

Health in Your



Hands

The Newsletter of New Heights Community Health Centres

Healthy People in a Healthy City



Big plans are in the works for our World Health Day event

By Oleksandra Budna

April 7, 2010 is World Health Day — an annual event observed worldwide. This year's theme is "urbanization and health." Life in big cities is often associated with many health challenges, which can lead to unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, tobacco and drug use, harmful use of alcohol, mental health issues and chronic diseases.

Join us for a World Health Day event

Many of these health issues are at the core of New Heights' work. So, we are organizing a World Health Day event that will bring our communities together and address various urban health issues. We promise an event filled with fun and information, including entertainment, prizes, great food, talks and discussions on various health-related topics, fitness and dancing workshops for different ages, healthy eating and cooking activities, crafts and games for kids, opportunities to socialize with your neighbours and meet service providers. All Lawrence Heights and Bathurst-Finch community members are invited. Activities will take place primarily in the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood (the exact location is to be confirmed). A shuttle bus will be provided for Bathurst-Finch residents to facilitate their participation in the event.



Nominate a "Health Champion"

As part of its World Health Day 2010 celebration, New Heights acknowledges the great work done by various community members to improve health in our communities. We are excited to issue a call for nominations for the **Health Champions in our Community award**. A Health Champion is someone who lives, works or goes to school in the New Heights catchment area (bounded by Eglinton Ave., Steeles Ave., Bathurst St. and Keele St.) and has made a significant contribution to protecting and promoting the health of community residents in line with the mission and values of New Heights Community Health Centres.

In this issue:

All About Making an Appointment.....	1
Message from the Board Chair and the Executive Director.....	2
Seniors' Health Project	2
New Heights Launches Annual Client Survey ...	2
Integration Update.....	2
Starting Up a Network in Bathurst-Finch	3
How You Get Down.....	3
Planting the Seeds of a Community Garden	3
Have You Met Victor Dhue?.....	4
There's Something Happening Here	4

Plus: dates to note and more

All nominees will be honoured during the Health Champions in our Community award ceremony, and will be featured on our website, in the event program and in the Health Champions in our Community video that will be screened at the awards ceremony. The grand-prize winner will be determined by a draw at the World Health Day event. 🌟 Watch for more information in coming weeks. Download the Health Champions in Our Community nomination form and get event updates at www.newheightshealth.org/whd. To learn more or get involved, please contact Oleksandra Budna, 647-436-0385 or obudna@newheightshealth.org.

ALL ABOUT

Making an Appointment

In response to feedback we received in the annual client survey, the **quality improvement committee** is developing a brochure about making an appointment. It will be published by March 2010. Below is some information from the brochure. This information is for New Heights Community Health Centres' primary health-care clients, who receive one-on-one service from one or more of our health-care providers (doctor, nurse practitioner, nurse, registered practical nurse, community dietitian, chiroprapist, social worker and case coordinator).

As a client, how do I make an appointment?

Call **416-787-1661**, and speak to a receptionist.

At certain times of the day, especially morning, the volume of calls is very high and you may have to wait on hold.

If your call is not urgent, it may be better to call in the afternoon or evening, when we get fewer calls and the wait is not as long.

As a client, what are my appointment options?

• **Pre-booked appointments** are available with all health-care providers. The amount of time you can book depends on which health-care provider you need to see and the reason for your visit.

- **Same-day appointments** are available only with the doctors, NPs and nurses. They are afternoon appointments. They are *not* for annual check-ups, which should be pre-booked. To book a same-day appointment, call 416-787-1661 the morning of the day you want to come in. These appointments fill up quickly. It's best to call right when we open at 8:30 a.m.
- **Walk-in appointments** with the doctor, NP and/or nurse take place daily during the walk-in hour from **1 p.m. to 2 p.m.** These are very short appointments. You will only be able to deal with one urgent issue. Walk-in appointments are **first come, first served**.


Message from the Board Chair and the Executive Director

For many people, ringing in a new year also means making resolutions. Many of these are often health related. Starting an exercise program, quitting smoking and improving diet are common resolutions. While we all start out with good intentions, it is often hard to keep up with our best-laid plans. New Heights has services and groups that can support you in reaching your health goals. We encourage you to browse through our newsletter to find out more on how we can support you in all your health needs.

In health,



Andrea Cohen
Executive Director



Michael Rethazi
Board Chair

Seniors' Health Project

By Sheila Buckmire

Care of our seniors is a priority for New Heights Community Health Centres. On October 1, 2009, we implemented the Seniors' Health Project (SHP), which provides home visits to frail seniors who are home-bound, do not have a family doctor and/or the family doctor does not make home visits.

The SHP is funded by the Toronto Central Local Health Integrated Network. We work collaboratively with our partners to provide comprehensive care to frail seniors in their homes. Our partners are: Baycrest Hospital, Toronto Central CCAC, Humber River Regional Hospital (HRRH), St. Clair West Services for Seniors and Downsview Services to Seniors. To date, SHP has received 52 referrals to the project.

Our dynamic team

Our team members are: Dr. Andrea Stern; Victoria I., medical secretary; Olu, community health worker; Reanne, registered practical nurse; Flo and Madeline, registered nurses; Victoria K., resident outreach worker; Aysha, advanced practice nurse (Baycrest); Vasilka, case manager (Toronto Central CCAC); and Sharon, geriatric emergency nurse (HRRH).

Our actions speak

Our multidisciplinary team – the best in the west of Toronto – enjoys being creative and innovative in the high-quality care we provide. Here's one patient's story:

Mr. Z., who is legally blind, was referred to our program because he did not have a family doctor. He needed a series of tests but was unable to get there because of his condition and the distance of the testing facility. Transportation to his usual testing facility cost about \$200 round trip – which Mr. Z. could not afford. The New Heights' SHP team organized the test at the nearest facility, and the transportation to get him there.

But, they did not stop there.... On the day of Mr. Z.'s test, they assisted him to the taxi and Aysha was on hand to greet, support, and assist him to his room at Baycrest.

And they weren't done yet... The team updated each other on Mr. Z.'s progress. On the day of his discharge, the team was right there to welcome him, assist him from the taxi, and settle him in his home.

Our client said: "Thank you. I've never had such wonderful treatment before." 🙌

For more information about the Seniors' Health Project, please visit our website, www.newheightshealth.org, or call 416-787-1661.

News

New Heights Launches Annual Client Survey

By Julie Callaghan

In June 2009, New Heights implemented an annual client survey, using a new survey tool and process. The survey asked clients of primary health care, health promotion groups, Diabetes Education Centre (DEC), Pathways to Education and Early Years about overall quality and ease of access.

Five community members roamed the centre, interviewing clients. Over a four-week period, 460 people were surveyed. Thanks to the interviewers for their hard work! Clients' responses were kept confidential.

What our clients liked

In many areas, New Heights received rave reviews from our clients. By and large, clients are extremely satisfied with New Heights' programs and services. Well over 80 per cent of clients surveyed told us that:

- Programs and services at New Heights are culturally sensitive and meet their needs.
- Primary healthcare professionals at New Heights listen carefully to clients' needs and provide excellent quality of care.
- Health promotion, DEC, Pathways to Education and Early Years programs and services have really helped clients improve their individual, family and community health.
- Staff at New Heights are welcoming to clients.
- New Heights' facilities are clean, comfortable, accessible and inviting.

Over 90 per cent of respondents said that they would recommend New Heights' services and programs to a family member or friend.

Areas for improvement

Clients also told us about the areas where there is room for improvement. In particular, respondents reported that:

- It can be hard to book an appointment and appointments are not always available at times that meet their needs.
- Our health professionals should try to explain things in ways that are easier to understand.

- New Heights should do more to provide clients with information about programs and services that can help them.

Next steps

The results of the survey were summarized in a report that was reviewed by New Heights' quality improvement committee. Results were also shared with management and staff, and, now, with clients and community members.

The quality improvement committee developed a work plan to address some of the concerns raised between October 2009 and March 2010. In this short period of time, the committee is focusing on improving communications as a means of addressing some of the issues raised. The first edition of our semi-annual calendar of programs and services is now available. Work is also underway on:

- a slideshow of promotional materials for the waiting room
- a brochure for clients on how to make an appointment

Upcoming surveys

New Heights will survey clients again in April and May of this year. We expect this timing will allow more time and resources for a more ambitious work plan. In the meantime, if clients or community members have any feedback for New Heights, please fill in a suggestion card and put it in one of the suggestion boxes (located in the main floor waiting area and in the second floor drop-in area; suggestion boxes are also planned for the Pathways and Bathurst-Finch offices).

Thank you to all those clients who made the time to respond to this survey. We hope you are pleased with the actions we are taking to respond to your concerns. We look forward to your continued feedback! 🙌



Integration Update

You may have heard that New Heights is exploring a potential merger with another community health centre. York Community Services (to the west of us) and New Heights have jointly embarked on a planning process that could lead to our voluntary merger. This planning will inform a recommendation that the boards of directors of both organization will review.

If approved, the merger process would commence in spring/summer of 2010. We expect that our planning will show that a merger would produce the following mutual benefits:

- improved and increased services delivered to the community
- efficiencies and opportunities to strengthen organizational capacity
- a stronger voice in the provision of health and social services for marginalized populations in Toronto's west end

In January we are seeking feedback from all our stakeholders about this potential merger. In February the two boards will review the recommendation and decide whether or not to proceed. You'll find updated information, and a link to e-mail us your input, on our website at www.newheightshealth.org/what_s_new.html.

Starting Up a Network in Bathurst-Finch

By Amy Katz

Inspired by the incredible work of the Lawrence Heights Inter-Organizational Network (LHION), New Heights has taken the lead on developing a similar network in the **Bathurst-Finch neighbourhood**. We are in the first stages, but momentum is building thanks to the energy, talents and determination of the residents and community workers in Bathurst-Finch.

“Why is New Heights helping organize a network in Bathurst-Finch?”

New Heights is in the process of developing a community hub and satellite community health centre in Bathurst-Finch. In developing the hub, we met and consulted with many residents,

community groups and service providers. New Heights is also responsible for Action for Neighbourhood Change in Bathurst-Finch. Through these projects, we have gathered a lot of input about the neighbourhood.

Residents and community workers both identified missing infrastructure, programs and services in the Bathurst-Finch area. We also heard over and over from agencies and residents that there isn't enough information out there about the neighbourhood and the services available in it. Community agencies feel a need to better coordinate services, make better referrals and work more closely together for a strong, healthy community.

Working with the City of Toronto and other community partners, we decided that a **Bathurst-Finch Network (BFN)** could help take on some of these problems and, potentially, work with the community to begin to address broader issues that affect the neighbourhood.

“How are you structured, and who is part of the network?”

So far, the network is made up of area residents and workers from community agencies, the City of Toronto and the Toronto District School Board. We have an interim steering committee, a general membership and are moving now to form sub-committees.



The Bathurst-Finch Network's first public event: a community conversation and agency fair. Conversations took place in English, Russian, Farsi and Korean.

“What have you done so far?”

In November 2009, we held our first public event, a “community conversation” and agency fair at Rockford School. About 140 residents and community workers attended, and took part in a series of small-group conversations in English, Russian, Farsi and Korean. Community partners are preparing a report based on these conversations, which will be sent to everyone who attended.

“What's next?”

Our sub-committees will begin making action plans to address specific issues. We are planning our next community event for early March 2010. In the spring, we will hold a planning day and formalize our structures. In the meantime, we are researching different network models and experimenting with how to work together. 🌱

If you live, work or go to school in the Bathurst-Finch neighbourhood, we invite you to join the BFN! For more information, contact Amy Katz at 647-436-0385 or akatz@newheightshealth.org.

How You Get Down

Youth

By Edith Wambayi

We are proud of Lawrence Heights youth for their participation in a youth-driven sexual-health program. The **How You Get Down** project was funded under the AIDS Prevention Community Investment Program of Toronto Public Health. Youth peer educators from Lawrence Heights and surrounding areas were trained to conduct outreach activities. The program's objectives were to increase understanding of risks associated with unsafe sexual-health practices, e.g., inconsistent use of condoms; address cultural values that influence safer sexual activities; increase understanding of various forms of sexual violence and reduce homophobia.

Training started in April 2009 and outreach activities began in June. Youth held community workshops with organized groups, and participated in community events to provide information and support around sexual health and HIV/AIDS. They handed out support materials, including pamphlets on sexual health and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as condoms. The program reached over 600 youth between the ages of 13 and 29. Many adults also benefited from the outreach activities. Through its peer model and training and leadership components, the project has helped build the capacity of youth to address other community health issues in Lawrence Heights.



Eight youth peers completed the program, and were greatly inspired by it. They learned about STIs and how to protect themselves. They met people in other neighbourhoods, had new experiences, and gained leadership skills through public speaking. They appreciated the diversity of working with each other and reaching out together. These youth were awarded certificates for the training at a ceremony in December 2009, in celebration of World AIDS Day. 🌱

Planting the Seeds of a Community Garden

Volunteer Profile

On October 18, 2009, after a lot of planning and knocking on many doors, the **community garden** group in the Bathurst-Finch neighbourhood finally got to do some planting on their plot in Rockford Park. While October is not exactly gardening season, the group still managed to plant some spring bulbs, garlic, raspberries and strawberries. They are now waiting for spring to really dig in and make their community garden dream a reality.

Meet Lina Zolotko and Alicia Kaminetzky, our community garden coordinators. Lina and Alicia completed community garden coordinator training program with FoodShare Toronto. With a group of volunteers they spearheaded the establishment of a community garden in Bathurst-Finch as part of the Action for Neighbourhood Change project.

Both women came to Canada not long ago. Lina is from Russia and has been here a little

over three years. Alicia came to Canada from Argentina in 2005. Both are now students; Alicia of interior decorating, and Lina of English classes, and in the fall, of social services.

In spite of their busy lives, Alicia and Lina find time to volunteer with different community agencies and groups.

“Immigration can be a lonely and isolating experience,” says Lina. “Volunteering is a great way to meet new people while helping the community.”

Volunteering with the community garden has been rewarding in more ways than one. As Alicia says, gardening lets people see the direct results of their work. It is interaction with nature, constantly changing, always alive. Alicia and Lina believe that community garden gives people great skills: learning to grow their own food and controlling its quality. For Alicia, gardening is a way to feel part of nature, some-

thing people in big cities have been forgetting lately. Lina adds that she has also enjoyed working with the steering committee, a group of people who share a passion for gardening.

Back home, Lina had a plot where she did a lot of planting. Now, in her seventh-floor apartment, she doesn't have much access to land. Alicia was involved in a community garden in Argentina. Here she doesn't even have a balcony so she tries to grow plants on her windowsill. She's been successful with herbs but tomatoes didn't survive. Community garden gave them an opportunity to reconnect with the land.

In the future, Lina would like their garden to be a relaxing space with tables and benches and an area for kids, where people could meet, and plant and enjoy nature. “Our garden is a seed,” says Alicia, “and it will be growing bigger and bigger in the future.” 🌱

Have You Met Victor Dhue?

Victor Dhue is **team leader for tutoring**, with the Pathways to Education™ Program. Victor's training is in social work, and he's been working at New Heights for six months.



Q. What is the most rewarding part of your work?

A. Meeting and interacting with the diverse group of young people in the Pathways program. The Pathways staff team is a lot of fun. We get a lot of work done in a relaxed but focused atmosphere. I really enjoy coming to work each day because the vibe that you get when you enter the New Heights is healthy and welcoming, and once you tour the building and meet all the staff, for me there is this immediate feeling of inclusion. It's genuinely nice to work at a place that tries hard to adhere to its mission statement.

Q. What is the most challenging part of your work?

A. Getting our young people to understand the value of an education and trying to engage them to take more responsibility for their education. It's a challenge to get them to see and understand that Lawrence Heights is a community that they live in, it's not who they are. It is significantly difficult to have them understand that in order for them to affect change in their community, they must change some of their attitudes, especially when it comes to the violence they live with on a daily basis. It is discouraging to see how many of them accept the violence within this community as a routine part of their lives and view it as something they cannot change.

Q. What is your personal definition of health?

A. To me personal health is a state of mind, it's a personal attitude. I have been athletic all my life, except over the past three years when I woke up one morning and said to myself I am not going to the gym anymore, not even the gym in my home. I don't think that makes me unhealthy. I am still the same person emotionally; my personality has not changed because I have gained some weight. As long as I feel good about myself and I feel good physically, I am good to go. I have never allowed others to rent free space in my head and dictate how I carry myself as a result of their opinions.

Q. What was your childhood like?

A. I had a great childhood. I have the best parents and my siblings and I are very close. Being the youngest in the family was the best. I was able to get everything. Competing with my brother and his peers was a good thing for me. They had a lot to do with the development of my confidence and competitive nature. The passing of my dad was difficult for me but the rock of our family made it all right. My mother made sure that I knew that it was going to be all right. To this day, my mother remains my role model, and her kitchen remains my favorite place to eat.

Q. What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

A. Hanging out with my three children is my favourite way of spending time. There is nothing that even comes close to the fun I have with them. After that, it's hanging with my extended family. Every year, we look forward to the holidays as everyone comes home from school or from out of town. I have some great friends that we have been there for each other since public school that I really like spending time with. It does not matter if we have not seen each other for months — and in some case years — because of our various professions, it is always great fun when we get together. 🍀

There's Something Happening Here

Pathways to Education is going strong

By Owen Hinds

Pathways to Education™ in Lawrence Heights is now in its third year. There are 287 Grade 9, 10, and 11 students receiving the four supports that make up the integrated approach of the program:

- **Academic Support (Tutoring):** An after-school tutoring program, in which students work with volunteer tutors for three hours weekly and receive other personalized academic supports.

- **Social and Career Support (Mentoring):** Group mentoring for Grade 9 and 10 students where they participate in group activities led by volunteer mentors. Focused support for Grade 11 and 12 students as they prepare for college or university participation, and explore various career options.

- **Financial Support:** TTC tickets or lunch vouchers provided to students daily based on school attendance, and a bursary of up to \$1,000 per academic year held in trust for post-secondary education.
- **Student Advocacy Support:** A Student-Parent Support Worker assigned to each student, who works closely with the student, parents, school, and Pathways staff to encourage and support the student for his or her success in high school.

The program has grown by leaps and bounds. Currently, 90 per cent of all eligible students in Lawrence Heights participate in the Pathways program. New staff, eager to fulfill the vision of Pathways and see the youth of Lawrence Heights realize their dreams, have joined our team. And so, we outgrew our office space at 12 Flemington Road. Last summer the Pathways office moved into new space at the Lawrence Square Shopping Mall. We now have better space for staff, as well as a drop-in space for the youth

and an area where they can receive personalized academic support. Plus, our students really appreciate the donated Sony Playstation, which encourages positive play and fosters better hand-eye co-ordination. (Could these be the newest social determinants of health?)

We also obtained space at Flemington Public School and the old Bathurst Heights Secondary School location. This is thanks to our relationship with the Toronto District School Board and the Ministry of Education's initiative to open up schools to community-



based programs. Flemington provides a central, accessible location. Both spaces are conducive to tutoring and mentoring, with plenty of large rooms, allowing more intentionality, consistency, and stability in service delivery. This is truly a win for our community, which has struggled to find suitable programming space for a long time.

At the midway point of year three, we hosted a celebration at Bathurst Heights Auditorium for parents and students. We recognized students who showed an outstanding commitment to the program through their tutoring and mentoring attendance. We celebrated some of our accomplishments, the talents of the youth, and the diversity of the program and the families with whom we partner. Close to 150 people were entertained and inspired through song and spoken word, and enjoyed the food prepared by parents and families.

There is a good thing happening here and you don't want to miss a minute of it! 🍀

Upcoming Holidays

New Heights Community Health Centres will be closed:

Family Day	Monday, February 15, 2010
Good Friday	Friday, April 2, 2010
Victoria Day	Monday, May 24, 2010
Canada Day	Thursday, July 1, 2010

New Heights Community Health Centres

12 Flemington Road, Toronto, ON, M6A 2N4

Phone: 416-787-1661

E-mail: info@newheightshealth.org

Website: www.newheightshealth.org



Achieving Health Together