

Health in Your



Hands

The Newsletter of New Heights Community Health Centres

Fresh Perspectives Youth

By Owen Hinds

On October 16, 2008, youth from the Regent Park, Rexdale, and Lawrence Heights Pathways to Education™ programs celebrated their hard work and visions for their communities — as well as their photography skills. They gathered with family, friends and the public in the Rotunda at Toronto's Metro Hall for the **Fresh Perspectives**



exhibit. The exhibit showcased photography from their spring 2008 mentoring project.

Twenty-eight youth, six of whom were from Lawrence Heights, worked with Whimsical Productions and Winged Centaurus to not only learn photographic skills, but to tell stories about themselves and their communities through images and pictures.

The youth photographers in Lawrence Heights gave voice to a neighbourhood often misunderstood and pre-judged by the larger society that only knows it through the media. With their images of smiling faces, playing

children, sun-drenched landscapes, and well-composed portraits, they encouraged visitors to take a closer look at our community. And, to understand that there is no limit to what they can contribute to the world. Overall, they showed that Lawrence Heights is a place teeming with life, hope and purpose.

Our own Hiree Ibrahim, with her mother looking on, addressed the audience about her experiences and motivation during the project. She spoke with passion and confidence, and earned heartfelt applause.

The exhibit was definitely a family affair.

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Plus: Board of Directors, volunteer opportunity, dates to note and more

One mother swelled with pride when she saw her daughter's artistry for the first time, and was also impressed to see her daughter's photograph on the promotional flyer. She explained that she had always believed in her daughter and always worked to encourage her creativity. ✨

To see an online exhibit of the photography, please visit www.pathwayscanada.ca. The artwork is also available for purchase, with the proceeds going to the youth.

Successes and Challenges in Bathurst-Finch News

By Julie Callaghan

Action for Neighbourhood Change recently marked its first full year of community development in the Bathurst-Finch neighbourhood. Community leaders who took part in ANC's first year met and gave input to the development of a plan for its second year. We will focus on developing the abilities of community members to take on more responsibility for existing initiatives and groups, as well as for future neighbourhood improvements.

Exciting events and initiatives have happened through ANC in recent months.

- More than 35 community members were recognized for their contributions to neighbourhood improvement at special dinner on September 12, 2008.
- A youth media club formed to publish a special youth edition of our community newspaper, *Bathurst-Finch Kaleidoscope*.
- A Filipino community get-together on October 18, 2008, with Filipino foods,

attracted over 40 people who contributed ideas for projects to work on together.

- Our nine part-time community animators started meeting every six weeks to further develop their community-building skills.
- About 30 people came out on November 3, 2008, to meet Frances Lankin, President and CEO of United Way Toronto, and to share with her their ANC success stories and concerns about the neighbourhood.

We also welcomed new staff members.

We're joined by a part-time dietitian, Jenny Lyttle, who is our first front-line staff person for the satellite community health centre. Jenny is splitting her time between our two sites. Hannah Bontogon, a new ANC community engagement worker, co-ordinates resident driven grants and projects, and increases our capacity to connect with the Filipino community.

Negotiations for a lease on a site at Bathurst and Finch were not successful. So, we renewed our search for other locations for our **satellite community health centre** and **community**



Over 40 people joined ANC for one of our community gatherings, where they came up with ideas for future projects.

hub. It's tricky, because there are few rental spaces of 12,000 to 15,000 square feet in the neighbourhood. We are searching for options, and trying to be creative! We welcome all suggestions and leads. We're looking for buildings and/or land for lease or purchase. Meanwhile, community hub agencies continue to explore how we can work together to better serve the neighbourhood, with or without a site. ✨

Contact Julie Callaghan at 647-436-0385.

Message from the Board Chair and the Executive Director

Welcome to the Winter/Spring addition of *Health in Your Hands*. We hope the information and articles help you to stay connected to the centre as we continue to work toward our goal of “Achieving Health Together.”

We distributed the last issue of the newsletter at the **launch party** for our new name and logo. The event was a great success! Over 500 members, staff, volunteers, clients, partners and community members joined us to celebrate our history of health and community programs and to look towards our future of reaching new communities and clients. With our new logo proudly displayed on our T-shirts, we participated in many activities including bus tours of the catchment, planting of a community garden, cookie decorating, photo exhibits, a community arts project, and the launch of our “New Heights” song, written and performed by local artists.



Finger painting at the launch party for our new name and logo, June 25, 2008.

Our new logo and name featured prominently in our 2007/2008 Annual Report, which we distributed at our **annual general meeting and open house** on September 22, 2008. We had great participation from long-standing and new members of the centre. Guest speakers from the STOP Community Food Centre generated interest in how communities can become involved in important issues that determine health. Our board of directors was elected at the AGM, and engaged with members at our post-meeting dinner, breaking the fast for Ramadan.

The new board of directors has been busy already. The board started its term by approving New Heights’ five-year **Strategic Framework**. The framework is based on our vision, “Healthy people in a healthy community.” It also recognizes the need for a healthy organization to support the framework. We developed the framework after an extensive environmental scan of our new catchment area (available upon request) and consultation with key stakeholders.

We look forward to working with you to achieve our mission and vision through this strategic framework, building on our strengths and meeting new challenges together.

In health,

Andrea Cohen
Executive Director

Michael Rethazi
Board Chair

New Heights Strategic Framework

Healthy People

Our **MAP** for achieving healthy people will focus on priority neighbourhoods within our larger catchment:

- Mental health and addictions programs and services
- Access to primary health care
- Prevention and management of chronic disease

Healthy Community

The **three Es** to achieving healthy communities will be:

- Engagement of community through leadership development
- Environments that support health, both physical and social
- Education supports that will strengthen individuals, families and communities

Healthy Organization

- Take a leadership role in integration with other organizations in order to optimize effective use of resources.
- Ensure that physical space and organizational culture support staff in “Achieving Health Together.”



By Gillian Kranias

Neighbours, Leaders

Building community leadership through training

They meet on Thursday nights: 12 residents of Lawrence Heights and Neptune who are participants in New Heights’ **Community Education for Action and Community Leadership (CEACL)** program. This is a 20-week leadership development program that takes place over eight months. This is our third time offering the program. Each previous program had a particular focus, and both received rave reviews. This year, the program focus is community leadership in the context of the Lawrence Heights revitalization.

All CEACL participants are community leaders. Each brings to the table a different history of issues and activities they worked on and roles they have played, big and small. But they have things in common, too:

experience working with others to discuss community issues, participating in solutions, and advancing community well-being.

When the program wraps up in June 2009, CEACL participants will have explored a range of topics including: community development, anti-oppression, political analysis for action, public speaking, facilitation, conflict resolution, working with the media and sustaining volunteers. Many workshop sessions include guest speakers. All of the sessions are highly participatory. Just as many participants had hoped for, there are plenty of opportunities to share experiences, gain valuable insights, and practice new skills together. 🍀

For more information about CEACL training programs, contact Judith Otto, (416) 787-1676 ext 256.

Community Crossroads: A resident-to-resident meeting space

Change, uncertainty and dialogue — these have formed the mood in Lawrence Heights and Neptune lately. Put simply, “Revitalization has become a household word.” The buzz is everywhere: in homes, on the streets and in the schoolyard. Meanwhile, a new resident-to-resident meeting place has emerged at New Heights.

On the first and third Tuesday evening (6 p.m. to 8 p.m.) of every month, residents have been gathering to explore and address revitalization concerns. Commonly referred to as “**Crossroads**,” this open-format group began in May 2008, with space and support from New Heights. Members have since taken increasing leadership in the group’s planning, facilitation and other activities.

After a few months of open-agenda meetings, Crossroads organized a July bus trip, where residents visited other Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) tenants in the recently redeveloped build-

ings of Donmount Court. The group then hosted a series of thematic discussions over the summer so that residents could explore issues together before they participated at official TCHC and City of Toronto revitalization forums. Through the fall, members have collaborated with other grassroots groups to create the document *Grassroots Community Priorities for Revitalization*.

Crossroads has drawn a wide variety of residents, all of them looking to get facts — and dispel rumours — about the revitalization. They share information, explore issues and generate a collective voice for community priorities. Crossroads members have had a significant impact on revitalization planning to date, but they are not finished yet! 🍀

To find out more or to get involved, contact Gillian Kranias, (416) 787-1676 ext 254. Or drop by 12 Flemington Road at 6 p.m. on the first or third Tuesday of any month.

Reaching New Heights

Now accepting applications for the New Heights Scholarship

All of us at New Heights Community Health Centres believe that education is one of the pillars of a healthy community. New Heights, in partnership with Bathurst Heights Secondary School Commemorative Scholarship, offers a scholarship award to two students who will be starting the first year of a university or college program in September.

The scholarship promotes the importance of education as part of a healthy life and a healthy community. Each year, scholarships of \$2,500 are awarded to one male and one female graduating from high school. This program is one of the many ways that New Heights invests in the talents and creativity of students and values their contributions to their school and community. Our hope is that these students will continue to contribute to our goal of “Achieving Health Together.”

Students who wish to apply for the scholarship must:

- live or attend school in either the Lawrence Heights or Westminster-Branson neighbourhood
- attend a publicly funded school on a full-time basis
- have achieved a minimum cumulative average of 75 per cent
- demonstrate involvement in the school and/or community
- have demonstrably overcome personal hardship
- be able to show an education plan that includes acceptance at a university or college for the following academic year

Download **scholarship applications** from our website, www.newheightshealth.org.

Anonymous HIV Testing

By Aynur Gurbanova

The HIV epidemic is still growing. There are now over 26,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in Ontario. The province provides many strategies and programs to overcome the epidemic, and it recently expanded its anonymous HIV testing programs. These offer patients the option to be tested without revealing their identities.

Anonymous HIV testing is now available by rapid (POC) testing process, which is done by pricking a finger and instantly testing blood. If the test is negative, the client gets the results immediately. If test is reactive, the clinic will take a blood sample for further testing, and the client will come back for the results. (He or she will use an assigned ID number, instead of any personally identifying information.)



Every anonymous HIV testing appointment includes counselling, both before and after the test. This helps the counsellors understand and support the client's readiness to have the test, and to deal with its results. It's also a chance to give out additional information about relevant services and support systems, and to respond to any of the client's concerns.

New Heights Community Health Centres was designated as an anonymous HIV testing site. Five New Heights staff members were trained and certified in anonymous HIV testing, and attended job shadowing and study groups to strengthen their counseling skills. We launched our anonymous HIV testing program on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2008. Anonymous HIV testing is offered at 60 sites across Ontario. More information about locations is available through the AIDS Hotline at: 416-392-2437.

Have You Met Auvriel O'Connor?

Staff Profile

By Karl Kabasele

Auvriel O'Connor, RN (EC) BScN, is a primary health care nurse practitioner. Getting to where she is today wasn't easy. With dogged persistence, Auvriel worked hard, educated herself, and rose through the ranks of her profession. Then, 16 years after she established herself in Canada, she obtained her ultimate goal — her dream job at New Heights Community Health Centres. Here's how her journey unfolded.

A new Canadian

After immigrating from Jamaica, Auvriel became a landed immigrant in Canada in September 1987. With the support of her aunt, who is also a nurse here, she held a job as a student nurse until she passed the nursing exam and registered with the College of Nurses. She later became an occupational health nurse at a newspaper company in Toronto.

Transition to community health nursing

Auvriel's area of interest and expertise was in community health nursing. So, when such a position became available at the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre in 1989, she applied immediately. The interview went well, but she did not get the job. But, she did impress the then-executive director, who sent Auvriel's resume to another health centre. It was there that Auvriel secured a job as a community health nurse. The community where she worked was similar to Lawrence Heights, with a large population of new Canadians. She collaborated with a multidisciplinary staff, providing primary health care to clients of all ages.

Getting involved

In 1990, Auvriel represented her organization on the advisory committee for the Easier to Read, Easier to Be Healthy project in the Lawrence Heights community. Later that year she became involved in the Multicultural Perinatal Network, and then the Midwifery Initiatives in Ontario.

Giving priority to education

Auvriel took a break from her part-time studies for a nursing degree when her son started his university studies in 1995. She eventually completed the nursing degree and later the Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Program at Ryerson University. Auvriel benefitted from much support and encouragement from her family throughout her studies. She was also actively involved in the University Hospital of the West Indies Graduate Nurses' Association, which helped her to stay connected to her roots in Jamaica.



The dream job

Since September 2003, Auvriel has been working as a primary health care nurse practitioner here at New Heights, at the site of the very community health centre that she first applied to work at in 1989! In her practice she provides health education, assessments, screening, counselling and treatment plans. She also consults within an integrated and interdisciplinary health care team.

Auvriel is committed to the education of nurses. She provides clinical placement opportunities for nursing students. Working with students also motivates Auvriel's dedication to her own continuing education, which in turn helps her to provide comprehensive, evidence-based health care.

Auvriel volunteers at her church and loves to sing at her church's choir.

Auvriel says, "I feel privileged to work with colleagues and community members. Ours is a workplace where kindness, understanding and mutual respect have built strong relationships, which in turn have helped to maintain a trusting and therapeutic environment. I feel blessed to be able to contribute to this community."

Diabetes: The Facts

Health

By the Diabetes Education Centre staff

250 million people around the world have diabetes. 20 million people in North America have diabetes. 2 million people in Canada have diabetes.

People often ask us: "What is diabetes?"

Diabetes is a health condition where the body does not produce enough insulin, or the body's cells do not respond properly to insulin. This results in high blood-sugar levels.

"Why do I care?"

A person is at risk for diabetes if he or she meets at least one of the following:

- is over 40
- is a member of a high-risk group (Aboriginal, Hispanic, Asian, South Asian or African descent)
- is overweight
- has a family history of diabetes
- has high blood pressure
- has high cholesterol
- had gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy)

"When should I check for diabetes?"

Everyone should have regular checkups, and see the doctor if he or she is experiencing at least one of the following:

- unusual thirst
- frequent trips to the bathroom
- weight change without trying (gain or loss)
- extreme fatigue or weakness
- blurred vision
- tingling or numbness in hands or feet

"How can I prevent diabetes?"

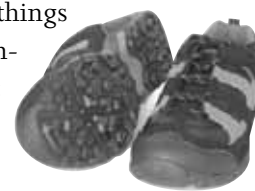
The best ways for a person to prevent diabetes are by:

- watching his or her weight
- being active
- eating healthy

"What can I do if I am living with diabetes?"

These are some of the things a person can do to manage his or her diabetes:

- visit a diabetes education centre
- eat healthy
- increase physical activity
- learn about diabetes
- visit the doctor regularly
- maintain a healthy weight
- take medication properly
- manage stress properly
- control blood pressure



If you are concerned that you are not getting control of your diabetes, call us at (416) 787-1676 ext 301 for more information. The Diabetes Education Centre is located on the second floor of New Heights Community Health Centres, Lawrence Heights site.

Adapted from Canadian Diabetes Association 2008 Clinical Practice Guideline

You are invited to become a member of New Heights!

Sign up at reception, or contact Ana Garcia, agarcia@newheightshealth.org or 416-787-1676 ext 257.

Is it a Cold? Is it the Flu?

Many of us often mistake a cold for the flu. Some of the symptoms are the same. Below are some of the usual symptoms of each – the ones that are distinct to each, and common to both.

	Cold	Flu
Symptoms		
Fever	Rare	Sudden onset, usually high (38.5°C - 41°C) and lasting three to four days
Headache	Rare	Usual and can be severe
Aches and pains	Sometimes, mild	Usual, can be severe, especially in back and legs
Fatigue and weakness	Sometimes, mild	Usual, severe, and may last two to three weeks or more
Extreme fatigue	Unusual	Usual, early onset, can be severe
Runny or stuffy nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Common
Chest discomfort, coughing	Sometimes, mild to moderate	Usual, can become severe
Complications	Can lead to sinus congestion or earache	Can lead to pneumonia or respiratory failure, or can worsen chronic symptoms
Prevention	Frequent hand washing	Frequent hand washing and a yearly flu vaccine

You should see your health care provider if you:

- belong to a high-risk group (e.g., people with other medical conditions or weakened immune systems, the elderly, very young children)
- have a sore throat that lasts more than two days; your throat is “beefy,” red, swollen, and covered with pus
- have a runny nose that lasts more than 10 days or has green or yellow discharge, or if you have severe face pain or headache
- have a cough that lasts more than seven to 10 days or is severe with thick green or bloody mucus
- have a high fever (above 38.5°C) that lasts more than four days
- have a high fever that returns four to 14 days after going away
- have difficulty breathing 🙋

If you have questions or are uncertain about symptoms, please call 416-787-1661 and speak to a nurse at New Heights.

Volunteer Profile

Roy Hintsa on the Mind-Body Connection

Roy Hintsa is a mindfulness-based stress reduction facilitator. Interview by Morgan Llewellyn.

Q: What is the connection to **mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)** and health?

A: When we are under stress we experience the flight-or-fight response, which secretes the hormone cortisol into our bodies. Higher and more prolonged levels of cortisol, like those associated with chronic stress, lead to impaired cognitive performance, suppressed thyroid function, blood sugar imbalances, higher blood pressure, decrease in bone density and muscle tissue and lowered immunity to mention only a few. MBSR trains us to counteract this response.

Q: What inspires you to do this work?

A: My own experience with mindfulness and meditation was so profound that I was inspired to share my experience with others.

Q: What inspires you to continue when it involves hardships?

A: I discovered through my practice and teaching that authentic happiness results

from altruistic behaviour and the practice of compassionate action.

Q: How does MBSR work?

A: Mindfulness works through systematic present-moment observation of our bodies, thoughts, emotions and perceptions in a non-judgmental way. This is accomplished by formal and informal techniques taught at the MBSR workshops by trained facilitators. This results in our improving our ability to lead lives of greater health, satisfaction, inner harmony and wisdom.

Q: What are the benefits for the participants? What are the benefits for the community?

A: Participants develop a greater sense of self awareness and have an improved sense of self esteem, resulting in a greater respect for others and for the environment. As we begin to understand that we have not only a responsibility for self-care but also participation in care for our neighbourhood it invariably leads to a co-operative performance in the community. 🙋

Recipe

Swiss Chard and Bean Sauté

When it comes to low-fat and high-fiber foods, Swiss chard is an excellent choice. One cup of cooked chard has only about 35 calories, no fat, and a good amount of dietary fibre (3.7 g). It is also a good source of iron and vitamin C, and an excellent source of vitamins E and K, magnesium, manganese and potassium.

Our diabetes cooking class loves Swiss chard! The class runs the first Friday of every month. Participants cook with our registered dietitians, where they learn how to better control blood sugar and get support from others with diabetes.

Serves: 4-6

- 1 small can beans (Romano/white or red kidney)
- 2 large shallots (or 1 large onion)
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 yellow or red pepper diced
- 1 small bunch Swiss chard, sliced (leaves and stems)
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh herbs (dill, parsley or basil)
- Several chopped green onions or chives
- To taste salt and pepper
- To taste lemon, red wine or balsamic vinegar
- Pinch grated nutmeg

1. Rinse canned beans and drain water.
2. In a large skillet over medium heat, sauté the shallots/onions for two minutes, until soft.
3. Add garlic, continue to sauté for one minute just until soft.
4. Add pepper and toss for three minutes.
5. Add remaining ingredients, including the can of beans, and toss just to warm.
6. Season to taste with salt and pepper. May add some lemon, red wine or balsamic vinegar to taste.
7. Serve with rice or bread, or toss together with cooked pasta for a great balanced meal. 🙋

Adapted from a recipe by Chef Christine Cushing.

Volunteer Leadership Opportunity

New Heights wants your help ensuring that our programs and services meet the needs of the community.

We have community advisory panels that provide advice and feedback on the centre's work and new members are welcome. CAPs work with management and our board in Bathurst-Finch, Lawrence Heights and Pathways to Education. If you are interested, please contact Ana Garcia, agarcia@newheightshealth.org or 416-787-1676 ext 257.

Board of Directors 2008-2009

Officers:

Michael Rethazi, *Chair*
 Dr. Karl Kabasele, *Vice-Chair*
 Maureen Simpson, *Treasurer*
 Shaon Saeed, *Secretary*

Directors:

Harry Rosenberg
 Alex Dow
 Lisa McLaren
 Scott Wolfe
 Michel Barrack

Upcoming Holidays

New Heights Community Health Centres will be closed:

Family Day	Monday, February 16, 2009
Good Friday	Friday, April 10, 2009
Victoria Day	Monday, May 18, 2009
Canada Day	Wednesday, July 1, 2009
Civic Holiday	Monday, August 3, 2009

New Heights Community Health Centres

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 Website: www.newheightshealth.org



NEW HEIGHTS
Community Health Centres

Achieving Health Together