating and a trip to the movies. The highlight of the week was a visit to Casa Loma to attend two musical shows and tour the castle. The kids had a great time and gave March Break Madness two thumbs up. Many March Break offerings in Toronto are expensive and out of reach for low-income families so the parents were certainly appreciative to have a program that gave them peace of mind knowing their children had a free, safe and educational place to be while school was out.



March Break Madness: The program featured games, drama, story tellers, healthy lifestyle workshops, skating, a trip to the movies as well as arts and crafts, as shown above.



Coming Together Project

The Coming Together Project was an intergenerational community arts storytelling initiative that took place during April, May and June. The project provided an opportunity for 5 seniors and 6 young people living in the community to meet and socialize weekly while collaborating on a video/photography storytelling project. Over the course of the project, the seniors shared many stories about their lives and their experiences of Toronto which the youth documented in a video. The youth also took photographs of Toronto landmarks that were significant to the seniors and to themselves. The project culminated in a panel discussion, video screening and a launch of the photography exhibit held at the

Toronto Reference Library on Tuesday, June 2nd. 60 people attended the opening and many more visited the week long exhibit of photos produced through the program. This project was sponsored by the Canada Arts Council, City of Toronto, Toronto Community Housing and the Silver Screen Community Arts Festival.



In addition to the Coming Together Project, during the months of April, May and June, Regent Park Focus offered a weekly photography program for children ages 11 to 14 years. Photography work created through the

program was exhibited in the Regent Park Focus gallery in late June.

The Catch da Flava Collective

The Catch da Flava Youth Collective use print, radio and media technologies to produce pieces on subjects important to them, their families and their communities. In this way, the Collective nurtures young people in becoming active citizens in their neighbourhood and beyond. The following is a short summary of the group's spring activities.

Food Security

The Catch da Flava Youth Collective decided to produce the upcoming issue of the magazine on the theme of Food. In preparation, eight members of the Collective attended an all day conference on Food Security sponsored by the University of Toronto's Youth Voices group. The conference gave the youth plenty of food for thought (!) and inspiration for their articles. The Food issue of Catch da Flava magazine can be viewed at www.catchdaflava.com.



Policing

Community policing and accountability is an ongoing issue of importance to the Collective so on April 21st, nine members attended a Police – Community Relations meeting held at the Regent Park Community Centre. The meeting gave the youth members an opportunity to share their both negative and positive policing experiences with members of 54 Division. One positive outcome of the meeting was an agreement between police and community members that more relationship building needs to be done. In this vein, the collective agreed to meet with the police to explore ideas for partnerships using Catch da Flava magazine and radio.



Beautiful City Alliance

Regent Park Focus is a member of the Beautiful City Alliance. The Alliance supports charging billboard advertisers in the City of Toronto an annual license fee to raise money for funding artist projects. In support of this campaign, on May 8th, sixteen members of the Collective

attended an Alliance meeting at the city council. The meeting was held to promote awareness of the campaign. The Collective decided to produce a short article and radio show about the Beautiful City Alliance initiative to help raise awareness.

Luminato 2009

In the spring, internal board and staff struggles at CKLN resulted in the suspension of its radio broadcast and thus the Collective had to cease the weekly Catch da Flava radio show. Fortunately, they had other activities to occupy their time. On April 14th, 16 members of the Collective partnered with Luminato 2009 on the creation of two radio plays, one on the theme of Home and the other on Social Networking. Over the course of 8 weeks the youth worked with professional theatre artists Aaron Willis & Julie Tepperman (co-directors of Convergence Theatre) to write scripts and create two 5 minute



radio plays. On the last day of the workshop, after several rehearsals, the plays were recorded live in Regent Park Focus' on-site radio studio. The plays will be aired on Catch da Flava radio show when it resumes in the fall. The audio plays will also be hosted on the Regent Park Focus and Luminato websites. As part of this project the Collective members had the opportunity to attend a performance of the play "Continuous City" on Saturday June 13th at the Isabel Bader Theatre.

Revitalization Panel

On April 17th two members of the Collective, Onik Khan and Sara Muhaseen, were part of a panel discussion about revitalization held at Regent Park Focus. The presentation, which was organized by Toronto Community Housing and part of a national housing conference, was attended by 50 delegates. The panel also featured youth from Lawrence Heights and Alexander Park and each presenter offered their opinions about redevelopment efforts in their respective communities. The panel started with a screening of Detective Jones, a 2008 RPTV video about the development of Regent Park.



Regent Park TV

Make, Engage & Exchange Media Exhibition

A showcase of Regent Park TV videos were featured in an exhibition of media work held on April 24th & 25th at LucSculpture Gallery. Entitled Make, Engage & Exchange, the exhibit featured a variety of youth produced media work on the theme of social justice. As part of the exhibit, 5

RPTV films were shown in a small screening room. The event was organized by the Association for Media Literacy and it is estimated that over 150 people toured the exhibit over the course of the two days.

CityView Alternative School

In April, Regent Park Focus offered a week long video production workshop to five students from CityView Alternative School. Working with Focus staff, the students shot and edited a short video on Ageism (discrimination based on age). In addition to street interviews, the video featured a dramatic role play about a storekeeper's discriminatory behavior towards youth customers and a poem about surveillance. On April 24th, the video was screened to 62 students and teachers at City View Alternative School. Congratulations to Oren, Nico, Anthony, Elise and Adaku. The Ageism video, along with many other youth produced videos, are available for viewing on Regent Park TV at www.regentpark.tv.



Lawrence Heights Partnership

On May 21st Regent Park Focus conducted a three hour video production workshop with six youth from Lawrence Heights. The youth were members of the CLASP program located at the Lawrence Heights Community Centre. Working in partnership with Regent Park Focus staff, the youth scripted and filmed a video on bullying. The video is available for viewing on Regent Park TV.

OASIS Alternative School

In May, Regent Park Focus once again partnered with OASIS Alternative School to produce a video exploring the issue of masculinity. Focus staff worked with male students to produce the video which featured a comedic men's game show and a short role play about a young man who gets pressured and heckled by his mates for preferring to spend time with his girl friend. The video is expected to be released in the fall.

Regent Park TV Honours Caramel Hili

On May 1st, Regent Park Focus joined the community in honouring Carmel Hili's 35 years of community development work in Regent Park, by videotaping his retiring ceremony. The video will be made available on RPTV in the fall.

The Directors Group

The Directors Group is a collective of aspiring filmmakers who meet weekly to learn about the art of film making. During the months of April, May and June the Directors Group met regularly to put the finishing touches on their personal videos and to participate in skill development workshops. During this period the group had an opportunity to

meet several Canadian filmmakers including Hubert Davis, the Director of Invisible City and Hardwood. Having completed their projects the group will be wrapping up their activities and taking a break over the summer. The next session of the Directors Group will take place in the new year.

Be Scene Magazine and The O'Connor Media Lab Project

The O'Connor Media Lab and Be Scene Magazine are two satellite projects coordinated by Regent Park Focus in partnership with community partners. In the spring, the Be Scene youth editorial committee released their second issue of Be Scene, a magazine serving the O'Connor, Flemingdon and Thorncliffe communities. The magazine featured a range of articles including one about the discriminatory treatment of youth customers at a local 7-11 store. The youth editorial committee meets weekly at the Flemingdon Health Centre.

The O'Connor Media Lab is located on the ground floor of a Toronto Community Housing apartment building and shares its space with the O'Connor YMCA. Having completed a winter session with unemployed youth, Focus staff decided to team up with the local

O'Connor YMCA to run an afterschool media club for kids, ages 10 – 14, who live in the area. The



after-school media club meets bi-weekly and the participants are working on the production of a video about the harmful effects of drugs.

Da Youngstas Perform at the Hard Rock Café

Da Youngstas is the house band of Regent Park Focus and consists of six young people committed to performing before live audiences. On April 1st Da Youngstas accepted an invitation by the

Ryerson Student Association to perform at the Hard Rock Café. The event, billed as a fund raiser for Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Centre, was well attended by approximately 200 students.

Underground Music Studio partners with Toronto Council Fire

The Underground Music Studio is a space where youth can create their own music with the support of professional musicians. This spring Regent Park Focus teamed up with Toronto Council Fire to

provide a series of music workshops for First Nations youth. The workshops introduced youth to song structure, lyrics and music composition using computer generated software.

Last Fridays'

Last Fridays' is an evening of story telling, poetry and music performances held on the last Friday of each month between the months of October and June. The event is presented by Regent Park Focus and regularly features the Focus house band, Da Youngstas.

On March 27th Last Fridays' featured a Poetry Slam with nine aspiring artists from Rosedale Heights High School of the Arts. The poetry tackled a variety of social justice themes including prostitution, violence against woman and racism. The evening also featured the guitar melodies of singer songwriter Monique Barry and R & B cover hits by Da Youngstas.

On April 25th Last Fridays' featured Caribbean rhythms from singer songwriter Hippy Mama and her son. We were also entertained by jazz flutist Wes Sharp and Blues singer John T Davis and our

very own Da Youngstas. The event was held at the Daniels Presentation Centre (where people can see models of the Regent Park revitalization). 60 audience members enjoyed this event.



On May 29th the Regent Park Diversity and Settlement Committee joined Regent Park Focus in co-presenting Last Fridays' Asian Heritage Month. The event was held in the North Regent Park Field and featured a variety of artists including an Asian Drumming Band based in

Guelph, R & B artist Kaysun, a Chinese lyrist, Mr



Mohammed (a resident South Asian singer) and Da Youngstas. Over 100 people attended the event.

The Diva's Young Women's Group

The Diva's Group is made up of about 15 girls who are between 9 and 14 years old. Their activities vary week to week but most sessions you'll find them working on an art project, talking about issues that they face as girls, taking part in workshops, dancing or going on field trips in the community. The program is based on issues the girls have identified as being important to them like health, relationships, finding creative ways to express themselves, dealing with gossip/rumours and identity. The girls say their favourite activities of the last few months were photography, learning a dance routine, designing and creating jewellery,

a trip to the Distillery district and an outing to a restaurant where they received a hands-on lesson about healthy eating.

On April 26th, the Diva's Group took part in a political poster workshop that was part of the Mayworks Festival of Working People and the Arts. Favianna Rodriguez, a guest visual artist from Oakland, California came in to teach the girls about creating political art that is meaningful to them and relevant to their community. The completed posters will be exhibited at Regent Park Focus in the future.

Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Center is a youth driven, not-for-profit organization located in the heart of Regent Park, Toronto. Regent Park Focus is motivated by the belief that community-based media can play a vital role in building and sustaining healthy communities and seeks to increase civic engagement and effect positive change through youth-led media productions.

With free access to media technology, participants work collectively to explore issues and develop resources that contribute to personal well-being, the health of the community and address systemic barriers to equitable social participation.

Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Center was established in 1990 as part of a provincial government initiative to promote health in vulnerable communities across Ontario. Regent Park Focus is sponsored by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and is funded by The Toronto Arts Council and Ontario Arts Council.

Want to preview our work, get in touch or drop by?

You can find us at:

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