

Street Health

COMING OUT OF THE SHADOWS

On March 8th 2013, we honoured International Women's Day in a new way. A group of strong, courageous women made Toronto history, as they owned the runway for the first annual *Out of the Shadows Fashion Show*.

Over 500 people came out to the Daniels Spectrum, a new, state of the art venue in the heart of Regent Park, to support the people involved in this incredible project, and to raise funds for programming that supports street-involved women. International Supermodel, Yasmin Warsame was our gracious emcee, guiding the audience through the amazing biographies of resiliency and empowerment as each of the models took their turn on the runway. The roar of the crowd and cheers from the audience reflected the looks of confidence and pure elation on each of the women's faces.

Hosted by Street Health and All Saints Drop-in, and in partnership with the Ryerson University School of Fashion Design led by Professor Sue Barnwell, this unique event celebrated character & creativity, hardship & triumph. Having completed an independent study course that covered social justice education these design students gained an in-depth understanding of the harsh realities of life for street-involved women, including the prevalence of violence.

The students were then paired with a woman from the community with lived street experience. Over a 3 month period, with expert mentoring from world-renowned designer Wayne Clark, these students worked alongside each model to design a garment that truly expressed her personal style, while proudly and boldly embodied her wisdom & experience. Their final creations were revealed on the runway at the Out of the Shadows Fashion Show.



The strong women of the Out of the Shadows Fashion Show rocked the runway on March 8th

So many women involved in sex work are creative and this event furthered this expression while highlighting the importance of social programs to help women who are involved in the sex trade. This type of programming through Street Health has helped countless women through harm reduction, training, and skills development.

The event was a tremendous success, raising significant funding for street-involved women. This would not have been possible without our generous sponsors. In particular, Events by Brandon Lee for creating a mysterious and magical backdrop that set the stage for our event perfectly, Salon Jie for making the women runway-ready, and of course the many volunteers that made the evening run smoothly.

Thank you so much to all who supported this amazing event. We are already planning for next year!

If you would like to make a donation please visit <https://outoftheshadows.blossomr.com/>.





The Jewell team all smiles and hard at work serving a delicious meal for over 400 clients!

27 YEARS AND GOING STRONG!!!

On February 25th, 2013 staff and clients marked Street Health's 27th year of providing care and services to the homeless and under-housed community of Toronto. Each year, the Street Health team throws a party for our homeless and under-housed clients. A full course meal, music, and an opportunity for people to socialize in a warm and inviting environment were provided. Every year attendees from the community receive a cozy Street Health sweatshirt.

The celebration was held at the Toronto Friendship Centre, across the street from our Street Health office. **Jewell Catering Company** continued their generous tradition of donating and serving a hot delicious meal to over 400 partygoers. Thank you to Michael Jewell and his amazing team for their kindness and generosity and to the volunteers at the Toronto Friendship Centre, who made our party a huge success. Happy 27th Birthday Street Health!

LEFT OUT IN THE COLD

For the past few months, there has been a growing debate in the city of Toronto. Homelessness and poverty advocates have been raising the alarm about an increasing crisis in our city's shelter system. City officials, however, claim that the system is working well, that shelter beds are always available, and that anyone who says otherwise is simply exaggerating.

Here at Street Health, we work with homeless people; we see how choices made by city officials can sometimes limit the choices available to vulnerable homeless citizens.

In response to media attention and pressure from poverty advocates, the city's *Shelter, Support and Housing Administration* looked into how well the shelter system is functioning, and released its findings in early March. According to this report, the city admits that the system is currently running at a 96% capacity, and must regularly use beds that are supposed to be reserved for emergencies (like during extreme cold alerts). They say this 96% capacity means that 4% of beds, roughly 170, are empty and available every night. Available beds are managed using a computerized database that tracks arrivals and departures to keep an accurate count of the number of empty spaces. Although there is sometimes a delay between when a bed is vacated and when it is entered into the database, there are always beds available and no one gets turned away.

The city has investigated their 'Emergency Shelter Services' and concluded that there is no problem – yet Street Health and other poverty advocates assert that there indeed is an emergency within the shelter service. Maybe we know something that they don't seem to see.

In 2012, 34 people died on the street in Toronto. So far this year, 8 more people have died –one of them freezing to death in late January. As of February 2013, there were 700 names on Toronto's Homeless Memorial, a list of the men and women who have died as a result of homelessness.

When the city speaks of 'empty shelter beds', they need to also mention that shelters come in different categories: shelters for pregnant women; older women with mental health issues; those that allow couples or people with pets; youth shelters; shelters for women who

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have experienced violence; women with children; single men. If you do not fit into a shelter's category, any available bed is not available to you. As a result, more and more people are being crowded into the limited space that is left. Overcrowding creates risks for our

homeless clients. Tension and anxiety, conflicts, bedbugs, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, lack of privacy, and violence. One client came to see us to treat injuries suffered when he was beaten with a fire extinguisher in one of the city's shelters. To find a bed for a client, Street Health nurse Jessica H. called the city's assessment and referral phone line, waited on hold for over an hour, and was told in the end that nothing was available and to try back later. The city's referral centre office, located at 129 Peter Street, is supposed to help people find the closest available bed, but some clients go there, wait for hours, are finally told that nothing is available, and end up having to sleep on the centre's floor. Others must travel to multiple shelters looking for a bed, fighting fatigue. With no money for TTC, they must walk to each one, and arrive only to be told that there was an error in the database and no beds are available. The *Out of the Cold* program is a volunteer-run network of churches

Attention Donors!

There is a great need for gently used clothing here at Street Health. If you would like to make a contribution please call or email Amanda Robertson amand@streethealth.ca or 416 921 8668 x229 to arrange a drop off.

We only accept men's' and women's' cold weather clothing in good condition and freshly laundered. You **MUST** arrange in advance to drop off a donation; we will not accept walk-ins due to possible bed bugs.

Sorry, we can not pick up.



Street Health nurse Victory Lall spoke passionately at a recent housing rally.

and synagogues that offers meals and overnight shelter to the homeless, thus relieving the pressure to find a place to sleep. The program runs from November to March and assists many of the most vulnerable each winter. But extreme cold is not the homeless person's only threat. Vicious storms like last October's Hurricane Sandy had a worse effect on those who has no homes. Toronto's own medical officer of health Dr. David McKeown published a report in 2005 revealing that more people die each year due to extreme heat than due to extreme cold! The people who work in shelters and the people who use them are saying that it is nearly impossible to find accessible emergency shelter when they need it most. And for some, this is literally a matter of life and death.

Both sides of this debate would agree that a better option to undignified and often dangerous shelters would be affordable housing. But affordable housing is hard to come by. Market-value rents are often too expensive for someone living on a limited income. The city's waiting list for subsidized housing, with 90,000 names on it, is approximately 10 years long. The growing income inequality in Toronto, that some researchers have uncovered, targets seniors, families, newcomers, and the people who need affordable housing most, who are seeing their income supports slashed or eliminated. Since 2006, the city has closed 5 of its homeless shelters, which accounts for roughly 400 beds. Affordable housing is scarce, the number of shelters has dropped, demand has increased but the supply has declined, and there is

increasing overcrowding in the remaining shelters. Despite all of this, the city voted to cut spending for emergency shelters, in the 2013 budget, by 2.9% -which means the loss of an additional 110 beds per night.

More and more people are crowding into fewer beds. For those who cannot find a bed – who are turned away – there is an ever-present risk that people will die on the streets of Toronto.

There is a crisis in Toronto's shelter system.

Back in 1999, City Council unanimously agreed that homeless shelter occupancy should not exceed 90%. In the summer of that year, Metro Hall was opened for 3 weeks to accommodate shelter overflow. The current administration has chosen to respond to this recent crisis by opting to open up 172 'flex beds', which means putting mats onto the floors of already crowded and unsafe shelters. Although this is better than nothing, it will not solve the problem. What we need is affordable housing that is safe and clean, that doesn't require choosing between food and rent, and that provides the right supports where necessary. In the meantime, we need more space to accommodate the increasing number of homeless people who rely on the shelter system.

Here at Street Health, we have a new Executive Director. *Kapri Rabin* brings to our agency a reinvigorated commitment to partnering with other like-minded organizations and to advocating on behalf of our clients who are too often overlooked, unheard, and left out in the cold.

Written by Terry Peters

OUR PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- Nursing Outreach
- Mental Health Support
- I.D. Replacement and Storage
- Harm Reduction
- Advocacy
- Research
- Education

NEW LEADERSHIP AT STREET HEALTH

Kapri Rabin began as our new Executive Director on February 20.

She has over twenty years of progressive leadership experience working in not-for-profit organizations, including community health centres, social services and hospitals, addressing such critical issues as mental health, disability, substance abuse, the effects of trauma and abuse, the specific needs of newcomers and refugees, youth, seniors, and those living with chronic diseases. Most recently she was the Director of Integration and Urban Health at Central Toronto Community Health Centre where she was responsible for developing and maintaining primary and specialized care for marginalized populations and overall leadership and strategic directions for urban health services. Kapri has considerable experience working with Boards of Directors and is the Past President of St. Christopher House. She has a Masters of Social Work and a Masters Certificate in Health Care Management.

I am thrilled to be part of Street Health – I have such great respect for the organization's mission and its many accomplishments. I would like to thank the Board, the staff, clients, and community partners for their very warm welcome. The Out of the Shadows event on March 8 was an extraordinary way to be introduced to an organization – it's energy and individual and collective impact demonstrated the importance of the work we do.

In my first weeks I have been getting to know staff, clients, peers and meeting with community stakeholders. I have concentrated on listening to feedback about what is working well and about some of the challenges Street Health is facing. In the next month we will be having a full day staff planning meeting to discuss our priorities for moving forward in our programs, services, education and advocacy, to improve the health and well-being of homeless and under housed individuals in southeast Toronto.

I would like to hear from you. If you have something you would like to share about Street Health please email me at kapri@streethealth.ca

MAKING GREAT FRIENDS!

For several years Street Health has been the lucky recipient of a donation from the Greater Toronto Apartment Association. In 2012, for the very first time, we were selected for a partnering grant of \$20,000! The donation will be used to fund Nursing and Outreach programs at Street Health. Thank you so much to our friends at GTAA!



On October 21st 2012 we attended that Annual General Meeting of the Greater Apartment Association where we were awarded a donation of \$20,000!

BOARD LIST SPRING 2013

EXECUTIVE:

Don Locke – Board Chair
Tar McCarville – Vice Chair
Michelle Mallette- Treasurer

BOARD MEMBERS:

Ric Atcheson
Jordan Berman
Adam Borovilos
Eleanor Lester
Michael Treuman
Diane Walter



Street Health



@streethealthtoronto

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- SEND A DONATION TO STREET HEALTH -
Your donation will help us to 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, club, or church about our programs and the needs of our clients.

- DONATE SLEEPING BAGS AND WINTER WARMTH ITEMS -
Please give your used sleeping bags, winter coats, warm clothing, new socks, and footwear to Street Health for our Sleeping Bag Distribution and Winter Warmth Project.

HAVE YOU VISITED OUR NEW WEB SITE YET?

Lots of useful information for donors and service providers.
Making a donation online is quick, easy and secure!
Be sure to check out our regular blog posts as well!

www.streethealth.ca



StreetHealth

Together We Can Make It Work

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