



REGENT PARK FOCUS
YOUTH MEDIA
ARTS CENTRE

SUMMER 2009

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



The Divas
GO
CAMPING

In June the Divas Young Women's group headed to Guelph for a three day camping retreat to celebrate the year end of their program. For many of the girls it was the first time they had been out of the city. It rained almost the entire time, but they still managed to have a great time! They enjoyed hiking and canoeing, taking part in a scavenger hunt, exploring the conservation area and

drawing in their sketch books. Because of the rain the group also came up with lots of creative ways to have fun inside including painting tote bags, learning to cook lots of delicious food and putting on a "Kids Canadian Idol" show. The girls all reported they wished the trip could have been longer and were already planning next year's trip on the way home.

2009

Media Arts Summer Program

Each summer Regent Park Focus runs a free multi-media arts camp for children and youth in the community. Typically, about 30 youth participate in the summer camp. This year, in an effort to allow more young people access to our specialized media equipment and training, we decided to try something different. We connected with 4 local community youth service agencies running their own summer camps and offered to provide them with a media arts component for their programs. Dixon Hall, Gerrard Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club, S.E.A.S Centre and Central Neighbourhood House were happy to participate in this initiative.

The Media Arts Summer partnership provided the participating campers with eight weeks of interactive, healthy life skills workshops along with video, music and photography arts training. The workshops took place daily at the Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Centre and were led by professional artists and youth program staff. In total over 70 youth participated in the program. The program was coordinated by Stephanie Nakatas, Adonis Huggins and Pat Whitaker. The 2009 summer program was generously funded by Dion Durrell and Associates and the City of Toronto Public Health (Community Investment in Drug Prevention Program).

The Media Arts summer arts workshops and outcomes are described in more detail below:



Photography

The Media Arts Summer photography program was designed to teach youth (ages 9 to 18) about photojournalism and documentary photography. The program was led by photographers Nick Kozak and Ashley Hutcheson with the assistance of Ikoro Warner, a 17 year old aspiring photographer and Regent Park Focus intern. After providing training, the instructors encouraged each of the participants to create a photo project about issues that were meaningful to them. The youth in the program decided to take photos exploring the themes

Life in Regent Park and Toronto; Family Stories; and the Meaning of Community.

In addition to developing technical skills, learning photo theory and taking pictures, youth in this program were given the opportunity to develop life skills that contribute to building healthy communities such as decision making, conflict resolution, team work, problem solving, goal setting and leadership. These topics were explored through role play, team building games and activities, creating art and group discussions.



Central Neighbourhood House Photography



Dixon Hall Photography





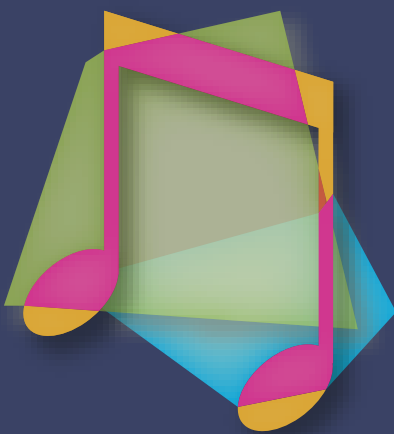
Music Recording

The Media Arts Summer music program was designed to help youth create their own tracks using professional recording equipment and music software. The facilitators of the program were Jamie Todd and Mathew Poulakis, two professional recording artists. They were assisted by Angela Musceo, an aspiring youth musician interning with Regent Park Focus for the summer.



As with the photography program, the music instructors helped the participants draw parallels between the decision making processes involved in creating music and the decision making required in real life situations. The program also encouraged youth to use their lyrics to articulate challenges and issues they face in their lives. At the end of the program all of the tracks were brought together to create a CD featuring songs from a number of genres, ranging from hip hop to

heavy metal. Several of the tracks deal with issues such as....The CD is available for listening on the Regent Park Focus website.



Video Production



The Media Arts Summer video program was designed to provide youth with an opportunity to create short videos about issues of importance to them. The program was coordinated by Adonis Huggins and Emmanuel Kedini with assistance from Fathima Nizar, an 18 year old arts student interning at Regent Park Focus. In addition, Pragna Desai, a Toronto filmmaker, worked with one of the production groups. Most of the youth participants had little or no previous experience with video production. Over the course of 7 weeks they learnt key technical skills and collaborated to brainstorm ideas, write scripts and film their videos. Following are a description of the videos that were produced in the program.



Higher Expectations

S.E.A.S is a multi-service organization providing settlement services to newcomer families from Asia. 6 youth from S.E.A.S participated in the Media Arts Summer video program and worked together to produce Higher Expectations. This 27 minute video is about the trials and



tribulations of a Chinese newcomer family to Canada told via the emails of a homesick teen. The length and complexity of the script made this a challenging video to produce but the youth were so excited by their project they were willing to devote their weekends through the months of August and September in order to complete the shooting and editing. Higher Expectations has been warmly received and was selected to be screened as part of the 2009 Regent Park Film Festival. This video is not to be missed and will

be released on Regent Park TV sometime in the near future. Also available online will be a video public service announcement on bullying that was previously produced by some youth from S.E.A.S.

The Graduate

8 children (ages 11-14) from the Gerrard Kwanis Boys and Girls Club met weekly over the summer to develop a video on resiliency entitled The Graduate. In this short video a youth reflects upon all the doubts, barriers and challenges that almost prevented him from graduating high school.

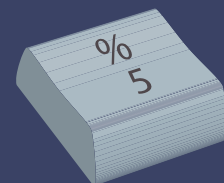


Culture Wars

15 children (ages 7 to 12) from Dixon Hall attended the Media Arts Summer program to learn about acting, scriptwriting and video production. Filmmaker Pragna Desai facilitated the workshops and the kids reported having a great time. After some interesting discussions about conflict resolution and decision-making, the group decided to produce a script about a conflict that arises when students from two different cultural groups each struggle to have their music played in a classroom. The resulting short video is titled Culture Wars and will be available for viewing on our website soon.

The Bank

In addition to providing media arts services to local day camps, Regent Park Focus continued to engage local youth by offering a weekly video production workshop of our own over the summer. 7 youth registered in the program and worked together to produce a video exploring the theme of cross cultural encounters. In The Bank a Bengali speaking woman attempts to open a bank account only to learn that the bank's advertised language services aren't up to the job. The humorous video looks at the often unappreciated role that low income multi-lingual people play in helping to make our institutions accessible to ethno-racial populations.



Alberta's Tar Sands

Justin Goldenthal-Waters is a graduate of the Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Program. Lucky for us he lives in one of the apartments above the Regent Park Focus facility and remains committed to the use of media for social justice. This summer Justin teamed up with Focus staff member Emmanuel Kedini to film and edit a video reflecting on the environmental implications and costs of the tar sands in Alberta.

Wolves in the Walls and Scary Regent Park



25 young people from Central Neighbourhood House took part in workshops focusing on storytelling, drama and the basics of creating a short video. Following this, one team of youth adapted the storybook Wolves in the Walls to create a short, scary video about ghosts. A second group produced a short video questioning the negative perceptions of Regent Park entitled Scary Regent Park. The participants loved learning how videos were made and had a great time creating a script from the story and then acting it out and seeing themselves on camera.

Regent Park Through the Lens of Our Youth

Each year Regent Park Focus wraps up its summer program by holding a showcase of the wonderful work produced by participants. This year's exhibit, Regent Park Through the Lens of Our Youth, was launched on October 8th at the Hotshot Gallery in Kensington Market. The event featured a photography exhibit of 50 mounted pictures, as well as a photography slideshow presentation. The highlight of the evening was a screening of all the videos produced in the program. Over 100 people attended the launch and after the screening community members socialized over food and drinks. The gallery owners remarked that this was the first time they had had such a diverse population of families attend one of their exhibitions. It was a magical night.



The photographs remained up at the Hotshot Gallery from October 3rd – 12th and following this can be seen at the Regent Park Focus Gallery space.

Summer Media Arts Activities in the O'Connor Neighbourhood

The O'Connor Media Lab and Be Scene Magazine are satellite projects of Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Centre. As part of these projects, Focus staff initiated two six-week programs in the O'Connor community.

The first program took place two full days each week and involved 12 out-of-school and out-of-work youth, ages 17 to 24. The aim of this program was to introduce youth to the fundamentals of film making. During the first two weeks youth were introduced to the art of scriptwriting by Adonis Huggins (Focus Program Director) and filmmaker Pragna Desai, along with the assistance of project staff Neguss Demoz-Goshe and Omar Wright (a graduate of the O'Connor program). In the following weeks participants were given the task of working in small groups to write their own film scripts. The youth, many of whom had just met for the first time, rose to the challenge and worked hard to complete three scripts. There was only enough time to shoot one of the scripts and after discussion, Loving Sam was selected. Loving Sam is a humorous story about two new friends who are unknowingly dating the same guy.



The second program took place one full day a week, and in this case, the participants were 13 youth from ages 11 to 15. In the morning youth participated in writing workshops and were introduced to Be Scene Magazine and encouraged to become contributors. In the afternoon youth were invited to attend video production workshops and produce a video on an issue related to their concerns.

Over the course of six weeks the youth each produced an article about their community as well as writing and filming a video about talk show on unhealthy parent-youth relationships called "Divorce Your Parents!". The video is still in a process of editing and is scheduled to be released in the new year.

The youth who participated in these programs learned a lot. Although many of them may not go on to pursue journalism or filmmaking as a career, by participating in these workshops they all learned practical skills related to goal setting, leadership, project management, group decision making and team work. Most of importantly, they had a lot of fun! Both sets of videos will be screened in the community sometime in the near future.

Myths of Regent Park Screening

On August 31st Regent Park Focus screened the Myths of Regent Park video for 65 York University students and teachers at the Regent Park Community Centre. The Myths of Regent Park challenges mainstream representations of Regent Park by presenting wealthy Forest Hill as a possible ghetto and Regent Park as a desirable destination and neighbourhood. The video continues to inspire lively debate and conversation among viewers.

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:**

**Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Centre
600 Dundas St. East (Rear Basement)
Toronto, Ontario, M5A 2B9**



416-863-1074



**focusflava@gmail.com
www.regentparkfocus.com
www.regentpark.tv**