

*Street*Health

ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009



Street Health works to improve the health and well being of homeless and underhoused individuals in southeast Toronto by addressing the social determinants of health through programs, services, education and advocacy.

A Message from the Board Chair

The second half of 2008 will be remembered around the world as the beginning of the "Financial Crisis". Financial markets underwent one of their regular down-turns, but this one had a much greater impact than usual. Governments responded very actively – and are generating significant new government deficits. And more working families than usual are affected by job losses. We are anticipating that 2009-2010 will mark an unprecedented number of people coming through our doors for the first time. It is now more important than ever to provide support to the homeless community of Toronto.

Over the six years of my being on the Street Health Board, we have continually adapted and are doing so again this year. Changes in our services for 2009 are closely aligned with Ontario's current health care strategies. Effective collaboration with other social service providers has been, and continues to be, a hallmark of Street Health.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank all those who continue to make Street Health relevant, important and effective for the population we serve. The attitude, talent and energy of the staff is truly inspiring. The resources of our volunteers and donors are fundamental to our on-going success. Thanks you so much for all you do.



Michael Treuman
Board Chair

A Message from the Executive Director

Positive change is a constant at Street Health – and this past year was no exception. In the natural evolution of funding cycles, as well as program development, our Hepatitis C Support Project fortunately found a permanent home at a partnering agency, while newer programs, Safer Stroll and Crack Users Projects, have also proven their effectiveness and importance in the community. We look to the future and welcome a new and innovative project funded by the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network; a project that will provide crisis intervention to seniors with addiction and mental health issues.

This past year also saw the evolution of the ground-breaking homelessness research, the Street Health Report 2007. From the rich data gathered for the report four Research Bulletins were published, expanding on significant themes related to the health of homeless people.

Each year the work of our employees plays a significant role in the lives of hundreds of homeless people in Toronto, and 2008-2009 was no exception. For this I would like to thank the staff for their determination and hard work. I would also like to thank the members of the Board of Directors for volunteering their time and effort to ensuring good governance and for providing the vision for the organization.

Together, staff and Board have fostered Street Health's roots as a unique endeavour dedicated to easing the suffering of those who are homeless through short and long-term solutions. I would also like to thank our volunteers and donors for supporting our efforts through the generous giving of their personal and financial resources.



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Executive Director

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OUR PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Nursing Program

Staff nurses work with volunteer RNs and NPs to operate scheduled clinics in drop in centres and shelters. In addition, nursing outreach is designed to locate people living on the street who generally avoid mainstream services. The nurses advocate for clients on an individual basis and challenge systemic barriers which prevent every person's right to appropriate, accessible and timely health care despite their individual circumstances. Mentoring of nursing and medical students and providing educational sessions for community groups and schools are important components of our program.

Community Mental Health Program

Street Health's community mental health program provides support for people who are homeless or under-housed and experiencing mental health issues. The Community Mental Health Workers assist people in trying to access basic needs such as shelter and housing, income, health care, and ID, which are fundamental determinants of health. Other support includes crisis intervention, outreach, informal counselling, and legal support as well as facilitating access to other community resources. The program also focuses on advocating for individual clients as well as addressing systemically on issues of poverty, homelessness, and human rights.

Harm Reduction Program

The street outreach team provides clients with referrals and peer support related to the harms associated with substance use. The program includes needle distribution, safer crack kit distribution, street outreach service, and support for sex workers. This year, Street Health partnered with the Sherbourne Health Centre Health Bus to offer early morning services and health care to sex workers.



Street Health clients wait for their turn to see the nurse outside the drop-in at Dundas and Sherbourne.

Hepatitis C Support & Education

Nearly one quarter of homeless people in Toronto have Hepatitis C and face major barriers to health care (Street Health Report 2007). Street Health provides support, referrals, and prevention education for clients who have Hepatitis C. Street Health recently partnered with Regent Park and South Riverdale Community Health Centres to provide access to treatment for street involved people with Hepatitis C. The project offers peer support as well as access to an interdisciplinary team of health care providers.

The Crack Users Project (CUP)

The *Crack Users Project* continues to be the Toronto's only program aimed at reducing the harms associated with the use of crack cocaine. The project in partnership with Regent Park Community Health Centre includes three weekly drop-ins, a health-care clinic with a Nurse Practitioner, housing help, a Community Support Worker, and peer training opportunities. In 2009, the CUP Project has been invited to present at several national and international conferences. Many organizations are using CUP as a model for their own programs. Graduates from the CUP outreach training program conduct street outreach with their peers and share what they have learned about safer drug use practices and strategies.

I.D. Replacement – Access to Health Cards for the Homeless

In 2007, 28% of homeless people in Toronto were refused health care because they did not have a health card (Street Health Report 2007). Street Health's *Access to Health Cards* program was established to assist homeless people with the onerous task of applying for health cards and the other personal identification they need to access health and social services. Last year, the *Access to Health Cards* program completed over 4,000 applications for ID, an average of about 335 per month.

Partners for Access and Identification (PAID)

Street Health is a lead agency in the *PAID Project* along with Neighbourhood Link, which runs identification replacement clinics across Toronto. Outreach workers help homeless people obtain identification such as birth certificates, landed papers, health cards, and Social Insurance cards. The PAID project also connects people to other services such as primary health care facilities, sources of housing and food, other programs, and community-based supports.



Street Health Nurse Allana and volunteer nurse Anna at a recent nursing clinic for homeless people in Toronto.

ID Safe

Homeless and under-housed individuals can easily lose their identification due to unstable living conditions. The *ID Safe* program at Street Health offers security for homeless people by storing their important identification documents, helping them to maintain access to services which require proof of identification. Approximately 500 people currently keep their identification safe with Street Health. An evaluation of the ID Safe this winter found that this service greatly improves identification retention and 89% of clients felt that having a safe place to store their ID had helped to stabilize or improve their lives in some way.

Research

In the past year, Street Health has released a series of 'Research Bulletins'. The bulletins based on additional analysis of the findings from its comprehensive study on the health status and access to health care of homeless people in Toronto, *The Street Health Report 2007*. Bulletin topics include: hepatitis C, crack use, substance use and mental illness, and homeless women. Research at Street Health continues to be a valuable source of information and a tool for advocacy for Street Health and for other community agencies and coalitions working to address issues of homelessness.

Community Health Promotion

Street Health has been involved in a number of initiatives over the past year that address poverty and homelessness: an anti-poverty rally at Queen's Park just prior to the last provincial election drew over 800 people; a community forum to discuss solutions related to an ongoing bed bug infestation attracted 300 participants; a Housing Not War campaign, and more recently a Recession Relief campaign.

Mail Service

Homeless people by definition lack the postal address required to qualify for certain services. Street Health will provide a mailing address and handle a person's mail.

STREET HEALTH NURSING STORIES

One of the unique advantages of Street Health nursing is our ability to meaningfully connecting with clients. We are able to spend time listening to our clients express their concerns and share their goals - all in a non-judgmental, open and accepting manner. This not only gives us a glimpse into the lives of the people we serve, but it also serves as an opportunity for us to build a rapport and establish lasting relationships within the community. Through our work we strive to go beyond healing, by providing education, counseling and empowering individuals to make choices and decisions that will improve their physical and mental health and well being. Here are two stories from our nursing team.

Steven

Steven has been a long time visitor to the Street Health nursing clinic. He routinely has his blood pressure and blood sugar monitored, and receives therapeutics for his arthritis management. In 2007, the Street Health nurses helped Steven to negotiate and secure an improved housing situation. Recently, an astute staff member at Steven's housing unit noticed a sudden change in his behavior and contacted Allana, a Street Health nurse, to express her concern. Allana visited Steven along with another nurse from Street Health and found him in a state of delusion and appearing physically unwell. In consultation with his family doctor, they determined that Steven would best be served in a hospital where he could be further assessed and treated for this sudden alteration in mood and health.

Unfortunately, Steven was arrested on allegations of assault before he received the much needed medical attention. At this point, a long legal process began that was made more complex by Steven's on-going health needs and his precarious housing situation. Throughout the process, Steven was supported by the Street Health nurses, who secured him a lawyer, accompanied him to his regular court appearances, medical and housing appointments, and continued to assist him through various circumstances as they arose. Throughout all this, Allana has advocated strongly on his behalf, championed his rights and worked to promote his overall health and well-being. His health issues are currently being addressed and Steven is receiving the help and support he so badly needs.



Making a Donation to STREET HEALTH is now easier than ever!

You can make a donation to STREET HEALTH through a secure online donation system. Go to CanadaHelps.org and type Street Health in "search".

OR...

Click on the "Donate Now" button on our website located at streethealth.ca, scroll down, and click on the CanadaHelps.org link.

Exciting features include a monthly giving option or making your donation in honour or in memory of someone special.

VISA and Master Card are accepted.

Gordon

Gordon is a soft-spoken, elderly gentleman who suffers from gradually worsening memory loss. He often attends Street Health nursing clinics and has come to trust the nurses implicitly. When he says, "I can talk to you", it usually means that in the time it takes for him to reach the clinic, he is still able to remember what he wants to tell us.

When Gordon arrived at clinic several months ago he was disoriented and greatly distressed. Gordon was unable to give his address and unable to name the street he lived on. He was also in severe pain and had poor vision. With Gordon's consent, Beth, a Street Health nurse, contacted his physician



Street Health nurse Jean-Claude provides medical care and a sympathetic ear to a client in need.

who was very glad to hear from her and asked that she bring Gordon for an appointment as soon as possible. Gordon had missed several appointments and his physician was very worried about him. Following this appointment and several tests, a brain scan showed the result of a fairly recent stroke which was likely the cause of his confusion and forgetfulness.

Today, Gordon's physician relies on Street Health to keep in touch with him and monitor Gordon's health. This presents a daily struggle because Gordon often forgets to take his medications and cannot read the dosage labels. Beth has been very creative in her attempt to solve this problem. She requested that the pharmacist place his daily doses into a "blister pack", which has made remembering to take his medication much easier. As a result, Gordon's blood pressure is the best it has been in a decade. He now has an established routine to attend nursing clinic for blood pressure checks, which have helped him to remain fairly well. He is still able to live by himself – cooking, shopping and appreciating his independence.

The trust between Gordon and Beth has enabled her to delicately suggest that he move into supportive housing; a suggestion that would have at an earlier point in their relationship, been met with anger and frustration. A move to supportive housing will likely be a lengthy process, but in the meantime Beth is arranging for further in-home support for Gordon through the Toronto Community Care Access Centre.

Street Health Introduces Innovative Peer Project

At Street Health, we recognize that the best way to develop innovative services for the homeless population of Toronto is through in-depth consultation with people in the community. The people we consult and work with are often living on the streets or using the shelter system, dealing with complex health and social issues, and may face significant barriers to accessing health care and other services. This process ensures that we are meeting the current and specific needs of our clients.

It was through this consultative process that the Health Information Project (HIP) was born. This innovative project began in August 2008 and was aimed at providing education to individuals who are homeless and using drugs by injection. National research projects have revealed that 70% of individuals who use drugs by injection in



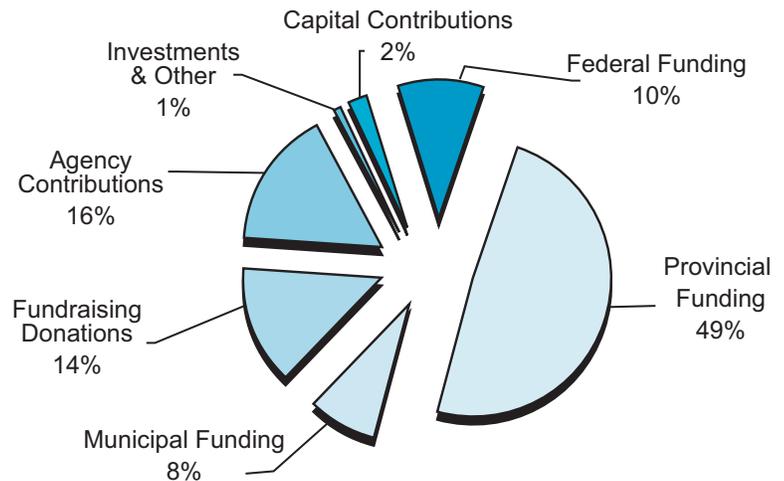
HIP participants at a celebratory luncheon receive their graduation certificates.

the city of Toronto test positive for the Hepatitis C virus. HIP provided much needed disease prevention education and peer-driven activities that focused on mitigating the transmission of Hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. The membership of HIP included 10 individuals who were homeless and using drugs by injection, one Street Health staff member and one social work student. Weekly meetings with HIP participants were an opportunity to discuss the issues facing injection drug users as well as receive meaningful feedback. Some challenges that were identified as impeding one's ability to use
(Continued on page 6)

Fundraising 2008-2009

In these uncertain economic times, it has become increasingly more difficult to secure charitable donations. However, 2008-2009 proved to be a successful year for Street Health's annual fundraising campaigns. We continued to strengthen existing relationships, fostered new funding opportunities, and increased overall participation in all our fundraising efforts. Development planning at Street Health allows our existing programs to flourish, makes possible new initiatives, and ensures long-term organizational growth. If you are interested in hearing more about our efforts, please contact us at (416) 921-8668 extension 229 or by email at info@streethealth.ca. On behalf of all of us at Street Health, thank you for answering our call for help!

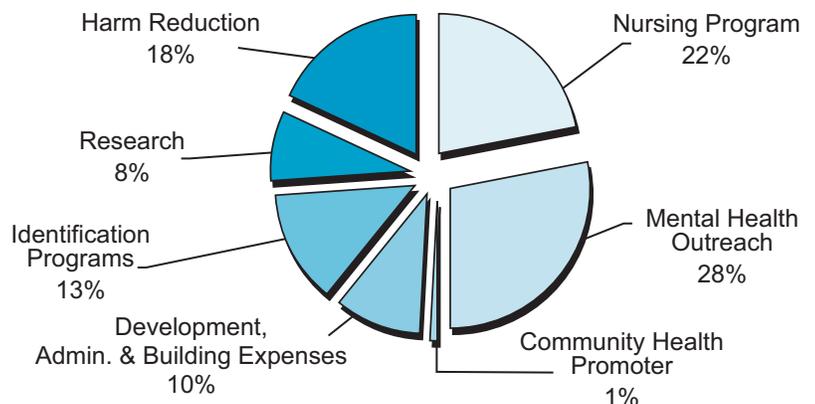
Street Health Revenue 2008-2009



Finance

Street Health is a fiscally responsible organization. Each dollar is carefully accounted for to ensure that we are providing the highest level of support and services possible to our clients, as well as enables Street Health to be a sustainable organization. We have some stable core funding, however, donations and grants allow us to add new and innovative services for our homeless clients, while continuing to provide high quality care.

Program Expenditures 2008-2009



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drugs in a safer manner were: limited access to needle exchange services within Toronto, drug use equipment not being allowed in shelter services, and not having access to comprehensive services such as a safer supervised site to use drugs.

As a result of these discussions, HIP has developed a series of harm reduction and health promotion educational materials. HIP also produced safer injection mats and syringe disposal kits containing educational messages that continue to be distributed to over 2000 people through harm reduction programs across the city. The hope of this project is that these tools will provide a practical way to keep drug use equipment separate and therefore reduce the spread of disease, while disseminating useful information.

In addition to developing these much needed materials, HIP participants have also been trained to be community educators. They have led several well-received workshops at needle exchange projects and harm reduction programs in Toronto, in addition to sharing knowledge informally with their peers.

Upon the completion of HIP, an independent survey found that 70% of respondents had a good understanding of disease transmission and 90% revealed engaging in safer



Above, a sample of the safer injection placemats developed by HIP participants as part of the community education component of the project.

drug use practices. HIP has paved the way for the on-going distribution of materials and continued education. The project also provided an opportunity for individuals who are homeless and using drugs by injection to take greater control over their lives, promoting informed and healthier choices. Way to go HIP!

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT STREET HEALTH'S NURSING OUTREACH PROGRAM

I want to help you provide vital services for those people living on the street. Enclosed is my donation of:

- \$35 \$50 \$80 \$100 \$250 I would prefer to give \$ _____

My payment preference is:

- Cheque enclosed (please make payable to STREET HEALTH)
 MASTERCARD # _____ Expiry Date ____ / ____
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Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code _____

Donations of \$100 or more *or* joining our monthly giving program will entitle you to a complimentary copy of *The Street Health Report*.

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR.

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME PART OF THE STREET HEALTH FAMILY!

Please process my monthly donation for:

- \$20 \$35 \$50 \$100 I would prefer to give \$ _____

- Master Card # _____ VisaCard # _____ Expiry Date ____ / ____

If you would prefer to have your donation debited from your bank account on a monthly basis, please include a blank cheque marked "VOID" with this donor coupon. All banking information is kept confidential.

Please detach this coupon and send with your donation.

All donations are tax deductible.

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