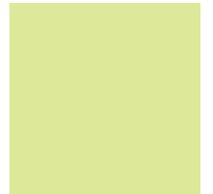




Youth Friendly Community  
Recognition Program

# SARNIA APPLICATION



## Youth Friendly Community Recognition Program

# SARNIA APPLICATION

The Community Round Table has been discussing the concept of a youth friendly community for a few years with many different organizations/groups in the community. In 2009, a Committee was established to work on making Sarnia a more youth friendly community.

The Youth Friendly Community Committee is working to make Sarnia “youth friendly” by:

- Talking about issues of interest and importance to young adults through video and other methods of communication
- Advocating for young adults
- Providing a voice for young adults about issues of importance to them
- Supporting and promoting youth friendly activities
- Normalizing the relationship between youth and adults
- Fundraising

The Committee has also agreed to use the phrase, S.A.Y., Sarnia Active Youth to represent youth friendly activities. The Committee had quite a brainstorming session with the phrase, and suggested that “SAY What” could represent what youth are thinking. A logo contest for S.A.Y. is in development.

The following organizations/groups and young people are members of the Committee:

Shelley Erwin	City of Sarnia
Becky Wellington-Horner	Community Health Services Department, County of Lambton
Joe Cebulski	Skills Link Coordinator, YMCA
Constable Mel Wright	Sarnia Police
Rev. Robert Roe	Minister, Trinity Church
Chris Coyle	Teacher, Lambton Kent District School Board
Mike Hurry/Kathy Boyd	Big Brothers
Kathy Alexander	Big Sisters
Rich Bouchard	Community Round Table, Innivity Marketing
Don Pitt	Community Round Table, Family Counselling Centre
Alison Mahon	Community Round Table
Dave Schaller	Pathways Health Centre for Children
Kelly Wilson	Sarnia Lambton Rebound
Rosemary Travis	TV Cogeco



## YOUNG ADULTS

Philip Beauchamp	Generation Impact
Alyssa Free	Generation Impact
Derek George	Generation Impact
Karl Adamek	Generation Impact
Jayne Mahon	Lambton College
Jordan Alexander	Youth CHAT
Rachel Waller	Youth CHAT
Amber Mundy	Youth CHAT
Krista Campbell	
Keith Hunt	PLAY
Ramon Rosales	PLAY
Evan Monk	PLAY

The Committee meets monthly to work on youth friendly activities and prepare the application for recognition.

The Committee has been very fortunate to have the YMCA Skills Link Program participating in the process. Skills Link is funded by Service Canada and offers fifteen individuals of diverse backgrounds aged fifteen to thirty, the chance to become active within their community in various ways over a six month period. Designed to teach the fundamentals of teamwork and leadership, Skills Link aims to enhance the abilities of these individuals in order to expand future employment opportunities. Although the project is called Skills Link, each group of students selects their own name.

In 2009, Generation Impact, the first Skills Link group to become involved with the Youth Friendly Committee, really took this initiative to heart and brainstormed strategies to involve young people. Generation Impact's contribution to this endeavour was the creation of a questionnaire based on Playworks 16 criteria for being youth friendly. Distributed throughout various schools in the community, with the assistance of the Wellness Committees, this questionnaire served as an indispensable tool in gauging the sentiment of the youth regarding the youth friendly status of Sarnia. To ensure that youth from elementary school were involved, a Minister who was a member of the Committee, visited a couple of grade 8 classes to review the questionnaire with them, and also sent the questionnaire to young people who were involved in the youth ministry. The questions were split into two separate surveys. In total, about 334 young people responded to the survey.

The Youth Group at Trinity Church also provided 30 prizes as an incentive for young people to complete the questionnaire. The prizes included tickets to the Sarnia Legionnaires Hockey games, Laser Tag coupons, Dairy Queen certificates, and 2 ipods.

As an alternative approach to gathering information about how valued the youth feel within the community, Generation Impact created a FACEBOOK group and a YOUTUBE video in order to generate more responses to the questions. Though limited, the responses are a positive reflection of Sarnia's commitment to the youth. (to view this video, search "Youth Friendly Sarnia" on youtube).

This year, the Skills Link group (PLAY) has been hosting a number of youth friendly activities, worked on a Facebook site (S.A.Y. and PLAY), and prepared a video in which two young men relive their youth to see what Sarnia has to offer youth. The video (included in the documentation) showcases:

- SkateJam '10 in Tecumseh Park (time 3:09)
- Bluewater Fun Park (time 3:58)
- Dynamic Academy of Martial Arts (time 6:57)
- Rock2 the Top (time 9:22)
- Sarnia Transit (time 11:22)

- Tecumseh Swimming Pool (time 15:25)
- Canatara Beach (time 18:52)
- Elite Dance Academy (time 20:36)
- Sarnia Bay Boarder Pass (time 24:24)
- Blackwater Coffee and Tea (time 25:24)
- Youth Friendly Community Committee (time 28:09)

At the meetings, members share information about youth related activities and issues in the community.

The City of Sarnia provides the meeting space and the pizza for the Committee's meetings. The City of Sarnia also sponsored one of the Committee members to attend the 6th Annual ACTIVATE 2010 National Youth Leadership Conference in Ottawa.

The discussions at the Youth Friendly Committee meetings are always refreshing and enlightening. At various times, the Committee has discussed community perceptions of young people, the importance of respect for all, relationships with law enforcement, and feeling respected and valued. In particular, the young people involved in the discussions, indicated that they wish to be called young adults rather than youth. Members are looking forward to continuing the discussions to build a stronger youth friendly community.

In the new year, the Committee plans to hold a half day workshop for youth to discuss their views on the community and what they would like to work on to make Sarnia more youth friendly.

In April, the Community Round Table hosted a Community Summit in conjunction with the City of Sarnia and the County of Lambton. The purpose of the Summit was to review what had been accomplished over the past six years, and to look at future directions for the community. Focusing on young adults has been a priority for the community over the past few years. The Sarnia Lambton Economic Partnership includes Students as part of its strategy to attract newcomers to the community. The Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board focuses on youth as well, and has developed a plan to focus on retaining youth in the community. The results of the Community Summit indicate that the community values youth and considers youth attraction, retention, and engagement as a high priority. Some of the strategies that were discussed at the Summit include:

### **Youth Attraction, Retention and Engagement**

Expanded post-secondary education, employment, cultural, and recreational opportunities were seen as the critical ingredients for retaining and attracting youth to Sarnia-Lambton. The community sees youth retention and attraction as being a key to ensuring population growth and a diverse, vibrant community.

It should be noted that the County of Lambton may be referenced throughout this application. Services such as libraries, social services, and arts within the municipal government, are governed by the upper tier, which is the County of Lambton.

Over the years, there have been many excellent programs focused on youth or young adults in Sarnia. In fact, a number of years ago, a Sarnian working with local Optimists Clubs organized a Students Conference for young people across Canada. High school students congregated in Toronto, from across Canada, to discuss topics of importance and formulate recommendations. The students then presented their recommendations to politicians at the national level.

In the mid 1990s, when organizations in Sarnia Lambton were addressing the Ministry of Community and Social Services' Making Services Work for People report, the importance of "play" in the lives of children and young adults was recognized. The local Restructuring Committee prepared a separate



Health Promotion report which recognized the many formal and informal activities that young people are involved in, and explored opportunities to strengthen the relationships. Despite the lack of funding to implement the report, it represented the philosophy of many of the organizations serving children and youth in the community.

**The Youth Friendly Community Committee believes that Sarnia is a Youth Friendly community that meets the following criteria:**

1. Youth have options for play in their community
2. Youth are formally connected to the community
3. Facilities are dedicated to youth play
5. The community supports public youth events
6. The community celebrates and recognizes its youth
7. The community commits funding for youth play
8. The community supports positive youth development
9. The community supports youth volunteerism and leadership development
10. The community has effective community partnerships
12. Youth feel comfortable in their own community
13. Youth can get to the play programs that are offered
14. Schools support the youth friendly approach
15. Adults champion the need for youth play
16. Play is accessible to youth with disabilities

# 1. YOUTH HAVE OPTIONS FOR PLAY

The community offers a consistent and varied mix of play opportunities for youth, aged 13 to 19. Play includes recreation, sports, arts, drama, dance, civic engagement, youth activism, volunteerism, social clubs and youth leadership. It is structured and unstructured, facility and non-facility based, competitive and recreational, active and passive and it is adult-led and peer-led. It is offered by public service, not-for-profit agencies, private enterprise or through informal groups.

## SURVEY RESPONSES:

The Sarnia community offers a variety of youth friendly activities such as: recreation, sports, arts, drama, dance, volunteerism, social clubs and youth leadership.



77.9% totally/kind of  
13% not sure  
9.1% not really/no way man

Sarnia offers a vast array of play opportunities for youth, including sports, recreation, arts, music, drama, youth activism and volunteerism. Some examples are:

## ARTS

- There is a young arts scene in Sarnia which encourages the participation of youth bands and youth artists. The downtown businesses and galleries in Sarnia celebrate the First Friday of every month by featuring local artists and bands. Youth bands and artists are encouraged to participate.
- Gallery Lambton offers Random Acts of Art Workshops, a free program for youth ages 14-18 in the community. The goal is to celebrate creativity and inspire students in innovative opportunities with wonderful mentors. Previous classes include Graffiti 101, Screen Printing, Graphic Imagery, Collage Party, Wearable Art and many more. One of the activities during RAAW included graffiti painting the Harry Turnbull Skateboard Park. On the first Friday of every month, businesses and galleries in downtown Sarnia host First Friday. At the September First Friday, Gallery Lambton had an exhibit of the art produced by the youth who participated in the RAAW workshops.
- The Gallery in the Grove holds the Annual Student Art Exhibition every year. This involves all of the High Schools in Lambton County. There is anywhere from 150 - 175 pieces of work by these students with selections of: Drawings, Paintings, Print-Making, Sculpture and New Media (Video/Computer).
- John Leverre established `Diversion Entertainment` to provide more performance opportunities for his students. He hopes to expand the company to include summer programs for students. He has also started a high school improve festival.  
(`New company takes the stage`, The Observer, July 24, 2010)
- Local Youth have been asked to perform their music for Opening Art Exhibits and have been asked to speak and participate at Gallery Lambton's weekly Thursday evening Art & Ideas presentations.
- For drama, there are a number of opportunities for young adults to participate. Hidden Talents produces a yearly Christmas show and a musical every two years. Most of the performances showcase the incredible talent of young adults in Sarnia.
- There is also an employment opportunity in the summer called Main Street Players. The Sarnia Lambton Business Development Corporation received funding to hire 5 high school or college students to perform free musicals promoting downtown communities during the summer.



## SPORTS

- Boxing is offered through River City Vineyard and Sharky's Boxing Club. Sharky's is run by former Canadian Boxing Champ Kathy Ure, the club is open to all youth and some funds are available to help subsidize those in need.
- Martial arts is available through Bluewater Tae Kwon Do, St. Clair Tae Kwon Do, Turtle Island Martial Arts, and Canadian Marshal Arts Academy
- Weight lifting and fitness programs are available through the Ironworks Gym, the YMCA, and other fitness centres.
- There are many sports such as hockey, golf, soccer, tennis, curling, and sailing available through the community as well as the school
- Bluewater Gymnastics hosted the Canadian Commonwealth and World Championships camp this year.
- Dominique Pegg, 16, with Bluewater Gymnastics, helped Canada to a silver medal at the Senior Pan American championships in Mexico; in the past year she has competed at major meets in Japan, Brazil, Australia, France, Mexico and the U.S.
- Daniel Barry finished first among junior sailors in the Laser Radial Canadian National Championship (under 18)
- Kyle Jackson was named to the under 19 Team Ontario Field Lacrosse team
- 16 year old Michael Abrametz represented the Sarnia Y Rapids swimming team at the national competitions in Winnipeg (he also serves as a coach for younger children)

## FAITH COMMUNITIES

- Trinity Anglican Church offers play opportunities through its youth and young adult programs. All are welcome to participate in the fun, affordable programming. From November 2009-2010, 233 individuals and/or families participated. Activities include mini golf, tubing on the St. Clair River, rock climbing, basketball, campfires, skating, indoor and outdoor games, mission trips, etc to empower youth to grow in the Christian faith.

## OUTDOORS

- Sarnia had one of the first skate board parks in the country, the Harry Turnbull skateboard has been around for at least 30 years
- The Youth Cox Centre BMX Trick area
- For the past couple of years, Sarnia WAKE Up Call, a wakeboarding event has been offered in Sarnia Bay
- Boarder Pass, was opened this year in Sarnia Bay, to provide people with the opportunity to learn to wakeboard

## STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES

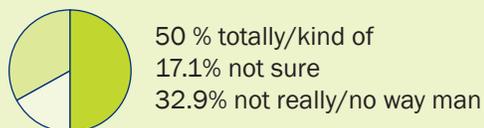
- The Sea Cadets offer many structured challenging activities for young people aged 12-18 that focus on life skills and lessons. Sea Cadets promotes citizenship, physical fitness, self discipline, skills in seamanship, and builds leadership and character. All activities are free for young people involved in the program. Activities include the corps band, seamanship, swimming, marksmanship training, scuba diving, sailing, and weekend trips. The supporting documentation includes an insert in the local newspaper.

## 2. YOUTH ARE FORMALLY CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITY

The community has ways in which youth can have their voices heard. These can be neighbourhood or municipal-wide, such as youth advisory committees or councils. Formal opportunities for youth involvement could include having designated seats for youth representatives at decision-making tables such as Business Improvement Associations, Recreation Committees, Staff Hiring Committees and/or Selection Committees for Recognition Awards. Youth could also have a formal connection through a regular column in the local newspaper or on a website.

### **SURVEY RESPONSES**

I know where to go and who to talk to if I have an idea or opinion about youth activities and events in Sarnia.



There are a number of examples that demonstrate opportunities for young adults to have their voices heard.

The Lambton Kent District School Board has a youth representative on its Board to ensure that the voice of the student is heard. One of the students from the Lambton Kent School Board is an advisor to the Minister of Education. Many of the high schools in Sarnia have student councils, and also Student Wellness Councils. A number of high schools also have Diversity or Cultural nights to promote youth involvement.

Over the years, the Student Wellness Councils have been involved in such community issues as Safe Proms and smoking cessation.

Most recently, many youth were involved in the Make Poverty History rally at City Hall and have pledged to work towards ending poverty.

The Sarnia Library has a Teen Advisory Group that lets teens have a voice in youth library services. The teens offer book reviews, help organize events, select material, and decorate their space for volunteer hours. Teens are recruited to the Advisory Group through word of mouth in the schools. Twenty youth aged 12 – 20 serve on the Sarnia Advisory Group.

This year the teens organized HadouCon, an anime convention, and have plans to make it an annual event. Approximately 100 people attended to discuss anime. The media release and photos from the event are in the supporting documentation.

There was also a teen photo contest at the Sarnia Library. Twenty seven entries were received, and the public was invited to vote on their favorite photo. A few hundred citizens participated in the voting process. A photo and media release are included in the supporting documentation.



The Lambton Drug Awareness Action Committee and the Community Health Services Department have received funding to support high school students develop plays highlighting the hazards of substance abuse such as drinking and drugs.

In honour of Earth Week, the St. Patrick's High School Environmental Club cleaned up the shoreline of Sarnia Bay. One of the Club members commented in the local paper that "small things can change the world, step-by-step". (Teens take to shoreline, Sarnia Observer, April 26, 2010)

The Lambton Kent District School Board recently hosted a day session for representatives from each of the high schools to raise awareness about environmental issues, improve schools, and create a better understanding of emerging green jobs. Community environmental experts spoke to the students and provided displays on topics of interest, such as naturalization, carbon footprint, and idling. One of the students who attended the forum, provided the following summary:

### **Making Eco-Friendly Schools**

On October 29th, there was an environmental seminar presentation at the Lambton College. It was here where we informed about other cities that have had their schools go through a process of environmentally friendly examinations and installments to have their school considered a Green School. Having an eco-friendly schools encourages students to be environmentally responsible and to take personal action at school and with their families. Classes undertake projects to communicate about or to enhance the environment.

Habits starting at school are habits that will continue at home. Educating youth at a young age about recycling and energy conservation is crucial for upcoming generations. With global warming being a big issue, we need to do everything we possibly to save and conserve our important resources. There is a lack of knowledge in teens today about the environment and how to manage it fundamentally and it is extremely relevant to have schools play a role in changing that. Whether students are interested in participating or not, forcing them to use recycling bins instead of the garbage, printing on both sides, and turning off computer monitors all add up.

Statistics show that over 563,650 projects have been completed at more than 8,000 Canadian elementary schools. By keeping records of achievements, schools gradually work towards 100 projects to become recognized as an environmental Green School. Examples of possible projects helping to become a green school can be:

- Hallway displays on nature themes
- Schoolyard plantings
- Schoolyard litter pick-up
- Share songs on the environment
- Recycling and reusing common objects to make bird feeders

Management and administration of the program must be adapted to the circumstances of your school. Announcements, assemblies, future plans and goals, and pictures followed by celebrations of success all help to encourage becoming a green school. If 8 000 elementary schools across Canada can become eco-friendly, why aren't high schools? If they can do it, we can do it. Please take into consideration the need for environment protection. High schools are a great place to start.

# 3. FACILITIES ARE DEDICATED TO YOUTH PLAY

The community has dedicated public space for youth play programs and/or events. Youth feel a sense of ownership and belonging for these facilities. Dedicated space is not limited to one location, but can be parks, meeting rooms, sports and arts facilities. Places where youth can meet socially are important to the community and may be provided by municipalities, not-for-profit groups, schools, faith-based locations, private businesses or service clubs. Space is made available at the times and locations suitable to youth participation and access to space increases as does the youth population.

## SURVEY RESPONSES

There are specific places for youth programs and events in Sarnia. I know where these places are and I feel comfortable using them.



Spaces dedicated to youth play in Sarnia include the following.

## BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB

The Boys and Girls Club was originally started in 1967 as a Centennial project by local churches to serve the needs of youth and the elderly in the core area of Sarnia. The Club is committed to providing prevention programs for youth that support their development a individuals, enhance their socialization skills, promote healthy peer relationships and help them build positive self images. Equitable access for all youth regardless of circumstance is also important.

The Boys and Girls Club offers monthly dances, After School and Drop in Centre programs (including a Homework Club with teacher assistance), and computer labs. The 404 Town House Youth Drop In Centre is sponsored by the Boys and Girls Club of Sarnia/Lambton. It offers recreational activities, internet, movie night, junior leaders, and tutoring assistance (see documentation for programming details).

## HARMONY

Harmony offers a space dedicated to youth play and expression. Details on Harmony’s programming are provided later in the application.

## DOW CENTRE FOR YOUTH

Three youth centered organizations – Big Brothers of Sarnia-Lambton, Big Sisters of Sarnia-Lambton, Sarnia-Lambton Rebound, together with St. Luke’s United Church have received funding from Dow Chemical Canada to develop a centre where agencies collaborate to provide services for children and youth. The Dow Centre for Youth officially opened on Saturday December 5, 2009. Many community groups, conferences, youth activities and drop in programs have been established since the opening of the centre. Examples of these partnerships include: summer programming for adolescent girls hosted by Big Sisters and Pathways, the Alternative Education offered through the St. Clair Catholic School Board is based out of the centre, several workshops offered by the 3 agencies and St. Luke’s Church



to youth in our community. The centre is also ideally situated in close proximity to schools and a large population of children and youth. Big Brothers, Big Sisters and Rebound work very closely with Queen Elizabeth and Holy Trinity – they refer a large percentage of students to the After School Program and the agencies in turn provide school based mentoring programs on-site at their schools. In addition, Holy Trinity allows the centre access to their gymnasium so that youth in the After School program have use of their athletic facilities.

At the new Dow Youth Centre, Big Brothers and Big Sisters jointly offer a new after school program for grades 6 – 12 on Mondays and Tuesday, as well as a Homework Hub on Wednesdays. Several specialty workshops are also provided for teens in the After School Program such as Teens Cook and Girl Getaway. Starting in January 2011, there will also be a drop in centre for youth involved in their mentoring programs.

Individuals and groups, such as the Rotary Club of Sarnia have also committed funding to the capital campaign for the Dow Centre for Youth, which brings Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and Rebound together under one roof.

### **YMCA**

The YMCA also has space dedicated to youth. Funding was received from the government to develop a new Youth Energy Zone which includes an “exer-gaming centre” that contains the latest in interactive fitness and video gaming equipment for children and youth.

### **CITY OF SARNIA PARKS - INCLUDING SKATEBOARD & BMX TRICK AREA**

The City of Sarnia operates over 100 parks across the community. Within Germain Park, there are 5 baseball diamonds (2 with lights), 4 soccer fields, arena, outdoor swimming pool, Lawn Bowling Club, tennis courts, and horseshoe pits. Harry Turnbull Park, also operated by the City, is a 30 year old facility designed for inline and skateboard use. It features 2 hills and a bowl area for beginners to advanced skaters. In Tecumseh Park, through the generosity of Mrs. Norma Cox, there is the Cox Centre BMX Trick area which includes a brand new steel portable BMX Trick area on a cement pad.

### **PROPOSED NEW SKATEBOARD PARK**

The City has identified a new skateboard park as a priority. The Rotary Club of Sarnia Bluewaterland is prepared to partner with the City and provide \$85,000 in funding towards the cost of the new park.

Schools and churches also offer youth friendly spaces for meetings and group activities.



## 4. IT IS EASY FOR YOUTH TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT PLAY ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY

The community has a variety of youth friendly information vehicles, such as websites, newsletters, bulletins, brochures, newspaper advertisements and articles, and community bulletin boards. Municipal services, community agencies, clubs, private businesses, schools and other service providers collaborate and/or are creative in finding ways for diverse groups of youth to access this information.

### **SURVEY RESPONSES**

It's easy to find information about youth related activities in the Sarnia community.



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17.1% not sure  
27.6% not really/no way man

Information is available on the programming and activities that are available for youth in Sarnia, however, this is an area that has been identified for improvement.

The City of Sarnia posts information on Summer and Winter Programs on their website. There are also many community bulletins in the local newspaper, Radio Sarnia-Lambton, and TVCogeco. School bulletins and announcements are also excellent sources of information for young adults. Many organizations have developed their own websites and facebook sites to promote events as well.

The YMCA offers YIELD, an Information, Referral and Support Service for Youth who are having difficulty entering the workforce, or returning to the demands of school. The service can assist youth aged 15-30 identify problems, build a larger support network, connect to opportunities and services, assist them in achieving their goals.

The Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board prepared a guide to services for youth in Lambton and Kent which included employment, volunteering, education, transportation, health, living on your own, and recreation. A copy of the Guide is included with the documentation.

The Family Counselling Centre offers STARRting Point, the central point of access for resources and residences that are available to support children and youth in need.

A few years ago, the community was exploring the development of a virtual youth centre for young adults, however the process seemed to have been delayed. Exploring strategies to provide information for youth is one of the key areas identified for improvement.

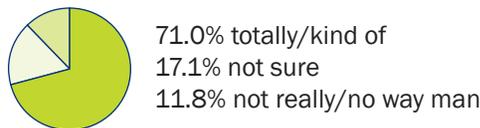


# 5. THE COMMUNITY SUPPORTS PUBLIC YOUTH EVENTS

The public comes out to support public community events planned by youth, works with youth to plan these events, and/or plans public community events in which youth come out to participate. Local citizens are able to see youth in a positive and public light. These large scale community events can include art shows, skate board exhibitions, tournaments, battle of the bands, community carnivals, dances, etc. Agencies and groups, such as health, police, local government, recreation, culture, service clubs and accessibility groups, may work to support these events. Through outreach and networking, isolated and disenfranchised youth are engaged in the process and/or event.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

There are people in the Sarnia community who work closely with youth to plan, organize, pay for, and supervise youth activities and events.



There are many opportunities in Sarnia for residents to see young adults in a positive and public light. A few examples are:

### LAMBTON COUNTY MUSIC FESTIVAL

- The Music Festival features the talents of many young adults over a two week period. The evening competitions often have excellent attendance, since it is a chance to hear the incredible local talent. The Highlights evening is also very well attended, and also represents the community support for the event, since many young people receive plaques, trophies, and monetary awards.

### DRAMA/THEATRE

- Youth are involved in many of the local plays at the high schools and downtown theatre. Some of the recent productions have included: Sweeney Todd, Man of la Mancha, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

### BATTLE OF THE BANDS

- Youth CHAT hosted a Battle of the Bands and a take down the wall event to increase awareness about smoking.

### SHATEJAM

- SkateJam was started in 2009 to offer music, skateboarding and BMX bike competitions in Tecumseh Park. This year the organizer also included arts and crafts, graffiti, a tug of war, and a barbeque hosted by Harmony for Youth. The event was a fundraiser for Harmony and the Canadian Cancer Society.

### **UNISON**

- Building on the concept of Music Monday, three local music teachers had a vision to showcase the secondary school ensembles, bands and choirs, to the broader community on Music Monday. The Rotary Club of Sarnia and the Lambton Kent District School Board agreed to provide funding to support the event. Unison, held on Monday May 3, 2010, featured nearly 500 youth, included the Lambton Concert Band, and was hosted by Emm Gryner, a Canadian recording artist. (see documentation for additional details). Plans are already underway for 2011.

### **SPORTS TOURNAMENTS**

- Many youth in Sarnia are involved in competitive sports, whether hockey, basketball, track and field. Sarnia often hosts a number of tournaments a year which provide opportunities for the community to support youth. Sarnia often hosts Boys and Girls Silver Stick Hockey. The community also recently hosted an Aboriginal hockey tournament.

### **DOMINANT 7 JAZZ BAND**

- Dominant 7 is a local jazz band composed of musicians aged 16-18 who came together two years ago. The students represent 4 different high schools. The group has received community support for their endeavours, including fundraising to go to the national music festival. They have performed in local restaurants, played around the community including Jazz in the Village, and made a CD to raise funds. Dominant 7 was recognized on the Mayor's Honour List, and also won gold at the national jazz competition.

## **6. THE COMMUNITY CELEBRATES AND RECOGNIZES YOUTH**

The community offers youth awards, special recognition and/or scholarship programs to recognize youth participation and contributions. This recognition may be given by local government, service clubs, schools, community agencies, etc. Formal announcements on these opportunities, and on the results of the recognition, are publicized and promoted throughout the community such as in the newspaper, on the radio, on the municipal website, on agency websites, in program brochures and/or newsletters.

### **SURVEY RESPONSES**

Sarnia offers awards, special recognition and/or scholarship programs to acknowledge youth participation and contributors.



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33.3% not sure  
10.7% not really/no way man

There are many opportunities to formally recognize and support youth in Sarnia. A few examples are:



### **CELEBRATION OF YOUTH AWARDS**

Each year the YMCA of Sarnia-Lambton hosts a Celebration of Youth award recognition program. This exciting award program recognizes youth in the Sarnia-Lambton community who demonstrate sensitivity to others, talent, innovation, and outstanding achievement in their programs of academic study, in the development of their personal talents, and in serving their communities. Many businesses/clubs and individuals support this award recognition program. Each recipient and his/her family are invited to the Awards Program and entertainment, at which time the winners' successes will be celebrated. Each of the winners is also presented with a \$500 award. The accompanying documentation includes the brochure of last year's award recipients.

For more information: [www.ymcasar.org/Default.aspx?Menu=11&Content=Article&ID=318](http://www.ymcasar.org/Default.aspx?Menu=11&Content=Article&ID=318)

### **NORMA & EDWARD COX SECOND SCHOOL VOLUNTEER AWARDS**

Mrs. Cox has established an award program to recognize high school graduating students who volunteer their time with charitable organizations, and other non-profit groups in the Sarnia-Lambton area. Students are required to submit an essay explaining why he/she promotes the particular charity, and why they feel so strongly about it. A winner from each school is selected to receive a \$4000 scholarship to be applied to their post secondary education. The winning students' charities also receive \$4000. The winning essays from each of the high schools are then submitted to Lambton College for the selection of the Norma & Edward Cox Overall Volunteer Award. The winner of this award receives a \$12,000 scholarship with a corresponding gift to their charity as well. Lambton College also received \$12,000 for its scholarship fund in appreciation for their assistance with the selection process.

### **WALTER PETRYSCHUK AWARD**

Mr. Petryschuk offers an award for a young person studying in the visual, literary or performing arts at either a college or university.

### **SUSAN MOFFAT SCHOLARSHIP**

This award was set up through the Sarnia Community Foundation by the Moffat Family, to recognize a young person pursuing either college or university, who has overcome a significant challenge.

### **JIM STOKLEY SCHOLARSHIPS**

The Jim Stokley scholarships were established in memory of the Sarnia businessman and Bayfest co-founder who passed away last year. The scholarships honour local students who make a valuable contribution to the community. Two local college students each received a \$2500 scholarship. (First Jim Stokley scholarships awarded" Sarnia Observer, June 10, 2010)

Bayfest also teamed up with Johnsonville Brats to create the Johnsonville Arts and Music Scholarship for a student from Sarnia - Lambton in arts and entertainment. The student receives \$1000 towards their tuition.

### **CINESARNIA AWARD**

The Cineseries of Sarnia (a not for profit charitable volunteer group dedicated to bringing quality Canadian and international films to Sarnia) donates a \$4000 scholarship to a student graduating from a Lambton County secondary school, who is pursuing studies in the Arts and film making.

### **LAMBTON COUNTY MUSIC FESTIVAL**

The local music festival also provides an opportunity to recognize young people who excel in music. For example, the Rotary Club of Sarnia provides \$ 1000 for scholarships. Many businesses and organizations also provide awards.

### **LANXESS**

Each year, Lanxess provides scholarships to: (1) a graduate of SCITS High School as part of the P.A.I.R.S. Program (2) a boy from either Big Brothers or Huron House and (3) a girl from either Big Sisters or the Community Girls Home.

### **ORGANIZATION FOR LITERACY**

In 2009, Organization for Literacy Sarnia/Lambton and the Book Keeper, a local independent bookstore, recently brought Rex Murphy to Sarnia. Three young adults won awards for their writing and read their piece at the sold out event.

### **REBOUND**

Each year at its annual gala, Rebound celebrates the young people who have turned around their lives with the assistance of Rebound programming.

The documentation package includes a list of scholarships and bursaries that are available to young adults in the Sarnia Lambton school system.

Local media are very supportive of youth in Sarnia. The Observer, Sarnia and Lambton County This Week, TV Cogeco, and Radio Sarnia Lambton regularly report on activities in the high schools, youth events, and accomplishments of youth. TV Cogeco has provided a letter of support for this application outlining their involvement in youth friendly activities.

## **7. THE COMMUNITY COMMITS FUNDING FOR YOUTH PLAY**

The community has a variety of funding sources that support youth play. These can include the municipal budget and local service agencies (e.g. YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Youth Centres), where there is a line item for youth play and/or through which a youth programmer is hired. Support can also be provided by groups such as service clubs, special granting programs and/or the business community. This funding opportunity is well known to groups who work with youth in the community and it is promoted through these groups and through the school system. Systems are in place to help youth to also regularly access these funds. Some youth play programs are free or have minimal costs. The community commits funding for current and long term capital for diverse facility development and improvement, such as indoor/outdoor parks, skate parks, creative arts spaces, dance studios and/or drop in centres.

### **SURVEY RESPONSES**

I know where to go and who to ask if I need money to organize and run a youth activity group.



35.1% totally/kind of  
24.3% not sure  
40.6% not really/no way man

The survey results indicate that only 35.1 % know where to go and who to ask for money to organize a youth activity. However, when the Youth Friendly Community Committee reviewed the information on services, activities and events in the community that were focused on youth, it was decided to identify that Sarnia met this criterion.



### **YRASP**

The County of Lambton has implemented programming based on Gina Browne’s research. YRASP (Youth Recreation and Sports Program) is one such program, it recognizes that children who participate in organized leisure and sport activities perform better scholastically, socially, and grow into healthier adjusted adults. If a family is on social assistance and has children between the aged 0 -17, they are eligible to access a variety of recreational programming for their child/young adult. This program receives support from many community organizations such as the City of Sarnia Community Services, Girl Guides, Bluewater Gymnastics Club, Sarnia Minor Athletic Association, Sarnia Boys and Girls’ Hockey. In 2007, the program matched up to 325 families with sports and recreation programs. Funding for the program is provided by the County of Lambton and the YMCA.

In 2009, the Youth subsidy provided was \$91,372 to a total of 2,872 participants. Youth used the subsidy for many play opportunities, including classes in health, fitness, and recreation, swimming lessons or Rapids Swim Team, as well as leadership training.

### **COMMUNITY BRIDGES PROGRAM**

Blue Water Bridge Canada has launched a Community Bridges Program which is aimed at helping families with the cost of enrolling their children into organized sporting events. The program is administered through the YMCA, and provides financial assistance to families in need on a first come, first served basis. Assistance is provided for children and youth aged 4 – 17 inclusive and is limited to one sporting event for each spring/summer or fall/winter season to a maximum of 2 per year. Funding is provided for up to \$300 per activity.

### **COMMUNITY RESOURCE HOUSES**

The YMCA operates three amenity houses in geared to income neighbourhoods within Sarnia. Breakfast, snack programs are provided for school aged children, and community enrichment activities such as outdoor movie nights, neighbourhood barbecues, holiday dinners, and community gardens are offered in the neighbourhoods as well.

### **HARMONY**

Harmony is a local organization that was established by Joanne Klauke-Labelle, to build youth’s self-esteem and teach them creative methods of self- expression. The program is accessible to all youth, and the only cost to youth for involvement is “paying it forward”. Youth owe one hour of volunteer service for each hour of programming. Programming is designed to build the entire child/youth and ensure their well being. Volunteers assist youth with homework, tutoring, and mentoring as well as singing, playing an instrument, dancing. Harmony and its founder have been recognized by the Live with Regis and Kelly show, and most recently was a finalist in the 2008 Donner Awards as one of Canada’s best run non-profit agencies.

### **SEAWAY KIWANIS CLUB**

The Seaway Kiwanis Club is one of the most recent service clubs to commit funding to youth play. Further in the application, details are provided on a local response to the development of a BMX Bike Trail. The Club committee \$70,000 to the City to create a bike trail that involves youth in its design.

### **MRS. NORMA COX**

The citizens of Sarnia are very generous in supporting youth and community activities. One such example, is Mrs. Norma Cox who is very committed to youth and provides funding support. In the last few years, she donated funding to re-develop the Tecumseh Park, which incorporated a skate park for youth as well.

### **SARNIA POLICE SERVICES**

The Sarnia Police Services commits funding to support youth play in recognition that young people learn

and develop through play opportunities. The Police are involved in Cooking with Cops, which is a high school mentoring program for kids at risk.

### **YMCA EXCHANGE PROGRAM THROUGH HERITAGE CANADA**

A few years ago, a group of resourceful students decided to come up with ways to highlight the area, culture, and business. They have committed hours over the past number of years to organizing an exchange with students from the Queen Charlotte Islands or Haida Gwaii, including the fundraising and planning. Fifteen students came to Sarnia, and the SCITS students visited British Columbia in May. (“Exchange initiated by teens”, Sarnia Observer, April 21, 2010)

The community has also committed funding to the new Dow Centre for Youth, which bring Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and Rebound together under one roof.

The City of Sarnia Community Services Department also offers free swimming and skate days

Businesses and organizations commit funding to support youth activities. For example,

- the Rotary Clubs sponsor an Interact Club for young adults in Sarnia.
- Rotary Club of Sarnia Bluewaterland is proposing to commit funds towards a new Skateboard Park
- Tim Horton’s is very supportive of local youth through camp and leadership opportunities
- Libro provides funding support to Harmony
- the Investors Group supports the Community Assignment (which will be explained further in the section on encouraging volunteerism).



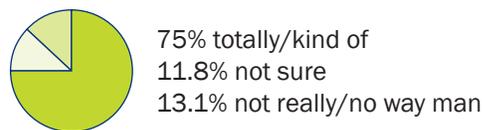


## 8. THE COMMUNITY SUPPORTS POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Positive youth development is a formal process through which a youth makes the transition from childhood to adulthood. During this time, youth are exposed to and learn the following five competencies: social, emotional, ethical, cognition, and physical. They also participate in programs and services which meets their seven developmental needs, which are: meaningful participation, mastery and achievement, positive interaction with adults and peers, physical capacity, creative expression, self-definition, and structure and clear limits. The community supports positive youth development by ensuring staff and volunteers of youth service programs are offered opportunities, and are actively encouraged to participate, in orientation and training sessions on positive youth development.

### **SURVEY RESPONSES**

There are programs and classes such as: sex education, drug awareness, suicide awareness, mental health awareness, mental and sexual abuse, women's rights etc. available in Sarnia. I know where to go if I need information on those and other topics.



There are many programs in Sarnia that support positive youth development for all youth including those who are considered at risk. Examples of some of the programs are:

### **BIG BROTHERS/BIG SISTERS**

These organizations recognize the importance of a positive adult mentor or role model for young people.

- Big Sisters matching program provides adult role models to 30 at risk girls between the ages of 13-18
- Big Sisters offers Go Girls, a mentor led program that provides girls with the information and support they need to make healthy choices. The program is developed for girls aged 12 - 14.
- Big Brothers also offers an in-school mentoring program that operates in 17 elementary schools throughout Sarnia and Lambton County. The program serves 45 young adults over 13 years of age. The Big Brother and couples matching program is primarily focused on boys from single parent, mother headed homes. 41 of the 106 youth involved in this program, are between the ages of 13 to 19.
- Big Brothers piloted the in-school mentoring program at Alexander Mackenzie High School this year; 16 students were matched with volunteers who engage them in "fun based" activities to build social skills
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters offer an After School program including homework assistance at the Dow Centre for Youth

### **COMMON GROUND**

St. Clair Child and Youth Services offers a program called Common Ground for young adults who have been in

trouble with the law. The program is a peer directed group which gives young people the opportunity to support each other, problem solve, and then work together on a social justice project to bring about social change.

### **TAKING STEPS**

- Recognizing the negative effects of bullying on youth, Alexander Mackenzie Secondary School, a local high school, worked in partnership with the Community Health Services Department, local police, and the Police Foundation program at Lambton College, to implement a health promoting whole schools project. Alexander Mackenzie School houses over 550 students who have been identified with learning challenges and also represents a disproportionate number of students living in lower socioeconomic conditions. Funding was received for a comprehensive program that included: Girls Health IN Perspective, Boys Health IN Perspective, Cooking with Cops, a Buddy system, and Student Leadership.
- Girls and Boys HIP (Health IN Perspective) programs focused on self esteem building. The programs included addressing assertiveness and making wise choices. A male police officer was involved in the Boys HIP program.
- Cooking with Cops emphasizes teamwork and positive adult mentors.
- Funding for the program has ceased, however the school is continuing to maintain components of the program.
- Students from Alexander Mackenzie contributed to this application through surveys, and discussion at the Committee level. One of the local police officers invited the young people to be involved in the process.

### **SARNIA-LAMBTON REBOUND**

- Rebound is a volunteer- driven, non profit community organization that provides prevention and early- intervention social skills programs for at risk youth. Rebound is committed to supporting young people in reaching their full potential. The program supports young people between the ages of 8-17 who are experiencing difficulties with their families, their schools and/or with the law.
- Trained community volunteers act as mentors and positive role models to youth
- Programming includes Life Choices, Substance Abuse education through SAFE Choices, Positive Alternatives to School Suspension (PASS), STAND (Stop, Think and Decide), and STAGE (Striving Towards Girl Empowerment)
- Rebound has been recognized many times with a Donner Award for Excellence
- This year, to showcase the talents of youth, Rebound produced the play the Wizard of Oz. Theatre was chosen because it empowers youth and increases their self confidence. Nearly 50 youth participated in the play which was a fundraiser for Rebound and the United Way. One 15 year old lady who attends Rebound, commented that “it is always somewhere to go when you’re not feeling very good or just need someone to talk to”.

### **YMCA HEALTHY HABITS**

The YMCA offers free after school activities for children and youth in grades 1-12 in four locations across Sarnia. The After School program provides a healthy after school snack, as well as hands on learning and fun activities that promote health and wellness among children and youth. Students can learn about such topics as keeping active, body image, self esteem, cultural activities, stress management.

### **ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ARE:**

- Sarnia Police Services are involved in a summer program entitled Honoring our Youth, which brings First Nations youth and non aboriginal youth together to break down barriers and create an understanding of cultural issues
- several Scout and Girl Guide groups
- Harmony has recently implemented Bully Busters – a classroom anti-bullying program. The focus of the program is peer intervention where students are given the tools they need to be the protectors of each other. Programs are also offered on teen suicide prevention.
- Lambton Drug Awareness Action Committee works with youth to address use of drugs
- Many churches, such as Trinity Church, promote positive youth development
- The Rotary Clubs support youth opportunities through the Interact Club, and Seminar for Tomorrow’s Leaders
- Junior Rayjon offers different missions for young people
- Learning Disabilities Association offers homework hubs
- Gallery Lambton offers various arts based programs

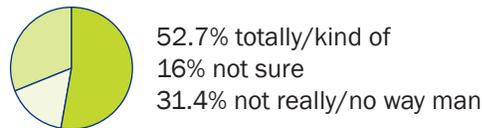


# 9. THE COMMUNITY SUPPORTS YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The community recognizes the connection between youth volunteerism and leadership development. Older children are sought out to fill junior leadership roles in sports clubs, youth groups, day camps and/or faith groups. There are systems to help youth get connected to volunteer opportunities, and youth are familiar with these systems and can access them. Appropriate training about volunteerism and leadership is provided for youth. The community has programs to recognize the efforts of youth leaders and volunteers and can access them. Appropriate training about volunteerism and leadership is provided for youth. The community has programs to recognize the efforts of youth leaders and volunteers.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

The Sarnia community encourages me to participate in youth groups and community service activities. I know what to do and who to contact if I want to get involved with volunteer activities.



Sarnia actively supports youth volunteerism and provides many opportunities for youth leadership. A few examples are highlighted below:

### KINGDOM ASSIGNMENT/COMMUNITY ASSIGNMENT

- St. Christopher’s High School offers a program called the Kingdom Assignment which encourages young adults to think about how they can build God’s kingdom. Each year, 40 Individuals (35 of whom are young adults) are nominated to participate. Basically, the successful candidates are each given \$100 to distribute to a charity of their choice, however they consider opportunities to grow the money as well. For example, one young adult purchased Forget Me Not flowers to raise funds for the Alzheimer Society, another plans to use the funding to plant the gardens at a local nursing home. The project has also extended to some of the elementary schools in the community. A private donor has sponsored 20 individuals for five years, and the school contributes the funding for 20 additional individuals per year. Each person also captures their project on a 12 X 12 quilt piece which is combined with the others to create a quilt which is prominently displayed around the school.
- In the second year of the Kingdom Assignment program, local organizations and businesses, such as the Investors Group became involved and sponsored the Community Assignment at different high schools in the community. Annually, the Investors Group supports approximately 30 youth to participate in the program
- It has had quite an impact on the young people as well as their families, as they consider how to make the wisest choices for the money, and where and how they wish to contribute..
- A letter from the Principal of St. Christopher’s is included in the documentation package.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

- Churches offer leadership development, which includes teens serving as leaders for programming for younger children; this approach also provides youth mentors and role models for younger children
- The YMCA offers Leadership training for young adults
- Many service clubs, such as the Rotary Club's Seminar for Tomorrow's Leaders, provide leadership opportunities for youth
- Rotary Club of Sarnia sends a young person to the Adventures in Citizenship program in Ottawa each year to learn about government
- Groups such as Harmony, Hidden Talents and sports programming such as Hoops (a basketball feeder program offered by a local high school to elementary school students) offer opportunities for youth to become leaders to younger children
- Junior Achievement
- YMCA offers series of awards to recognize youth who have demonstrated leadership or exceptional abilities in a number of areas
- The Community Services Recreation Section of the City of Sarnia trains high school students with leadership abilities for recreation programs. The Successful applicants are enrolled as Leaders in Training, and are given the opportunity to work on a volunteer basis in the program of their choice. Programming includes aquatics, day camps and playgrounds, special events, and children's programs.

## **RAYJON YOUTH**

- Rayjon Share Care is a local organization with an international focus. It was founded in 1986 when two local residents witnessed the extreme poverty in Haiti and decided to do something about it. Almost 25 years later, Rayjon has sent over 2500 Canadians on similar awareness raising trips and implemented a number of projects to improve life in Haiti.
- In 2009, a group of young people, including some studying at university or college, decided to become more involved with Rayjon projects, and formed the Rayjon Youth Committee.
- The Youth Committee is focused on supporting the youth of Haiti by building on a scholarship fund to send graduating students to post-secondary school
- The Committee meets monthly to discuss fundraisers, socials for young people, and implementing plans to reach Rayjon's goals
- Organized a Starvation 24 hour fast to raise funds; hoped to raise \$15,000 to head to central and northern Haiti during the 2011 March break

## **EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

- High schools have annual food drives to support the food banks
- St. Christopher's High School students visit the Inn of the Good Shepherd once a month to prepare, serve and clean up a lunch
- St. Christopher's High School students also visit residents in a local long term care home, Trillium Villa

## **SPORTS FORUM 2010 FOR SPORTS LEADERS - IT IS TOBACCO FREE SPORTS AND RECREATION FOR LAMBTON COLLABORATIVE**

- community partners including the Y, Local Junior Achievement, the City, girls and boys sports, and industry sponsored a forum for sports leaders that was focused on "play, live, and be ... tobacco free"
- coaching packages were offered
- it highlighted tobacco free sports and recreation
- to support this initiative, a Smoke Free Winter Olympics was held for students (students represented different countries and competed in Indoor skiing, hockey, etc)

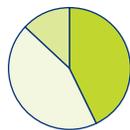


# 10. THE COMMUNITY HAS MODELS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Local government departments work cooperatively with each other and with community groups to provide the best menu of opportunities for youth play. Specific attention is given to the needs of hard-to-reach, isolated, vulnerable and disenfranchised youth. Community partners include not-for-profit agencies, cultural groups, housing cooperatives, youth associations, sports clubs, arts groups, justice, social services, the faith community, health, and education. Local businesses and the corporate world play a key role in supporting youth play.

## SURVEY RESPONSES

The Sarnia community gives special attention to the needs of hard-to-reach, vulnerable and at-risk youth when offering youth groups and activities.



42.9% totally/kind of  
44.2% not sure  
12.8% not really/no way man

There are many models of effective community partnerships in Sarnia that are focused on youth and opportunities to enhance the delivery of programming to young adults and all residents of the city.

PAIRS (Partners Active in Resource Sharing)/ Science Education Partnership  
Industry and business work with local schools through the PAIRS program, and also through a Science Education Partnership. Each year, PAIRS hosts a student conference covering a wide range of topics of interest to youth. For example, Suncor Energy Foundation recently provided funding to St. Clair Secondary School to assist in enhancing the environment. The Science Education Partnership for 2009 included Dow and Esso Imperial Oil. Programming includes an Adopt a Scientist program.

The Kiwanis Club is partnering with the City of Sarnia and youth to develop the new BMX trick area.

Providers who serve individuals with disabilities work collaboratively to meet the needs of their clients. Through their collaborative arrangements, they are able to focus on the individual and explore/create opportunities as opposed to focusing on the limitations of their programming.

IronWorks Gym works closely with youth who have disabilities in a weight lifting program.

Garbage Can Connection: Inclusive Art Program – “Creating a more colorful and inclusive Sarnia” is a partnership between the City of Sarnia, the Lawrence House Centre for the Arts, and Pathways Health Centre for Children. Youth utilizing the services of Pathways create art on garbage cans that are placed around the city. A copy of the partnership agreement is included in the documentation.

The Sarnia Lambton Social Service Network is a voluntary affiliation of charitable human service organizations working together to strengthen the capacity and promote the value of community-based

health and social services throughout Sarnia-Lambton. Many organizations that serve youth (Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Community Living, Huron House Boys Home, St. Clair Child and Youth Services, Rebound, and the YMCA) are part of the Network. By working collaboratively, the Network is able to give more permanence to its efforts in community capacity building (see documentation for the Terms of Reference).

The local police work in partnership with many schools and organizations, such as Rebound, to support positive youth development in the community.

To promote leisure, recreation and sport opportunities in the community for individuals with disabilities, the Recreation Integration Sarnia Lambton Committee was established. Membership includes consumers, service providers, interested individuals, and representatives of groups for individuals with disabilities.

Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and Rebound have formed a partnership in the Dow Centre for Youth to better meet the needs of youth. The Chairman of the Dow Centre for Youth Management Board, Don Cook, wrote the following article on the success of the Centre.

### **A SUCCESS STORY – THE DOW CENTRE FOR YOUTH – SARNIA LAMBTON**

The Dow Centre for Youth, which opened its doors in September 2009, began a long time before that in the minds of several groups. What appears to be just good luck and being in the right place at the right time, does not tell the whole story.

Back in the mid-1980's the parishioners of St. Luke's United Church had a sizable piece of land that they wanted to develop in some way for the youth who lived in their immediate neighbourhood. However, they were never quite able to get that vision 'off the ground'. Nearly twenty years later, at a public community forum a number of concerns or challenges were listed through a brainstorming exercise. One of those concerns suggested at that meeting was the need for greater collaboration amongst the many social service non-profit organizations in Sarnia-Lambton. It was suggested that there was a need to eliminate duplication of services, as well as closing gaps in services for youth. From that meeting, a small group of twelve agencies came together to discuss what they could do to improve or enhance both their image and maximize efficiencies in services. A group called the Sarnia Lambton Social Service Network (SLSSN) was formed. They met on a monthly basis to look for opportunities to promote their agencies and what they called "The Third Sector".

Three years later, Dow Chemical Industry announced that it was preparing to close their plant in Sarnia but wanted to leave a legacy to the community. This legacy would take the form of a \$1,000,000 award to a worthy project that would symbolize Dow's appreciation to the citizens of Sarnia-Lambton. They wanted this award to have great significance and a lasting impact. This was a great challenge for many organizations to come up with an award winning idea and many projects were submitted for Dow's consideration.

Three of the visionary executive directors from the SLSSN Group and their respective Boards seized this opportunity that fit into their long range planning as well as met the challenges that came from the public forum three years earlier. Each group had either outgrown their current facilities or were dealing with aging buildings that were in disrepair, and found they were often limiting their ability to expand programs and services. Big Brothers, Big Sisters and Rebound - A Program for Youth decided to put forward a plan that would result in a new building which they would share and would offer them the opportunity to develop greater collaborative possibilities.

When St. Luke's Church got word of their idea, the congregation voted to join in this vision by donating a large piece of their land in support of the project. As the plan began to take shape, the three agencies realized from their research that this land was well situated in Sarnia to reach the largest percentage of



young people living near this concept building. Since one of the major problems for young people and families is the problem of accessibility to services, the executive directors realized this location would have enhanced visibility and ease of access for all families.

In January 2008, the Dow Selection Committee announced that the Dow Centre for Youth was being awarded the \$1,000,000! A Board of Directors was created, architectural drawings and building plans needed to be submitted and approved, building contractors chosen and fund-raising needed to begin. Eighteen months after Dow Chemical made its announcement to the community all those people who shared in this vision in some way or another, finally saw it become a reality in September 2009.

Within weeks of opening, the Dow Centre for Youth became a big hit and focal point for young people and for other agencies who could see the benefits of its facilities and location. Big Brothers, Big Sisters began an after-school program that attracted 25 to 35 young people on a regular basis. The St. Clair Catholic District School Board began an Alternative School Program which runs every morning from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Other partnerships formed when a new school just a short distance from the Dow Centre offered their gymnasium for physical activities. Rebound started a new program for young girls to meet and discuss a variety of life skills issues. As well, members of the Rebound staff have joined a neighbourhood parent group providing leadership and resources to help them deal with various family and neighbourhood issues.

There are other opportunities that are in the works such as providing health care in the form of nursing, dietary assistance and therapeutic counselling.

The future for the Dow Centre looks very bright and success-oriented. Young people are being provided with a safe and secure facility, where people who truly care are there for them. Many college co-op students are having great opportunities to apply their skills in a very inviting and challenging environment. From the perspectives of staff, having an opportunity to work in this environmentally friendly workplace is a real plus for them all. The Dow Centre is extremely proud to be one of the first new LEEDS buildings constructed in Sarnia-Lambton. It is our hope that we can be an example to the many young people and adults that frequent this building to help them become more environmentally conscious.

When entering the lobby of this beautiful building the sign that hangs below a series of colourful hand prints reads:

### **“Many Hands”**

*The Dow Centre for Youth – conceived by a few, encouraged by many and built through the energy, hard work and commitment of a community. Big Brothers, Big Sisters and Rebound share that same history; each agency established by caring individuals, committed to improving the lives of children and youth.*

*The work of many hands has gone into both the growth of these agencies and the creation of the Dow Centre for Youth. Great ideas start as an impossible dream. However, when many hands work together on achieving the impossible, the result is truly inspirational.*

*Welcome to our home, built and nurtured by many hands.*

# 11. YOUTH ACTIVISM AND ADVOCACY FOR PLAY IS NURTURED

Youth activism and advocacy for play are nurtured. The voice of youth is a critical component of community life. The community ensures that youth actively participate in planning, promotion, implementation and evaluation of programs and services that affect them. Youth actively speak out about their needs and where this is not in evidence, youth are encouraged to do so by local champions. The community, including local decision-makers and the media, create ways for and encourage the voice of youth to be heard. Decision-makers and media respond pro-actively and change happens as a result of the youth voice being heard.

## SURVEY RESPONSES

I feel I have a say in the programs and services that affect me in Sarnia.



37.4% totally/kind of  
18.6% not sure  
43.9% not really/no way man

There are many excellent examples of support for youth activism and advocacy. A few examples are:

### COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- The Community Health Services Department supports youth leaders in informing and mobilizing other youth to speak out and be active on various health issues such as tobacco, substance abuse, nutrition and healthy eating.
- The Community Health Services Department also supports Wellness Councils in the high schools

### YOUTH CHAT (COMMUNITY HEALTH ACTION TEAM)

- is supported through the Community Health Services Department
- raises awareness about tobacco issues and advocate for youth on healthy lifestyle issues
- organized “Rock the Wall” to celebrate the talents of young people and deliver a healthy tobacco-free message to other youth. The event also celebrates World No Tobacco Day, and commemorates the removal of Ontario’s tobacco “power walls”. ( “Rock the Wall returns”, The Observer, May 27, 2010)
- organized “A Party in Hollywood – Tobacco Free Dance”
- recently held a Play Live Be Tobacco Free Video Contest for youth in which contestants outline why sports and recreation should be tobacco free
- involved in Tobacco-The Movie promoting be tobacco free
- participated in the Jingle Bell Walk promoting Active living
- Participated in the Canada Day parade

### BIKE TRAIL

- Within the past couple of years, there were concerns about an unsafe BMX bike trick area that was being used by young people in the community. The City initially was going to demolish the site, however there was an uproar in the community. Young people as well as adults expressed concern about the lack of support for a “play” area for teens in the community. The youth who developed and used the site, met with the Mayor of Sarnia, Mike Bradley, to advocate for a solution. Further details and documentation are provided in the Local Issue Response section.

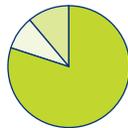


# 12. YOUTH FEEL COMFORTABLE IN THEIR OWN COMMUNITY

The community encourages businesses, recreation centres, malls, theatres, and other locations to understand the needs of youth and works to recognize and engage youth as contributing citizens within the community. Spaces are promoted as “youth friendly”, and youth are provided opportunities to interact with others in a positive and mutually respectful way. Staff who work in facilities where youth play receive an orientation about the needs and interests of youth, and how to build positive adult/youth partnerships.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

When I go to public places like recreation centers (for example YMCA), the mall, the movie theatre and other businesses, I am welcomed and treated with respect.



79.4% totally/kind of  
9.1% not sure  
11.4% not really/no way man

As identified in this application, there are many organizations, groups and individuals promoting youth and the involvement of youth in the community. Youth are welcomed and invited to participate in the vast majority of activities.

To highlight a few examples:

Gallery Lambton involves Youth in many Art related activities such as volunteering for First Friday Events, the Annual Artwalk Week-end and Childrens Art Classes. Video Art Screenings are held every month after First Friday and have included may Videos by local youth.

Local Youth are also asked to perform their music for Opening Art Exhibits and have been asked to speak and participate at Gallery Lambton’s weekly Thursday evening Art & Ideas presentations.

#### Book Club

The Book Keeper, a local independent book store has established a Teen Book Club which meets on the third Thursday of the month – the theme is “Your books, your night”. In October, the book was Plain Kate-Bow, and the November book was Dark Life. Last month, the author Kat Falls skyped into the Book Keeper to discuss her book, Dark Life, with the Book Club. There are 10 people in the book club ranging in age from 11-16. Earlier in the year, the Book Keeper has a midnight release party for Mockingjay. Approximately 70 people were waiting for the book to be released, many in costume.

Jake and Luke Reaume, twin teens from Sarnia, wrote a book called the Draconeian for young adults. The Book Keeper held a book signing.

When the Community Round Table has hosted community workshops, such as the image of the community, and individual actions to improve the environment, youth are always encouraged to attend. The Community Round Table participated in a First Impressions Community Exchange with Sault Ste Marie. The Sault team commented on the positive energy of the Sarnia youth and seniors that they met in the community.

For immigrant newcomers to the community, the YMCA offers the Settlement Worker in the Schools program to support newcomer youth in secondary schools. The YMCA’s Newcomer & Immigrant Services also include language instruction, referral to services, and a HOST program which assigns a volunteer to help them adjust.

# 13. YOUTH CAN GET TO THE PLAY PROGRAMS THAT ARE OFFERED

The community has explored innovative ways to physically connect youth with play opportunities. Examples include: responsive transit systems with routes to dedicated youth play spaces, and that operate on days and times to maximize participation by youth; lighted bike paths and/or bike lanes on major roads; and mobile outreach into isolated area. Where public transit is not available, activities have been specifically located or relocated to be closer to youth and to increase access for youth.

## SURVEY RESPONSES

There are lots of safe ways for me to get to and from youth activities in Sarnia, such as good bus routes and lighted bike paths/routes.



66.3% totally/kind of  
13.3% not sure  
19% not really/no way man

## LOCATION OF PROGRAMMING

- The Dow Centre for Youth has moved into an area of the city with the highest concentration of children and youth
- Scouting Programs & other Youth Groups are located in various churches and schools within walking distance
- A number of organizations, such as Trinity Church, provide transportation to their programming

## SARNIA TRANSIT

- Sarnia has an extensive bus system across the community. The City's Transit Committee works with the schools to coordinate transportation for young people; special routes are provided to service high school students
- A semester bus pass for secondary school and College students is offered at a greatly reduced price
- The County of Lambton Community Services Department has a program that further reduces the cost of public transportation for individuals on financial assistance
- Buses have a front loading bike rack for cyclists
- Places where youth frequent such as the arenas, movie theatre, malls, YMCA, parks, schools are on bus routes
- Youth representative is on the Transit Accessibility and Advisory Committee from time to time (letter from Sarnia Transit included in documentation, also PLAY video highlighted Sarnia Transit)

## CITY SERVICES

- The City's arenas are located in different areas of the City, and are on the bus routes
- There are a series of trails throughout the community
- Survey results indicate that most young people are able to get to the activities that they are interested in

There are always opportunities to improve transportation. For example, it was noted that bike lanes would be helpful.

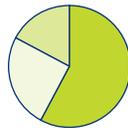


# 14. SCHOOLS SUPPORT THE YOUTH FRIENDLY APPROACH

Schools are recognized for their contribution to the community's youth friendly approach. In addition to circulating information to students on play activities, the school works with local service providers to offer opportunities for the larger community to become involved with school-based play activities and actively participates in, and has a presence at, community-based youth play events. Schools work to adjust bussing to assist in getting students to play areas and work to increase access to school facilities through the Community Use of Schools Agreement with the Ministry of Health Promotion and through reciprocal agreements with local governments.

## SURVEY RESPONSES

My school offers information on local youth events.



58.3% totally/kind of  
24.7% not sure  
16.9% not really/no way man

The schools and the teachers in Sarnia are very committed to youth, and encourage a youth friendly approach. A number of examples have already been identified. Additional examples are:

- Athletics – many of the activities that are available are listed on the following website. The website alone demonstrates how much the schools value these activities. <http://lssaa.net/>
- Artistic Endeavours - difficult to categorize because each school has a distinct offering. Some examples of these clubs are musicals, bands, choirs, visual art clubs, improvisation clubs, arts councils, talent show etc.
- SCITS offers SCITSStock each year to showcase through music, art and film, the talents of the students; for further details see <http://scits.lkdsb.net/scitsstock>
- Clubs - difficult to categorize because each school offers different activities based on interest, tradition, and staff leaders. To name a few, there are, anti-bullying clubs, chess clubs, world wide friends, school councils, student outreach to seniors, wellness clubs, teens again drunk driving, prom organizers, environment committees, etc,
- All of the programs are highly visible throughout the community and most are open to the public. Student involvement at the high school level has been a long tradition of excellence within Sarnia Lambton. It must be noted, however, that each high school has a unique tradition and focus. It should also be noted that the vast majority of these programs occur before and after school hours which, makes them true community based activities for youth.
- During Earth Week, members of the St. Patrick's High School Environment Club cleaned up the Sarnia Bay shoreline. The group organized the event to show others that all the small things add up when it comes to the environment. The students have a lot of ideas to make the city a better place to live, and are trying to make a difference themselves. ("Small acts that can change the world", Sarnia & Lambton County This Week, April 28, 2010)
- At SCITS, students held a 30 hour famine, the "30 Hour Foodless Power" to support Haiti Relief and the SCITS Breakfast program. A number of events were held to support the Haiti Relief effort (car wash, pasta dinner, guest speakers). \$3000 was raised for earthquake relief in Haiti as well as funding towards the SCITS Breakfast program. ("Students help make foodless event a success"



Letter to the Editor, Sarnia Observer, June 10, 2010)

- Vikes on Trikes fundraiser Students at the Northern Collegiate High School held a fundraiser for the Bluewater Health Children’s Ward and Community Living Sarnia-Lambton. (“Almost there!”, Sarnia Observer, May 29, 2010)
- SCITS Kraft Dinner Domino Event – SCITS students bring in Kraft Dinner to show that they care about their community – the Kraft Dinner is given to the Salvation Army for those in need. The class who brings in the most Kraft Dinner overall, has the honour of launching the dominos.
- The schools have individual websites with their own information
- Schools are available for use by the community
- Students from St. Pat’s High School worked with Habit for Humanity on a home construction project as part of a year end experiential program for students
- Some of the high schools in Sarnia have created feeder programs in the elementary schools. For example, the St. Clair Catholic District School Board offers the HOOPS program to encourage basketball in elementary school students. St. Patrick’s High School had also created a Toots program to support elementary school students in playing a musical instrument. These initiatives are designed to ensure that students are ready to either play the sport or instrument when they enter high school, however, as noted in one of the testimonials, it also makes the young person feel comfortable advancing to the next level of school because they have already met a broader range of students and have a familiarity with the high school environment.

All but one of the high schools in Sarnia have signed on for the Student nutrition program which helps students stay alert and mentally active in the classroom by ensuring that students have at least one healthy meal per day.

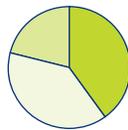


# 15. ADULTS CHAMPION THE CAUSE FOR YOUTH PLAY.

The community has many adult leaders from diverse backgrounds and positions who recognize and advocate the need for positive youth play. They publicly support youth by ensuring elected officials, police, local celebrities and media are involved in local youth events. For their part, youth regularly share their experiences of positive play with adults and at adult-led events, such as service club meetings, school board sessions, annual general meetings and professional association meetings.

## **SURVEY RESPONSES**

Adult members of society such as: elected officials, police, local celebrities, and the media, support and are involved in local youth events in Sarnia.



40.2% totally/kind of  
38.5% not sure  
21.3% not really/no way man

There are many strong champions who advocate for and work with youth in Sarnia. Many such individuals were involved in preparing this application. To provide a few examples:

## **MRS. NORMA COX**

- As noted throughout the application, Mrs. Cox is a strong advocate for youth in the community. She has established a scholarship program and has also provided funding for the Cox Youth Centre at Tecumseh Park
- Mrs. Norma Cox received the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for voluntarism. She was one of 18 individuals honoured for their exceptional leadership, innovation and creativity in community service. She has donated over \$1 million to create a major facility for young people in Tecumseh Park, she helped develop a post-secondary scholarship program for high school students involved in local charitable work. She is also a benefactor of Rebound, the Huron House Boys Home, the city's youth golf camps. Many of her projects are youth oriented. ("Sarnian recipient of prestigious award", Sarnia Observer, April 23, 2010)
- Mrs. Cox was also the recipient of a 2010 Ontario Senior Achievement Award

## **CONSTABLE MEL WRIGHT**

- was recognized by the IODE for his fifteen years of community service. Constable Wright devotes a lot of his time to helping teens. Within the Sarnia Police Services, he is involved in community service work with youth. In his volunteer time he supports the Annex Youth Centre which is across the street from Sarnia's Harry Turnbull Skateboard Park. ("IODE recognizes Sarnia officer for community contributions", Sarnia & Lambton County This Week, April 7, 2010)

## **MAYOR BRADLEY**

- The Mayor of the city is very accessible to all citizens
- Mayor Bradley met with the youth over the BMX trick area to explore solutions
- Each year, the Mayor announces his Honour List of individuals/groups who have contributed to the community; many receiving recognition are working with youth
- The Mayor recently received the first Ontario Disability Employment Network Champions League Award for promoting inclusion of people with a disability in the workplace across Ontario

This year, for the first time, Sarnia City Council will be sworn in for the 2010 to 2014 term of Council at Holy Trinity Elementary School. The Mayor and Council are sending a message to young people that they are part of the community and have a voice. Students will be involved in the ceremony, and the St. Clair Drum Corp, from St. Clair High School, will be performing.

- Sarnia Police Services invests in supporting youth in the community, officers serve as role models and champions for youth through their work in the schools
- Churches such as Trinity Church, provide support and mentor youth; the Youth Group at Trinity Church provided the prizes to encourage young people to participate in this process of designating Sarnia as a youth friendly community
- Citizens and businesses are generous in providing support for youth initiatives as identified throughout this application – through donations to the YMCA’s Celebration of Youth, or individual scholarships
- Libro Financial is a strong supporter of Harmony, the Investors Group supports the Community Assignment, Dow left a lasting legacy through funding for the Dow Centre for Youth
- Service Clubs support youth initiatives: Seaway Kiwanis supporting the BMX Bike Trail, Rotary Clubs providing financial assistance as well as opportunities for youth to participate in various initiatives

### **SARNIA**

- Mayor of Sarnia working with local youth to develop BMX bike trail in Canatara Park
- Many coaches involves with minor league sports
- Level of volunteerism is high
- Teachers commit to young people above and beyond their role at school





# 16. PLAY IS ACCESSIBLE TO YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS

Every youth in the community has the opportunity to participate in programs, if they want to. Programs are set up to specifically include youth with both physical and mental disabilities. Activities are adapted, facilities are accessible, additional assistance is onsite, and the participation of youth with disabilities/special needs is a seamless part of the program. Participating youth are part of program planning and evaluation phases.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

There are youth programs set up to specifically include youth with both physical and mental disabilities.



The City of Sarnia has a Community Services Special Needs Coordinator - Miriam Carmody, whose role is to work together with the community to provide accessible recreation programs for youth with disabilities.

Sarnia has also established a Recreation Integration Committee to enhance inclusive sport and recreation opportunities for youth with disabilities in Sarnia Lambton.

The Recreation Integration Committee develops a resource (available as a document or CD - no charge) which identifies 22 different types of leisure opportunities available for people with disabilities. The guide is available on a number of local websites (see attached). Local agencies that provide sport and recreation opportunities for youth with disabilities are always listed in the City's seasonal recreation program brochure, alongside the city's other programs. The Community Special Needs Coordinator is listed in the brochure as well.

Sport For Disabled:Lambton is a parent / volunteer driven organization that coordinates sports opportunities for youth with disabilities. This includes: sledge hockey, weight training, boccia, track and field. Sport For Disabled:Lambton has also actively partnered with the local Junior A hockey team, the Sarnia Sting to highlight Sledge Hockey and the benefits for young adults. The parent group has also championed the cause to help similar groups get started in other communities.

Ironworks Fitness, a local fitness club offer a weight training club, called: The Iron Eagles for teens and young adults. It runs every Tuesday from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. Thirty teens and young adults participate in the program.

Pathways Health Centre has developed a number of partnerships with community service providers to offer programs for youth with disabilities. They include:

- St. Clair Tae Kwon Do
- Bluewater Gymnastics

- Lawrence House
- Ironworks Fitness
- Sarnia Yacht Club
- City Of Sarnia

Pathways Health Centre offers the following teen programming:

- Friday Night Junction, which is an opportunity for teens to hang out and socialize in a supportive environment.
- Fitness Fun in the Pool, which is strength training, exercise, music and more
- Swim & Movie
- Guys only Cooking School at The Real Canadian Superstore

Tween Junction has been introduced by Pathways to serve as a feeder program to Teen Junction. The goal is to connect with preteens and their parents to prepare them early for the transition journey to adulthood.

Community Living Sarnia- Lambton offers programming such as dances, trips, and bowling for youth with developmental disabilities. The organization is also in the process of developing a new Activity Centre to house some of these programs for the population they serve, including youth. It includes a kitchen for group cooking opportunities, a gym, and a Snoezellen room.

Community Living Sarnia-Lambton offers a Summer Employment Transitions program to assist young people who have disabilities gain and maintain real summer jobs, which pay at least minimum wage. College and university students are hired as job recruiters, developers and coaches to support the young people. In 2010, 57 youth aged 16-19 completed the program. The accompanying documentation includes the 2010 Year End Summary Report and the video promoting the program.

The Consumer Survivors Association runs a drop in centre for 16+ young people with mental health problems.

In 2007, Sarnia hosted the Para-Provincial Summer Games which brought top athletes with different abilities to the community. Watching the athletes perform and compete, provided tremendous motivation and inspiration for local youth, both disabled and abled.

In April, a number of organizations (including Pathways Health Centre for Children, Community Living Sarnia and District, and St. Clair Child and Youth Services) hosted “Jump Starting the Future”, a one day conference for parents and caregivers who support people who have intellectual or physical disabilities to explore possibilities for a quality lifestyle after high school.

It should also be noted that many of the organizations who serve people with disabilities have “greyed” their service boundaries, to ensure that they are able to work closely to support the individuals they serve. The emphasis is on the individual as opposed to the program and its limitations.

**ADDITIONAL FACTORS:**

- Some of the Bowling alleys are designed to accommodate persons with disabilities.
- The Lambton Kent District School Board has an equivalent track and field session for young people with special needs
- The Tecumseh pool has a ramp for easy access for disabled youth.





# 2009 LOCAL ISSUE RESPONSE UPDATE

## BMX PARK IN SARNIA...DEMISE TO CREATION

The City of Sarnia prides itself on the high quality amenities and services that we have for our community youth. However, there is always room for improvement.

Roughly eleven (11) months ago a BMX trick area was uncovered in a quiet area of Canatara Park, a recovered landfill site. As a result, the City needed to address the unsafe conditions and the liability exposure. The City's initial reaction was to bulldoze this site and eliminate the liability and environmental issues. This reaction was not consistent with what the Community Services Department had been saying to youth at other forums. These youth, who had taken the initiative to build a BMX area which was built with hard work and creativity. The local media was made aware of the situation and reported the story. This led to an immediate reaction from the community and with the invaluable support from Mayor Mike Bradley, the BMX site was given a temporary reprieve. This allowed city officials to decide on their next steps.

The City consulted with the Lambton Riders. This was the group who constructed the initial Canatara Park BMX track. This consultation led to discussions on how to address and resolve the issue positively. Fortunately, with the media exposure of this issue, the Sarnia Kiwanis Club learned about the site and offered \$70,000 to construct a safe and designed BMX park. The site will be re-located within Canatara Park, with consideration given to a more environmentally safe area. The process to design the new track has had rider input which focus on family involvement and safety.

The City of Sarnia and the Sarnia Kiwanis Club report that positive meetings and consultations have been taking place for the last six months with the Lambton Riders. Feedback and design input have been recommended by the Lambton Riders. As a result, a design company has been hired to bring these ideas into the design of the new BMX facility which will be ready for summer 2010. This is an excellent example of how a response to eliminate a valued play activity for many youth was changed with good input for the youth. We will now have a premiere facility available to the youth and families of the Sarnia area thanks to the collaboration and dedication of the riders, city officials and a committed service club.

The new facility was officially opened this spring and is a popular spot for people of all ages. Young people are using the track, which has varying levels of difficulty to accommodate the varying levels of expertise. Adults are also enjoying the track and the skills of the youth. Students like the fact that the trail was built for them. A member of the Youth Friendly Community Committee has commented that the BMX park has created a generational dialogue where old and young BMX bikers alike are sharing and learning from each other.

# 2010 LOCAL ISSUE RESPONSE

## TEEN SUICIDES

In September of this year, the community was in shock when two teens at Northern High School committed suicide within a couple of weeks of each other. Word of the suicides spread quickly among the young adults in the community through Facebook.

The dilemma is always, whether or not to talk about the issue, potentially causing others to consider it as well.

Members of the community decided to address the issue and raise awareness about suicide. A local mother, Gabrielle Stringer, who lost her husband to suicide years ago, launched an online petition for more education and awareness in the schools. Thousands signed the petition. She also organized an information and awareness session with the support of the Community Girls Home and Mind your Mind, a London based mental health program for youth. All students who attended the awareness session received a package of brochures and information on agencies in Sarnia-Lambton.

Harmony for Youth, co-founder, Joanne Klauke-Labelle, also organized an awareness session with proceeds going towards the teen suicide prevention programs offered at Harmony.

The Sarnia Observer did a feature on suicide, noting that 5 people aged 14-22 had taken their lives in the Sarnia-Lambton area in the past seven months. A young woman, aged 18, who has been battling depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts for most of her adolescent life, told her story to the reporter. She commented that “people need to start recognizing mental illness as a disease, just as you would diabetes or cancer”. She also noted that the stigma of mental disease often prevents teens from speaking out or seeking help.

A couple of teens, Haylee Payne and Scott Butler, organized a walk and commented that, “we will raise our voices and talk about this”. The students want to put a “stop to the silence around suicide”. The purpose of the walk was to let people know that help is available. At the walk, the students also discussed bullying and the impact that social media has had on it. The young adults started a facebook page to invite walkers, 270 people had signed up. A yellow ribbon campaign was also started on Facebook to raise awareness about suicide, hundreds have signed on.

Local organizations that support youth with mental health concerns have been underfunded for years. Shortly after the suicides in the community, a forum was held at Lambton College to discuss the shortage of child and mental health services funding. A series of recommendations were made, and a Committee will be established to move forward on the recommendations.

The Sarnia-Lambton Suicide Prevention Committee is sending a group of students from each high school to a day of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training.

At a recent County Council meeting, Mayor Bradley of Sarnia raised the need for \$15,000 to St. Clair Child and Youth Services to increase their part time social worker to full time to help at risk young people. The County was prepared to put the funding forward, however the Local Health Integration Network came forward with the money.





The Lawrence House for the Performing Arts partnered with Harmony, two local schools and the Sarnia-Lambton Suicide Prevention Committee to bring a multicultural ensemble band, Ouanani, to the community. The project focused on youth, the celebration of cultural diversity, and building inner strength through the power of music. The sessions and workshops were designed to help young people build their self esteem and also to offer them hope by allowing for the dialogue. The sessions were very well received.

This issue is still under discussion. It is an extremely important subject for any community. In order for youth to be able to play, they need to feel that they are supported, are able to speak, or find help through family, friends, and the community.