



BRIEFING NOTE

United Way Toronto's youth programs — what's working best

July 23, 2012 — not for distribution

Background:

The shootings across our city this week have been tragic. Many people are asking what more needs to be done to prevent this kind of violence and give young people in our city opportunities to build a better future

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty has announced that his government will adopt a balanced approach, with both strong policing and social supports to prevent gun violence. Minister Hoskins (Children and Youth) and Minister Meilleur (Community Safety and Correctional Services) will be reviewing community and policing programs over the next 30 days, then report back with an action plan outlining further investment. United Way is one of the groups Minister Hoskins is meeting with.

Key messages:

- We support of the government's intent to take quick and thoughtful action.
- Our response needs to be a balanced one. We need to ensure that our community is safe. We also can't lose sight of what is causing violence in our city, things like growing poverty and social isolation.
- There are many programs and initiatives that are currently serving our city's young people well. Over the next 30 days we will identify the best options and share stories of success with the government as we move forward together.
- We will share what we've learned over the past several years and discuss how we will build on the foundation laid by United Way and others to ensure young people have access to the opportunities they need.
- We are looking forward to continuing the conversation with the community and the government in the days ahead.

United Way Toronto's investment in youth

Since 2003, United Way has made creating opportunities for young people a priority. Over the 2011/2012 fiscal year, we invested \$15.3M in youth — \$8.7M in member agencies and \$6.6M in time-limited initiatives like the Youth Challenge Fund and Toronto Sports Leadership Program.

In addition to those investments, we continue to support a Community of Practice on Educational Attainment Partnerships and are helping with the development of a provincial Youth Policy Framework through Ontario Youth Matter!

Our youth investments are focused on three main areas that we know contribute to young people's overall wellbeing and health:

- Increasing social and civic engagement
- Improving educational attainment outcomes
- Supporting youth economic security

United Way's Youth Impact Plan:

We're currently finalizing a Youth Impact Plan with four objectives:

- Invest strategically in evidence-informed approaches that advance program-level outcomes.
- Strengthen the capacity of the youth serving sector to achieve greater impacts.
- Influence systemic and structural change which reduces barriers and inequities.
- Promote research, evaluation and knowledge exchange.

The new plan, which we will start implementing in the fall of 2012, is built on a Positive Youth Development framework which:

- Is asset-based
- Is non-deficit based
- Sees potential in *all* youth
- Considers the environment/context

Positive Youth Development suggests that the most effective youth programs have four elements:

- Building strong relationships between youth and non-family adults
- Youth agency and decision-making
- Skill building
- High expectations

Examples of successful programs:

CITY Leaders — increasing social and civic engagement

Launched in 2008, the Creative Institute for Toronto's Young (CITY) Leaders is a six month education certificate program that offers vital leadership skill development to young professionals (aged 18-33) who are in the early stages of their careers in the non-profit sector. Some of these young people would not otherwise be able to access professional development. Every second cohort engages young people from priority neighbourhoods.

Program partners

Led by United Way, CITY Leaders partners with the 17 Learning partners including the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto, the Centre for Social Innovation, the Authentic Leadership in Action Institute, International Centre for Studies in Creativity, Laidlaw Foundation, and the Toronto City Summit Alliance. CITY Leaders is partly funded by the Youth Challenge Fund. Mentors for participants come from various organizations.

United Way dollars invested: \$1,005,860 from the Youth Challenge Fund as well as an additional \$483,723 directly from United Way donors.

Outcomes

Since its launch, CITY Leaders:

- Trained 119 young people, with 104 of those youth graduating with a certificate from United Way Toronto and the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto
- Matched 104 young people with high profile mentors from various sectors

Additional Information:

<http://www.thestar.com/parentcentral/education/article/1069759--training-a-new-kind-of-leader>

Bridge to Success — improving educational attainment outcomes

Launched in 2006, this Rexdale program helps keep students who are academically and socially at-risk engaged. It also helps them succeed in school and transition into post-secondary education. Supports include a homework club, recreational activities, parent support and financial incentives.

Program partners

Community Microskills Development Centre, North Albion Collegiate Institute (a Rexdale high school), Toronto District School Board, along with 15 community partners including Albion Library, Hinks Dellcrest, Youth Assisting Youth, Harmony Movement, Toronto Public Health, and Ryerson University.

United Way dollars invested: \$1 million in special gifts from United Way donors.

Outcomes

Since its Bridge to Success' launch:

- Over 200 students from North Albion Collegiate Institute (NACI) have participated in the program
- With attendance rates now at 95%, NACI is one of the best-attended high schools in the TDSB
- Suspensions dropped from 275 in 2005/6 to 51 in 2008/9
- 88% of participating students have gone on to post-secondary education
- The school has seen an enormous culture shift benefitting all students

Additional information — see page 26:

<http://unitedwaytoronto.com/downloads/aboutUs/AR2010/2010UWTAnnualReport.PDF>

Success Beyond Limits — Supporting youth economic security

Launched in 2008 as a response to poor youth educational attainment and engagement in Jane Finch, this initiative aims to help young people — some of them involved in the criminal justice system — successfully transition from middle school into high school and achieve their academic and social potential through educational and recreational programming. A youth-led organization, it engages young people as participants, mentors, volunteers, staff and board members. Now a year-long program run out of Westview Centennial Secondary School, it employs young people as mentors at a crucial time in their lives.

Program partners

Once funded by YCF, this initiative partners with the Toronto District School Board, York University, local residents and various community partners.

United Way dollars invested: \$387,000 from the Youth Challenge Fund since 2008, and another \$262,250 in special gifts from United Way donors.

Outcomes

Since Success Beyond Limits' launch:

- Over 1020 youth have participated in the program
- 542 TDSB credits have been granted with a 93% graduation rate.
- 145 peer mentors, senior high school students from Westview have worked as Youth Mentor, contributing 48,350 hours of youth employment, which has generated a total of \$525,710 earned.

Additional information:

<http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/article/1229826--jane-finch-summer-program-helps-grade-8-kids-and-turns-older-youth-into-mentors>