

StreetHealth

THE STREET HEALTH REPORT 2007 – LIFE ON THE STREET IS GETTING MUCH WORSE!

Street Health recently released a ground-breaking research study that is making a lot of people sit up and take notice. The Street Health Report 2007 presents the findings of a survey of 368 homeless adults in downtown Toronto last winter. While it is understood that homeless people have much poorer health than the general population, current information about the health status of homeless people in Toronto was lacking.



"If people were housed they could take care of their medical problems more easily", says Nancy, a Street Health Report 2007 participant.

The study confirmed what we at Street Health have suspected for a quite some time, that homeless people's health and their access to health care has gotten worse in the past fifteen years. The Street Health Report 2007 is currently the only study of its kind that provides a detailed picture of the difficult daily realities of homeless people in Toronto today, and the health consequences of this reality.



Provincial Health Minister George Smitherman speaks with Meghan one of our report portrait photographers with the National Film Board of Canada.

In 1992, Street Health conducted a groundbreaking research study on homeless people's health and access to health care. Our 2007 study finds that the shocking rates of violence, rape and attempted suicide among homeless people have not changed. Other shocking findings include: **over one third of homeless people have been physically assaulted, one in five women have been sexually assaulted or raped and one in ten have attempted suicide in the last year.** Meanwhile, many serious physical health conditions have become even more prevalent among homeless people and their access to health care has worsened. Diabetes is now three times higher among homeless people than it was in 1992. Rates of arthritis, asthma and high blood pressure are also significantly higher. The study also found that **28% of homeless people had been refused medical care in the past year because they did not have a health card**, up from 7% in 1992.

"One of our most staggering findings is that 74% of people we interviewed had at least one serious physical health condition, yet 59% do not have a regular family doctor, compared to only 9% of the general population in Toronto" says Erika Khandor, Street Health Research and Evaluation Coordinator. "It is appalling that despite their poor health, homeless people still cannot access the health care they desperately need."

Partners for this project included: The Wellesley Institute, The Centre for Research on Inner City Health at St. Michael's Hospital, The National Film Board of Canada and other community and research organizations. Interviews were conducted by a team of peer researchers, people with past or current experience of homelessness.

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Researchers and key study advisors present findings at the launch of The Street Health Report 2007, held on September 19th.

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“Our findings show that homelessness is not, on average, a transient short-term crisis, but rather a long-term disastrous economic situation with grave health and social consequences.” says Laura Cowan, Street Health Executive Director. “Homelessness today is a stark reflection of the erosion of health and social programs over the past 15 years, and the cost of doing nothing about homelessness.”

78% of people in the survey said their poverty was keeping them homeless and more than a third reported that they live on less than \$200 a month. People had been homeless an average of 4.7 years.

“Our study makes it clear that we need immediate action to address poverty and inequality, which are the underlying causes

of homelessness,” stated Laura Cowan. “For the sake of the health of homeless people, and the health of our city, we simply cannot afford to keep doing nothing about homelessness.” The report outlines an action plan consisting of targeted solutions to both immediately improve the health of homeless people and to ultimately end homelessness. Key recommendations call for improvements to people’s incomes by increasing social assistance rates and the creation of more affordable and supportive housing. It is our hope that swift and meaningful action will be taken by all levels of government and by organizations that provide services and health care to homeless people.

The full report and summary can be downloaded at www.streethealth.ca. For more information please contact Erika Khandor at: erika@streethealth.ca.



THE FOLLOWING IS A LETTER WRITTEN TO PAULA, A STREET HEALTH MENTAL HEALTH OUTREACH WORKER, FROM HER CLIENT PETER.

“ When I returned to Toronto my buddy Robbie told me that he had cancer. Robbie lived close to where I live in a downtown Toronto rooming house and I went to visit him. Robbie was always clenching his stomach; Robbie was in pain.

I went with him to the doctor’s appointments; he was disappointed in the way he was being treated. After one visit, Robbie was given prescription for painkillers only. The doctor offered Robbie a bed at St. Michael’s Hospital but Robbie said no. He didn’t want to die in the hospital. I told Robbie that I would help him as much as I could. There are really no alternatives for people like me and my friend Robbie who are completely alone and have no income.

Robbie spent the last three months of his life unable to walk. He became depressed and very isolated, except for my visits. He was afraid of dying. I brought him whatever he wanted, usually milk and ice cream.

Welfare tried to cut Robbie off, telling him that he was no longer eligible. I remember going to the welfare office to try and get his social assistance back. Robbie lay down on the floor while he waited to see his worker. They told him that he was not eligible and he lost his welfare. Welfare recipients do not get the same treatment as people with insurance. They never even offered to operate or give chemotherapy to my friend.

I visited Robbie twice a day, every day. Robbie spent the last week of his life at Toronto Grace Hospital where he died peacefully. I miss my friend and I hope that one day I am not in the same position he was. ”

“Street Health nurses are supportive, efficient, polite & courteous”.

Street Health Community Caucus Client Satisfaction Survey 2007.

“I appreciate the help and guidance”.

“Staff is professional”.

“Staff are nice and always there”.

“The services provide follow-up and contacts”.

“Nurses make me feel stable and functioning”.

“I have increased trust when on the street because of the nurses”.

(As reported in the) Street Health Community Caucus Client Satisfaction Survey 2007.

This year's Annual Street Health Fundraiser took a trip to the East Coast, with our East Coast Kitchen Party theme!

This year's Street Health Fundraiser was held at the Steam Whistle Brewing Company and incorporated the unique charm of an authentic East Coast celebration. The event was hosted by Enza Supermodel and Tim Bolen. Party-goers enjoyed a succulent raw oyster bar, a delicious bar-beque, and several sweet and savoury hors d'oeuvres. Authentic down-homers, **Willis and Vern** entertained the crowd all night with a variety of lively "jigs and reels". These two Newfoundlanders put on a fabulous show and got everyone's feet tapping.



Party-goers danced up a storm to the sounds of authentic East Coast performers *Willis and Vern*, at our annual fundraising event held September 18th, 2007



Street Health mental health outreach worker Fiona Husband, takes a break from selling raffle tickets to pose for pictures with a friend.

A silent art auction, raffle, and dance lessons were just some of the additional attractions available to guests. Step-dancer Meghan Bold amazed everyone with her fast and fancy foot-work. ArtTrend.com provided a number of stunning original art pieces for the auction.

The event raised over \$20,000.00 for the Street Health nursing outreach programs. Thank you so much for attending and showing your support for Street Health. A special thank you to all of our sponsors, staff and volunteers who made the night such a success.

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS:



- D'Vine Wine
- Loblaws Inc.
- Rich Tree Market Restaurant
- Eatertainment Catering
- Universal Music
- Warner Music
- The Toronto Star
- Siegfried's Restaurant
- Marigolds & Onions Catering
- Rogers Inc.
- Bold Steps Dance Studio

STREET HEALTH WANTS YOU!

Interested in event planning? Street Health is currently looking for volunteers to work on the Fundraising Event Planning Committee. The Committee meets approximately once per month, and every-other-week during the two months prior to the event. If you are a motivated, energetic individual and would like to be part of this committee, please contact our development manager at Amanda@streethealth.ca.

VOLUNTEER NURSE PLANS TO CLIMB MOUNT KILIMANJARO!

Street Health volunteer nurse, Elizabeth Del'Bello is planning to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in support of the nursing team! She and a friend will be leaving Canada on January 18th, 2008 for their adventure. This ambitious and determined nurse has financed the entire trip from her own pocket, so all contributions to her efforts will go directly to Street Health. Pledges and donations can be made through our office. Please call 416 921 8668 x229 or visit our web site at www.streethealth.ca if you would like to support Elizabeth and Street Health. Tax receipts will be provided for all donations.

Way to go, Elizabeth!

88% of clients report being VERY SATISFIED with our Nursing Program.

Street Health Community Caucus Client Satisfaction Survey 2007.

STREET HEALTH BASEBALL TEAM HAS ANOTHER AMAZING SEASON!



The Street Health baseball team has another amazing season! While we did not finish in first place this year, the team placed 3rd overall in the league. In the semi-final game, Street Health faced off against Gateway Salvation Army Shelter, losing 10 to 7 at Moss Park baseball diamond. It was truly an amazing season, with some incredible wins and amazing team commitment!

In addition, Street Health received a special donation of Blue Jays tickets for the entire team. The team brought good luck to the ballpark on August 15th, watching the Jays defeat the Los Angeles Angels 2-1!

The City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department coordinates the Downtown East End Softball League (DEESL). Since the league is specifically for homeless individuals, a variety of physical and mental disabilities are anticipated. Physical fitness is not a requirement and accommodations are made so that everyone has an opportunity to get involved. The league provides a positive element in the lives of street-involved people that they would otherwise not have. Weekly games give people the opportunity to engage in team building activities and develop important social skills. They promote structure and rules, which can be transferred into their personal lives.

A big thank you to our team captain Rose, and staff sponsor, Linda Hazard for their commitment. Congratulations team on an amazing season!

Written By Amanda Robertson

STREET HEALTH'S current board members include:

Marguerite Ethier - Chair
Samuel Awe - Vice Chair
Michael Treuman - Treasurer
Brian Dubourdieu - Community Liaison
Chris Archer
Dennis Chow
Sharole Gabriel
Scott Goodman
Jeff Lewis
Jim Meeks
Jackie Schlifer-Taylor

HOW YOU CAN HELP

SEND A DONATION TO STREET HEALTH-

Your donation will help us expand our programs to better serve our clients.

ORGANIZE A FUNDRAISER-

Street Health would love to help you plan a fundraising event through your club, church or office. Please call for more details.

ADVOCATE FOR THE HOMELESS-

Express your concerns to your municipal, provincial and federal politicians...
WRITING A LETTER CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

GIVE STREET HEALTH A VOICE-

Our staff would be happy to speak to your organization, staff or club about our programs and the needs of our clients.

DONATE SLEEPING BAGS-

Please give your used sleeping bags to Street Health for our Sleeping Bag Exchange Program

This symbol was used by American hoboes in the early part of the twentieth century. It indicated that "if you are sick, they will care for you here"

MISSION STATEMENT

Street Health is an innovative community-based health care organization that provides services in non-judgmental and respectful ways to meet a wide range of physical, mental, and emotional needs to those who are homeless, poor, and socially marginalized. Education, advocacy, and support are important components of our services.

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