

StreetHealth

“A DAY IN THE LIFE”

A day in the life: Representing the social determinants of health through Photovoice began in March 2006 as an 8-week community-based research pilot project funded by a Wellesley Institute Enabling Grant. The aim of the project was to create a forum for members of the



The Street Health PhotoVoice Project is a ground-breaking initiative that allows homeless participants the opportunity to express their unique experiences on the streets through compelling images and words.

homeless community to present their lived experiences of homelessness, poverty and social inequity through stories and photographs.



Photovoice is a method of working with people in communities that are typically under-represented or excluded from decisions that affect their lives. It is a way of documenting community strengths and initiating dialogue about what is significant to the community. Quite simply, it is a way of giving voice to those who are excluded through the use of photography.

A Day in the Life project members met in March and April to tell stories and take photos about their daily life experiences and the issues that are important to them. The first eight weeks were so successful that the group continued to meet weekly at Street Health for seven months to discuss their experiences and photographs.

Every week brought new insight into the lives and experiences of people living on the streets of the city of Toronto.

When you are little you never dream, you will grow up to be homeless. I never dreamed I would stay a night at a shelter but all of a sudden there I was. And bed bugs. I

thought they were only in nursery rhymes, but all of a sudden actual bed bugs are biting me.

Disability is one of the ongoing issues for many people who are on the streets or living in insecure housing with low incomes.

I [eventually] had a psychiatric diagnosis. Found out medication wasn't going to get me un-depressed – I was depressed by the situation I found myself in - unemployed and homeless. ... Some of the people I don't know how they survive, and some of the people, well, they just haven't survived.

Politicians have really dropped the ball on what their role really is. The role of the rulers is the connection to the earth and the well being of the people and it seems our politicians have really forgotten that. And when we don't have good rulers, we don't have good leadership and then everything and everyone suffers.

The idea of having a home and how having a home affects people's health also arose.

... Home is where the heart is. If I have a room, is that a home? If I am not allowed cooking, hot and cold running water – is that a room or a home? I believe that is still a room. When I am in jail I am in a room, when I am in a hospital I am in a room, but it's not a home. A room is still not a home.

Health is not only a biological condition but also a social one.

Not everyone on the streets is there 'cause they want to be. I was married, had a good job, had a house and this is where I am right now though. I needed stitches in my head last year 'cause somebody cracked me with a bottle, I sat in the emergency ward for three and a half hours and I saw people go in there with nothing wrong and I just walked out and had buddy just tape up my head, I was alright. You get a lot of hassles, don't have a health card, and then they find out that you're on the street and right away the whole mood changes. And these are people that are supposed to be helping you. I've seen both sides of it now.

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STREET HEALTH'S current board members include:

Marguerite Ethier - Chair
Samuel Awe - Vice Chair
Michael Treuman - Treasurer
Brian Dubourdieu - Community Liaison
Chris Archer
Sharole Gabriel
Maureen Hennessy
Brenda Johnson
Jeff Lewis
Jim Meeks
Maureen Neville
Jackie Schlifer-Taylor



Photographs courtesy of the Street Health PhotoVoice Project.



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Using photographs and stories, *A day in the life* has been building a comprehensive picture of what the daily experience of homelessness is like and its effects on health and well-being. The project has provided an opportunity for reflection, relationship building, and an opportunity to work together towards social change using the arts. Changes to address the issues that we have been exploring do not happen quickly. Much education is needed. Outreach and education have been central activities of the project. The group has created visual and written materials that represent project members' experiences, which have been presented at community events, written publications and exhibitions. The *A day in the life* photography and story collective have been presented at the Parkdale Festival, ARCfest, YIMBY, and at the Trauma and Homelessness workshop.

A day in the life has received overwhelming support from the community and has resulted in an ongoing partnership between Street Health and Professor Nancy Viva Davis Halifax at the Centre for Arts-informed Research at the University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. We would like to continue this work and are now working toward securing long-term funding.

Our upcoming exhibit will be at the University of Toronto, on January 29, 2007 to February 23, 2007. For more information on *A day in the life* contact Nancy Halifax at 416 536 4488 or Fred Yurichuk at 905 791 0011 or email us at photographyandstory@gmail.com.

Written by:
Nancy Halifax and Erika Khandor

OUR WEB SITE GETS A FACELIFT!

Street health has recently completed construction on our NEW WEB SITE! The new site contains a wealth of information about our programs, the history of our agency, publications and research reports, and much more. The site also outlines all the ways you can help Street Health.

Please visit us at www.streethealth.ca

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR PAID AND ID SAFE IN JEOPARDY

Supporting Community Partnership Initiatives (SCPI) was launched by the Government of Canada in 1999 for “strategic investments that address homelessness” across Canada. This flexible, locally responsive and community driven program will end unless renewed by the federal government. Hundreds of valuable services delivered by thousands of experienced staff people will be lost by March 2007.

Partners for Access and Identification (PAID), a joint Street Health and Neighbourhood Link project and Street Health's **ID Safe** project are 100% SCPI funded. Both projects will be forced to shut down if we do not hear word about further Federal funding.

PAID was established in 1999 as an identification replacement program for homeless people. Seven identification workers hold over 100 ID clinics a month across the city of Toronto, helping homeless people obtain the identification they need to access essential services. Without identification people cannot access basic services including: health care, welfare, shelters and food banks; nor can they apply for jobs, secure housing, open a bank account or apply for other needed identification.

ID Safe was established in 2003 in response to a growing need for a safe and secure storage site for identification for people without a safe place to store their documents. Due to the nature of street life – sleeping on the street, communally in shelters or in insecure or temporary accommodation – homeless and marginally housed people often find their ID gets lost or stolen. People on the streets often get asked by the police to show identification documents and regularly this ID is not returned.

ID Safe and **PAID** are essential services at Street Health. Please take the time to write to the following federal officials and ask them to commit to future funding and invest in alleviating homelessness.

Contact:

Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada;
Honourable James Flaherty, Minister of Finance; and Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development.
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

If you have questions or require more information please contact:
Jane Kali, ID Safe: 416 921-8668 ext. 269, janek@streethealth.ca
or Julia Chao, PAID: 416 921-8668 ext. 228, julia@streethealth.ca

YEEHAW! DOWNTOWN HOEDOWN IS A RIP-ROARING SUCCESS!

On September 12th, 2006 Street Health put on its cowboy boots for our annual fundraising event, **The Street Health Downtown Hoedown!** Each year, Street Health hosts an incredible event at the Steam Whistle Brewing Company. This year was a huge success, raising over \$30,000 for our nursing and outreach programs, a record!



The event featured country-blue-grass greats, Heather Morgan & the Company of Men who certainly got the party moving on the dance floor! Line dance instructors taught a few lessons over the course of the evening, which provided hilarious entertainment for all! The charismatic Tim Bolen, of Rogers Television, hosted the event.

As always, the food was incredible! The menu included everything from a raw oyster bar, to sausages on the barbeque and delectable desserts. Many partygoers went home with incredible raffle and silent auction items, such as a gas barbeque, a Blackberry, original pieces of art, and free pizza for a year!



Thank you to all the staff, volunteers, and the 300+ attendees who made **The Street Health Downtown Hoedown** such a wonderful event. See ya'll next year!

Written By:
Amanda Robertson
Fundraising & Development Manager



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

Thank you to all of our event sponsors! Without you we would not have been able to host such an amazing fundraising event.

- Pizza Pizza Inc.
- Eatertainment Catering
- The Toronto Star
- Siegfried's Restaurant
- Right Angle Graphics
- Marigolds & Onions Catering
- Rogers Inc.
- Country 95.3fm
- Starbucks
- D'Vine Wine
- Loblaws Inc.
- M & M Meat Shops



WHAT'S NEW IN RESEARCH!

In 2006 Street Health continues to break new ground in community-based research on homelessness in Toronto!

In addition to the success of our A Day in the Life "Photovoice" Project, we have collaborated on a number of research projects including a study on Hepatitis C transmission led by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and have participated in many exciting conferences such as the International Harm Reduction Conference, which took place in Vancouver in May of this year.

We also released our first ever Street Health Research Bulletin, which highlighted findings from a survey on homeless people's health and health care access, showing that the majority of homeless people have serious physical health conditions and face major barriers to health care. We have since presented this research at international conferences in both Portland, Oregon and Toronto.

This spring we began work on the Street Health Survey, our own comprehensive study on the health and well being of homeless people in Toronto. We have recruited a team of 15 peer researchers who have past or current experience with homelessness. This fall the research team will interview 350 homeless men and women in shelters and meal

programs across Toronto about their health status and access to services.

In June 2006 we launched the "Failing the Homeless: Barriers in the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) for Homeless People with Disabilities" report. This was the result of a one and a half year project that explored the barriers our clients face to accessing disability benefits while at the same time helping our clients to secure benefits. Of a 85 homeless men and women who participated in this study:

- 100% were eligible for benefits but 0% were actually receiving benefits
- 100% of eligible participants needed help accessing benefits
- 100% of participants who successfully secured benefits were also able to then secure housing.

The report identifies key barriers in the ODSP system and makes recommendations for how to improve access for homeless people with disabilities.

Stay tuned for more exciting news from our research team!

Written By:
Erika Khandor, Research and Evaluation Coordinator

THE ROOTS & SHOOTS – STREET HEALTH KNITTING CLUB

Roots & Shoots is an international youth organization with the goal to inspire young people to take action and make change in whatever way possible. The Downtown Alternative School started their chapter of Roots & Shoots in 2005 with enormous success. Projects last year included an earth day neighbourhood clean-up, a write-a-thon for human rights, and a partnership with our local Meals on Wheels chapter to name a few.

This year, the school has started a knitting club with the goal of making scarves for the homeless. In partnership with Street Health, the group of young students will distribute these scarves to individuals in need. Several students in the group have spoken about meeting people on the street and expressed a desire to help make a difference in their lives. For children, being able to contribute in such a practical way is an invaluable experience. Many children who attend the school live in the downtown core and are aware of the number of people who live without adequate shelter, food, or clothing.

Street Health staff, parents and teachers are volunteering their time to teach the children how to knit. One stitch at a time, the children are creating their meaningful change in the world.

For more information on the Roots and Shoots Program please visit www.janegoodall.ca



Street Health staff member, Kari Gregorio teaches two young students the basics of “knit one, purl two” at the Roots and Shoots Knitting Club, benefiting Street Health clients.

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.

STREET HEALTH

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www.streethealth.ca

Charitable Registration
11920-0541-RR0001

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