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Community conversations - Connecting strategy to community

- by Aynsley Morris, Board Vice-Chair

Quality, accessibility and sustainability - these are three key themes that SHCHC sees as essential to achieving the organization's vision of ensuring that everyone in our community will have an equitable opportunity for health and wellbeing.

The Centre's Board of Directors is made up of volunteers who are dedicated to supporting the health centre and its community members in their goals for better health and wellbeing. One of the Board's key responsibilities is to work with staff on setting the strategy for the Centre.

We live, work and play in a diverse area with so many committed neighbours who contribute so much time and effort to make Sandy Hill and Old Ottawa East vibrant, inclusive and safe. And while the mem-

bers of the Board of Directors have ideas of what quality, accessibility and sustainability mean to us, we wanted to make sure that community members had the opportunity to share what these key themes mean to them.

With this in mind, members of the Board of Directors, with support from the centre's Community Development Team, will be undertaking a series of "Community Conversations" to engage with those who play an important role in the community and at the Centre. We want to learn about diverse perspectives on how clients and partners interact with our Centre, and how clients and partners understand what contributes to creating a healthy community.

We want to stay relevant to the community members we serve, and we want to make sure you feel your voice is heard. We also want the services we offer to be the ones that will benefit you and your family and neighbours.

Over the coming months, you may meet some of the members of the Board at one of your community group meetings, or you may see an opportunity to come to attend a Community Conversation. We're excited to meet others who are passionate about the health and wellbeing of the community, and keen to hear about your experience with the SHCHC.

If you or the community group you're involved with is interested in making your voice heard, contact us at board@sandyhillchc.on.ca.



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ACB Health Zone at SHCHC

- by Rob Boyd

November 26, 2018, was the official launch of an exciting new initiative called the African, Caribbean, Black Health Zone (ACB Health Zone for short).

This is a multiagency drop-in supporting ACB communities to access HIV and STI testing and treatment, by creating a community space where health promotion activities can take place.

The ACB Health Zone is a 1-year pilot project, and is open every Monday evening from 5 to 7:30 PM, at 221 Nelson Street.

African, Black and Caribbean people are a high risk group for HIV in Ottawa. This risk is heightened by HIV/AIDS stigma within ACB communities, and by the lack of access to HIV care and treatment within a health care setting that is culturally relevant to these communities.

The vision for the ACB Health Zone is twofold:

1. offering creative, consistent and culturally inclusive social programming, namely: nutrition workshops, hair care and youth programs; these will be assessed



every 3 months, and are subject to change post evaluation;

2. clinical services: diabetes screening, point of care anonymous rapid HIV testing and health navigation.

The goal is to attract community members with culturally inclusive programs, while simultaneously pro-

viding access to much needed clinical services.

There have been several reports over the years that have identified the need for a community health centre program geared toward ACB populations, and we are pleased to be able to host this new initiative!

What is Harm Reduction in action? - by Jean-François Martinbault

The common perception is that you give out safe injection or inhalation supplies (crack pipes, clean syringes, disinfectant swabs). While being true, that is Harm Reduction in its most basic form. Harm Reduction is so much more profound and meaningful than that.

Every day, the Centre's Harm Reduction Workers help people move towards change. Their presence with very marginalized people who use drugs is like a vector for healing. The person opens up about their hopes and dreams, their plans and goals, their health care needs and objectives.

The Harm Reduction Workers are always watching for those sparks of change. Although a client will only see a spark, the Harm Reduction Workers see the potential for a beautiful warm fire. They help the client by referring them to services, by advocating for them and by helping them set and reach their goals.

All of our clients have a spark inside them, no matter how small. The Harm Reduction Worker's job is to find it and light a fire underneath it. The very essence of Harm Reduction work!



A client's testimonial

"I am writing to let you know how much I have benefited from two of your health promotion programs.

I have been participating in the Nordic walking group for 3 years and the adapted yoga for two years.

At the beginning, I was barely able to walk or hold my head up for ten minutes. The kinesiologists supervised by Natacha [Ducharme, the Centre's Physical Activity Specialist] have helped me to progress slowly and safely, to the point where I can fully participate in the whole hour of each session I attend. My physical health is improving month by month, and this program makes a huge difference. It is also good for my mental wellbeing, as it gives me a reason to get up and get out of the house each morning.



I started the Chair Yoga class last year, and have progressed to the next level this year. It is wonderful that the instructors are aware of our relevant health issues and gently adapt things to our abilities. Yoga has helped me to become more comfortable in my body, and to slow my thinking and find calm. In both these ways, it has been vital in my ongoing recovery from PTSD.

What would I like to happen as a result of this feedback? I just wanted to let you know how valuable these programs are, and that they have contributed to huge improvements in my physical and mental health. I hope these programs will continue to be offered on an ongoing basis. Thank you."

Community project with Nursing students from University of Ottawa

- by Julia Marques

The fourth year Nursing students from the University of Ottawa created a pamphlet to inform Syrian newcomers on screening tests, immunizations, and their importance for overall health. With guidance from Heather Thomson, Nurse Practitioner, and Irena Konopacki, Community Health Nurse and Certified Diabetes Nurse Educator and Health Promoter (and the group's advisor on behalf of the Centre), they were able to create a comprehensive educational resource tool for health care providers at the SHCHC, that informs newcomers on Canada's healthcare practices. This pamphlet was translated into Arabic by one of the students, with the hope to increase accessibility to clients. The group presented their pamphlet to the staff at SHCHC for feedback and to answer questions surrounding their project.



From left to right: Krislyn Leung, Lianne Bankert, Irena Konopacki (the group's advisor), Julia Marques and Mobarak Al-Moujally

SHCHC re-applying for funding to continue supervised consumption

- by Rob Boyd



In the spring of 2018, the Centre opened its long awaited supervised injection service, integrated within the Oasis programs and services. Since then, uptake has been steadily building and the feedback from people using the service has been very positive.

Late summer 2018, Honourable Christine Elliot, the new Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care under Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative Government, announced that she would be undertaking a review of the evidence for supervised consumption services, in order to decide if such services were going to be part of the new government's opioid strategy. Our Centre was one of many organizations across the province who submitted evidence briefings for the Minister's consideration.

We are pleased that after careful review, the Minister has affirmed that supervised consumption is an essential part and a comprehensive response to the crisis. The Minister has also established new criteria to ensure that the newly named Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) have well defined referral pathways to primary health care and mental health and substance use treatment. This new direction is consistent with the model of care already in place for the people who use our services, with timely access to on site primary care and treatment services.

The Centre is now working with Ministry staff to ensure the ongoing operation of our integrated model of care.

Rapid Access Addictions Medicine at SHCHC

- by Rob Boyd

As part of its investment of new provincial resources to respond to the opioid crisis, the Champlain Local Health Integration Network awarded SHCHC resources to establish a Rapid Access Addictions Medicine (RAAM) clinic, in the context of a province-wide roll-out of this innovative model of care.

Our RAAM clinic offers a walk-in Monday to Friday before 2:00 PM, for anyone who has an opioid use disorder. People who show up will be seen by a nurse and will have various treatment options explained to them. They will then be assessed by a physician or a nurse practitioner and, if indicated, would be started on opioid agonist treatment (buprenorphine or methadone) the same day.

Referrals can come from hospital emergency departments, medical professionals, substance use treatment agencies, harm reduction agencies or just simply by walking in.

Booked appointments are also possible if you call ahead (may not be available same day).

If you or a loved one is concerned about their opioid use and want to speak to someone about their treatment options, call 613-569-3488, or drop-in Monday to Friday before 2:00 PM.



Awesome Arts Festival 2018

- by Gerald Dragon

The fourth Awesome Arts workshop series and Community Festival came to a spectacular finale on November 16, 2018, when more than 200 people packed in to the gymnasium of Viscount Alexander Public school to celebrate the creative spirit within us all.

From September 27 up to November 8, over 80 participants took part in various community based arts workshops led by professional artists. The workshops included: Original Song, led by Jamaal Jackson Rogers and Khaleefa Hamdan, Brazilian Carnival with Luciano Porto, Animation with Tina Le Moine, Afro-Caribbean Dance directed by Suzanne Lavertu, What's Your Story with Jaqui Du Toit and Maya Bassude, Hip Hop Dance led by Bboys Crazy Smooth and Mr. Fresh, Mural creation guided by Claudia Salguero, and Photography with Bill Juliette a.k.a. Mr. Bill.

Each instructor worked with their group for seven weeks to create something that was then presented to the audience of family, friends, community members and supporters on November 16. There was an original song and music video, a carnival parade, animation videos, dance in its Hip Hop and Afro-Caribbean roots, a photography exhibit, a story telling piece and, finally, a 36 foot mural which will be placed and remain permanently on the outside walls of Viscount Alexander as a reminder of this year's Awesome Arts theme: *Diversity and Inclusion*.

Many thanks to the students from the University of Ottawa and the Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement: Alessia Principe, Samantha Lehn, Johna Magno, Rj Jean Jean, as well as Rayan, Aron and Abdikarim for shepherding the group of small children on a weekly basis. Special thanks also go to the staff and volunteers of Christie Lake Kids for their partnership and support throughout the program. Awesome Arts could not have happened without the financial support of Arts Network Ottawa, City of Ottawa, Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Community foundation of Ottawa.



Farewell, Ryta!

- by Rob Boyd

Earlier last year, the Oasis Drop-in Coordinator, Ryta Peschka, announced her retirement after 20 years of working in the Oasis Program.

Ryta has been a driving force within the program, challenging conventional attitudes toward people who use drugs, and developing innovative solutions to barriers that people who live in poverty face on the road to recovery. She assisted the community in publishing *Choices and Voices*, the first newsletter by, and for, the drug using community.

Ryta started her work here as an Outreach Worker, on the streets and in the community, advocating for clients for whom the system was clearly failing. She then took on the role of Ottawa's first official Harm Reduction Addictions Counsellor, and supported innovative programs, namely: the Oasis Women's clinic, Men's Group, Cheque Day Buddy project and Street Angels Memorial, all developed in response to the articulated needs identified by people in her practice.

For the last few years, Ryta took on the role of Drop-in/Peer Coordinator, where she entrenched client led programming as essential part of both the program and people's recovery plan, and continued to innovate with "peer projects", such as making beaded lanyards to sell to conference planners, a themed Oasis annual calendar with clients' photos or art, and a peer-led harm reduction support group.

With the opening of the Consumption and Treatment Services at the Centre came a new organizational challenge, as we wanted to take the next step and hire people with lived or living experience of substance use disorders as employees of the Centre. Ryta was tasked with developing a hiring and orientation process that would ensure a smooth transition for this new role, both for the individuals and for the organization.



Ryta Peschka retired at the end of December 2018, after 20 years of working with clients of the Oasis Program

The common thread throughout Ryta's tenure at our Centre was her tenacious focus on championing the voices of the community, and for greater and more meaningful inclusion of people who use drugs at all levels of service planning and delivery.

On behalf of the Oasis Program, the Sandy Hill CHC and of the community that she served so well for the past two decades, I offer thanks and gratitude to Ryta, and wish her the very best in a much deserved retirement!

Harm Reduction saves lives! - by Jean-François Martinbault

The red lights in the Oasis bathrooms flash when someone has been in there for more than 5 minutes. This is to alert the staff that there may be a possible person who has overdosed. 98% of the time, it is a false alarm. The person is fine.

At the beginning of last November, Cara and Marie-Michèle (Harm Reduction Workers) noticed the red light flashing and knocked

on the door. Harm Reduction Workers check bathrooms probably 100 times a day, just in case...

Well at that moment, a person was passed out from a potential opiate overdose. They were found by Marie-Michèle and Cara, and received the help they needed.

A great reminder: what often seems like simple Harm Reduction intervention ends up being life savers and/or life changers!

Harm Reduction saves lives! Take five minutes to say "Hi" to a Harm Reduction Worker, they are doing a great job!



Farewell, Olly!

- by Nancy Knudsen



After 13 years as the Centre's Dietitian, Olly Wodin began her well-earned retirement at the end of December. As the first dietitian hired at SHCHC, Olly was instrumental in the development of the nutrition services. Over the years, she provided individual nutritional counselling, group education on a wide range of topics, consultative support to colleagues, internships to dietitian students, and community advocacy work in a variety of food security and policy areas.

Olly was always quick to answer nutrition questions and to share information and resources. She often introduced new foods to colleagues (quinoa!), sharing recipes and encouraging people to try new foods

At the farewell gathering, Olly played a moving violin piece in honour of those killed and impacted by the shooting at the Pittsburgh synagogue, in October 2018.

and methods of food preparation. Olly often said that one of the most satisfying parts of her job was when group members connect with each other to provide mutual support in their efforts to improve their health.

An annual highlight for Olly was sharing the celebration of Hanukkah on Latke Day with Oasis clients.

Consistent throughout her work was her desire for people to have access to affordable nutritious food, her embrace of clients' strengths and diversity, and her belief in the importance of preparing and sharing food together.

As a young retiree, Olly plans to continue to be involved in nutrition issues, and looks forward to be able to spend more time on one of her other passions: singing.

Thank you, Olly, for your many contributions to the work of the Centre, and congratulations on your retirement!

Fluffy stuffed socks... Fuzzy stuffed socks... Fifty nifty stuffed fluffy fuzzy socks...

Every year for the last eleven years, SHCHC has given out over a hundred pairs of heavy, woolen socks to some of our clients who need them the most. The pair of warm socks are stuffed with toiletries, delicious food items, as well as packets of soup, hot chocolate, mini flashlights, packets of Kleenex etc. The socks disappear in a matter of hours, and we could easily hand out three times as many.

For many years, our neighbourhood pharmacies along Rideau Street have been extremely generous with their contributions to this project. In fact, many of the hygiene products to fill the socks are donated by them. Both Shoppers Drug Mart and the Rideau Pharmacy have been wonderfully generous to us, donating boxes of small hygiene products and other useful items. As well as the local pharmacies, Metro Grocery store on Rideau Street has been extremely supportive of this program, with a very generous donation.

We can't thank them enough for their generosity in helping us carry on this fun annual project that helps so many people have a bit of cheer at an otherwise cold time of year.



Staff members from Client Access Team and Addictions and Mental Health Services preparing the stuffed socks for the winter holidays.



Our mission

To lead and innovate in *person-centred* primary health care and community wellbeing.



Our vision

Every one in our community will have an equitable opportunity for health and wellbeing.



Get involved in your Community Health Centre!

Become a member of Sandy Hill Community Health Centre Inc./Centre de santé communautaire Côte-de-Sable, Inc.! Simply fill out the Membership Application Form below and return it to us at 221 Nelson St., Ottawa, ON, K1N 1C7. No membership fee is required.

Application for Membership: June 1, 2018 - May 31, 2019

Name: _____ Address: _____
(Home or Work)

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____
(Home or Work) (Home or Work)

I confirm that I am over 18 years of age, I reside in the Ottawa area, and I support the Mission and the Vision of the SHCHC/CSCCS.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Application approved by the Board of Directors at its meeting of: _____

Secretary: _____ Date: _____