

'I vote, I count' — inspiring a record voter turnout for city election

Newly-eligible voters (i.e. young adults and new citizens) and low-income people usually have lower than average turnouts for voting. Nonetheless, the three wards within our catchment area were among the seven wards in Toronto with the highest increase in voter turnout from the last municipal election (13.1–17.8% increase*). We believe our focus on democracy this fall can take some credit.

Leading up to the October 27th municipal election, West Neighbourhood House and local partners organized a democracy festival and a mayoral candidate forum that reached over 350 residents. We also led nine workshops about voting with young adults in our employment programs, newcomers in Parkdale, and seniors in our Older Adult Centre.

West Neighbourhood House wanted to ensure that all local people had clear and accessible information about why voting matters, the role of municipal government, electoral reform, as well as opportunities for civic engagement in between voting days.

Some Toronto Youth Job Corps (TYJC) participants said that they had walked into the democracy workshop not sure of who the candidates in the municipal election were or when the election was. After discussing a variety of city issues, many of them felt inspired to cast their first ballot.

One participant later reflected on the workshop saying “if you don’t vote, you don’t get to complain.”

There can be an overwhelming amount of information leading up to an election. Through our democracy workshops we were able to make voting less intimidating and engage more people in the democratic process.

We will continue to encourage those who have taken the step to vote to now stay involved in the democratic process between elections. <

**spacing.ca/toronto/2014/10/30/torontos-mayoral-election-five-maps/*



Participants in democracy workshops discussed where candidates stood on issues



In an exercise, Meeting Place staff explored tensions between three competing goals: survival, belonging, and positive change.

Thinking in new ways about our work at West Neighbourhood House

The community social services sector is always bad about using too much jargon but here at West Neighbourhood House, we've reached a new high (low?) with three new projects:

- Developing a **theory of change** for programs and for the House
- Working with participants and staff using a **co-design model of grounded change**
- in perhaps the most jargon-filled project yet, inventing new ways to demonstrate if and how our community-based centres contribute to **collective efficacy** in neighbourhoods

Despite the eye-rolling jargon, these are exciting projects garnering attention from many quarters. They are also inter-related although the origin of each project was very different.

Most importantly, the combined work will improve how we help community members and the community overall.

Theory of change is a way of describing the logic about how and why our program activities result in positive changes for program participants. Through the Innoveave program of the McConnell Foundation, we are learning how to be as specific as possible about the activities we do to outcomes we desire. The more specific we can be the more we will be able to measure the positive changes.

Co-design and grounded change are the work that the social innovation lab

of InWithForward does to stimulate re-design of social services from the participants up. The InWithForward team starts by observing program participants in their daily activities, inside and outside of the House. Then, using interactive games and materials, the InWithForward team helps participants imagine new and healthier behaviours and new and healthier connections to the broader community. InWithForward, participants and staff then experiment (or prototype) different ways to reach the new goals of the participants.

Collective efficacy is the most difficult to explain in clear language because the project itself is to define the term. Through exploratory research with our team of Toronto Neighbourhood Centres and University of Toronto, we want to

better understand how the work of organizations affects the local community – above and beyond the effects on individuals who use our services. At this point, collective efficacy refers to the ability of a neighbourhood to have meaningful influence for achieving things for the common good.

This work on collective efficacy will help us, as a multi-service neighbourhood centre, to see if there are ways we can and do contribute to the broader community having a strong voice.

These three projects each have a different starting place: programs, sector, or neighbourhoods. But they are similar in using new language (and yes, jargon) – and most importantly – introducing us to new concepts to consider. They are getting us to re-think and test our approaches so that West Neighbourhood House remains as responsive and helpful to our community as possible. <

THANKING JOAN EDDY

Come rain, snow, or sun, every Tuesday Joan was there to deliver meals.

Many people are going to miss Joan Eddy as she retires from her more than 25 years of volunteering in our Meals on Wheels program. Volunteers Tim, Frank, and Kerrie; participants Nick, Marta, Paul, and Patrick; staff members Angie, Beryl, Shamair, Nelson, and Maureen as well as many others around the House will miss her greatly.

The Meals on Wheels staff could (and did) count on Joan's extraordinary reliability and dedication.

Frank Pereira is a volunteer who often was paired with Joan as one of her "runners." Frank said that he appreciated the chance to get to know someone with such a different life than his. Joan and Frank were indeed the odd couple as they set off in her car laden with hot meals for the "Blue Route"!

Joan was also a Board member of St.



Christopher House and as a professional accountant she was particularly valued as a volunteer Treasurer of the House. She has been a generous donor and has introduced her family and friends to the House over the years. For all of these gifts, we thank you Joan. <

Winning awards and earning accreditation



The Learning Partnership Welcome to Kindergarten Award for Partnership Excellence

We received this award in partnership with Queen Victoria Public School, the Child Development Institute, Parkdale Community Health Centre, 4 Villages Community Health Centre, and Toronto Public Health for our School Readiness

Program. This national award is given to four schools and community teams across Canada for their commitment to early learning.



Big on Bloor Neighbourhood Award

The Big on Bloor Neighbourhood Award was presented by Andrew Cash, Member of Parliament-Davenport, to

West Neighbourhood House Children and Youth programs.

CARF accreditation for three years

We are pleased to announce that CARF International has accredited West Neighbourhood House for the next three years. Independent evaluators have taken a close look at our policies, procedures, and practices and consulted with program participants, caregivers, and our partners in the community. Accreditation means that our programs meet the rigorous quality standards set for health-funded programs. <



WHY I GIVE ...

Because West NH is a beacon of hope

West Neighbourhood House is a great community organization, or as I declare it, a longstanding beacon of hope. As a single parent who was unable to afford the high cost of music lessons, the House gave my children the opportunity to attend the Music School. Now, as an employee, I give back to the House in any way I can. I participate in the Scotiabank Marathon to highlight its importance in the community. One year, I dressed as a clown and someone whispered, "I wouldn't be caught dead in this." But I was able to represent the House and won \$500 for West NH. I say, "Kudos to West NH."

– Rosena Joseph

Because I believe in its programs

I donate to the house because I believe in the programs it delivers. They have a diverse group of programs that support a wide range of people and pursuits, the result being that West NH is at the centre of our community. I love being at the House, interacting with the staff, volunteers and program participants. I especially love watching the impact that the House has on so many in our community.

– Mark Satov

Because it does so much for Toronto

Roberts Gallery has had a very long relationship with West Neighbourhood House (St. Christopher House) for over 35 years hosting their annual Art Affair. We are honoured to be associated with an organization that does so much for the people of Toronto.

– The Wildridge Family of Roberts Gallery



Rosena Joseph (left in top photo), Mark Satov (middle) and The Wildridges (bottom)

Please consider becoming a West NH donor!

- www.westnh.org/donate
- info@westnh.org or call
- 416-532-4828

MEMBER OF
MEMBRE D' Imagine Canada



United Way
Member Agency



Formerly St. Christopher House

588 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON, Canada, M6J 1E3