



City Insight

'Giving so others can give'

Winter 2012

Promoting Healthy Relationships and Preventing Bullying

By Jennifer Perry (Community Worker)

A little roll of the eyes, a quiet whisper to a friend, these are the things that can be more devastating than a punch to the stomach. When we think of bullying, images of fists and shoving come to mind. However, sometimes bullying can be something as subtle as a "look."

I recently started to recognize bullying behaviour among some of the girls that come to our after school *Kids In Community* (KIC) program. At that time, we had a group of girls ranging from grades 2 to 5, involved in very unhealthy group dynamics. My colleague Elita and I realized that something had to be done when almost every day we were sorting through conflicts that had arisen

Although most of the girls are still struggling with the same issues, the encouraging thing is their willingness to talk about it with us. I've also seen change happen in some of the girls' lives. We watched Lisa* who is in grade 3 choose to get out of that group and make other friends in the program. So far this year, Lisa hasn't been involved in a single conflict with the girls.

Another girl, Sarah,* who is in grade 6, had dappled in the conflicts last year. Recently, I overheard her talking to Tanya* one of our grade 4 girls who has been struggling all year, playing all roles from bully to victim, depending on the day. Sarah asked Tanya why she contin-

"What do you like about KIC (Kids In Community)?"

What helps me is that when I fight the leaders help me

amongst the girls. It started out by just taking the group outside and encouraging them to talk about whatever was the topic of the latest conflict. Half the time the problem was that they didn't even want to face the person who had hurt them directly and would rather pass messages through another mutual friend.

After proceeding a few weeks in this reactionary mode, we realized that more had to be done when the conflicts just kept coming. We began to do workshops with the girls, based on the *Bring Love in Girls* (BLING) curriculum, developed by TCM community worker, Shelby Hall. These workshops teach them about things like healthy communication, respect and forgiveness. Knowing that the heart of the issues was low self-esteem and insecurity, we encouraged the girls to spend time in the Bible, finding passages that were uplifting and helped them recognize their value in God's eyes.

ues to spend time with the other girls when they are often excluding her and hurting her on a regular basis. She advised Tanya to spend time with other friends and even offered to spend the day with her so that she wouldn't have to be alone, since the other girls were in a fight with Tanya. She also shared with Tanya how she had made a choice to not spend time with those girls this year because she recognized the problems that were going on.

Watching Sarah and Lisa has encouraged me to keep on working with these girls through all their struggles. My prayer for them is that they would discover the incredible depths of love that Christ has for them, so that they won't feel like they have to put each other down to feel better about themselves.

(To learn more about this topic come to Ignite 2012.)

IGNITE 2011—FOLLOW-UP



The Reyes—Christmas Dinner '03



Marcus and Jon at Ignite 2011



Aaron, Marcus and Jon at "The Wizard of Oz" in Dec 2011



The Reyes Family with Shelby Hall

Those who attended Ignite (TCM's newest fundraising event) last May had the privilege of witnessing how God has been at work in the lives of some of the children, youth and adults who attend TCM programs. We heard stories, songs and testimonies that brought tears to our eyes and encouraged our hearts. We followed up with two of the presenters to see what they are doing now and would like to share their stories with you.

Marcus...

The Reyes family has been a part of TCM programs for many years (see photo on the top left). The entire family has been exposed to new opportunities because of TCM. For example, Nancy, the oldest child, had the opportunity to complete a co-op placement with John Filion, Councillor for Willowdale. Marcus and Aaron also had a wonderful opportunity this December. Marcus's tutor Jon recounts the experience below:

"This past December was certainly very eventful. My student, Marcus Reyes, and his brother, Aaron, and I had the opportunity to be in a community theatre production of "The Wizard of Oz". This was a humorous answer to a micro-prayer I made one day about a year ago as I was sitting in the audience of a Mirvish production of "Wicked." I was watching the chorus members in action and I prayed "God, that looks fun!"

Samantha...

Q: How long have you been attending programs with TCM?

A: I have been with TCM for 6 years. Two years as a kid in KIC, 2 years in Junior High, and 3 years in Senior High. I have also been a TLC (Teens Leading Communities) for 4 years and been in the tutoring program for 6 years.

I saw God's Sovereign hand on this entire process. Especially when our director, Sarina Condello, gave Marcus and I the opportunity to sing a song at the show's conclusion. Having prepared a song for Toronto City Mission's Christmas dinner (an event which we sadly missed because of the dress rehearsal) the decision was easy. We would sing Chris Tomlin's version of "Amazing Grace, My Chains are Gone." When I sheepishly told Sarina, self-described as "unreligious," that the song would be related to our faith, she agreed!

As a result, Marcus and I were able to sing our thanks and praises to God in a theatre filled with people from various walks of life. I marvel at the way God causes circumstances to arise in our lives in unimaginable ways. God be praised!"

Q: What are some of your responsibilities as TLC?

A: As a TLC I usually pick up the kids from their school. I lead the children in a variety of games and activities. I tutor the children and help them with their homework. I also assist with their Bible study and worship time.

Q: How has being a TLC benefited you?

A: Being a TLC has benefited me in many ways. I have gained invaluable leadership skills and learned so many things. I have had the privilege of meeting great leaders like Elliott, Elita, and Jenn and have been able to develop a relationship with God.

Q: What is this mentoring program you have been accepted to?

A: I was recently accepted into the 2011/2012 University of Toronto's Faculty of Arts and Science Mentorship program. This program is designed for Grade 11 and 12 students to assist a university professors with their research.

Q: What will you do in this program?

A: I was selected to study English Literature and pop culture. This specific program studies modern young adult novels and modern reading technologies, which are topics I am really interested in. We are also studying the Twilight Saga and the Harry Potter series and their film adaptations.

Q: What are your hopes for the future?

A: I hope to go to university and get my MBA. I hope to become a very successful business person, maybe even the CEO of a company. I also hope to remain connected with TCM and volunteer as much as I can.



Samantha at Day Camp 2009



Samantha at Family Camp 2011

Save The Date

Toronto City Mission presents **Ignite**

Tuesday, April 17, 2012 from 7:00-9:00pm

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Debra Pepler

Professor of Psychology at York University & Scientific Co-Director of PREVNet)

On The Park Events & Conference Centre

1095 Leslie Street, Toronto, Ontario

R.S.V.P. Dorothy Wong 416-922-6223

dwong@torontocitymission.com



Dr. Debra Pepler's major research program examines the anti social behaviour of children and adolescents, particularly in the school and peer contexts. Her current research in this area examines aggression and victimization among adolescents. Dr. Pepler has served on several advisory committees related to parenting, anti social behaviour, and safe school policies, within Canada and internationally.



Samantha and Elita at Ignite



Perspectives

by Andrew Schell (Executive Director)

Dear Friends,

This Christmas I was struck anew by the generosity of others! I was blessed to witness churches and individuals rallying together to support the families that we minister to throughout the year.

Some examples of this spirit of generosity are...

- Stone Church raised \$5,500 towards Adopt-a-Family and when they discovered that we were not meeting our goals they rallied together to raise an additional \$700.
- St. Paul's on Bloor worked together with St. Clements school and a local business to put together 25 gift packages including cookies and a board game. St. Paul's also collected stocking stuffers for our families.
- One of the families we serve in Malvern, who received gifts cards from TCM as one of our "adopted" families, then shared her cards with neighbours who were experiencing financial difficulties.
- A new donor called us suddenly before Christmas and, after assurances that any gift would go directly to families in need, paid for all the family games that were distributed in St. James Town.

Jesus' command to 'love our neighbours as ourselves' is intended to benefit both parties. One party feels cared for and loved while the other feels the impact of sharing that love. Generosity is therapeutic, it's contagious, and it's relationship building. Most of all, when expressed as a gift of love, it is closest to discovering the nature of God.

Thank you for partnering with TCM so that the families we serve benefit and experience God's love through your generosity.

Faithfully Yours,

Andrew Schell (Executive Director)

Coming up...



Date: Friday February 17, 2012

Time: Registration - 6:15 pm;

Tournament begins at 7:00 pm

Location: Beach Blast (15 Leswyn Rd, Toronto)

Cost: Each team needs to raise \$700.

Deadline: January 27, 2012

To Register: contact Dorothy at 416-922-6223 or
dwong@torontocitymission.com

Published by:



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