

St. James Town Festival 2014

Final Report

1. Executive Summary

The St. James Town Festival is an annual event put on by the St James Town Service Providers' Network, community members, and businesses. The event took place inside the Wellesley Community Centre, on its green space, at the St James Town Community Corner and on the green space in front of 200 Wellesley. Detailed in this document is the inscription of how this event came to be and recommendations for the future.

Background/Introduction

The SJT Festival has been celebrated in the community for decades, pioneered by the safety committee: a group of community activists and volunteers, headed by Gene Lara, and was first held in 2005. It is an event that brings together service providers, business vendors, and community members. The annual St. James Town Festival celebrates our richly diverse community and helps residents connect and engage with one another and with the neighbourhood.

With the passing of Gene Lara and due to various factors, the SJT Festival was not celebrated in 2011 and 2012. The St. James Town Service Providers Network (SJTSPN) discussed the importance of bringing the festival back to the community. In 2013, with a short time period of 45 days, the SJT festival was celebrated once again. This year, planning started 3 months in advance with an intent to engage the community of residents and service providers, and develop processes and systems for future events. St. James Town is home to approximately 19,000 people and is one of the two highest density neighbourhoods in Canada. Its' diverse and multicultural touch has inspired the description of St. James Town as a **“world within a block”**. Hence, **“A World Within a Block”** was put forward as the name of the SJT Festival.

2. Planning & Collaboration

Collaboration:

In June, 2014, the SJTSPN made a formal announcement that the SJT Festival planning committee was starting to plan this year's festivities. The Planning Committee also discussed an idea to partner with the Cabbage Town Festival, in order to increase our reach and reinforce connections between the Cabbage Town and St James Town communities (which already intermingle). As the planning continued, further collaborations were created through the joining of Urban Flair and a strengthened partnership between the St James Town Community Corner and Wellesley Community Centre, in bringing this festival to fruition.

Cabbage Town Festival:

As planning carried on, coordinators of the St James Town festival met with the Cabbage Town BIA to discuss the partnership. Certain elements of collaboration were not realized, such as a shared festival route, joint flyers for outreach, and shared performances. However, the SJT Festival was able to host a booth at the Cabbage Town festival in order to advertise the former's event.

Urban Flair:

In the past, Urban Flair had hosted a separate event in the SJT community. This year, Urban Flair joined the SJT Festival by hosting their talent show in the last two hours of the SJT festival. Urban Flair developed their unique flyers and coordinated their performances and maintained ongoing communication with the SJT festival planning committee. Amongst other items, major contributions from Urban Flair included the donation of the stage, activities and volunteers at the festival.

Planning:

From June-September, bi-monthly meetings were held by the planning committee in order to develop the SJT Festival. Attendance and representation varied at each meeting, but planning continued remotely. The core of the planning committee consisted of:

Nivedita Balachandran	SHC
Maria Sumreen	SJTCC (Volunteer)
Yogarajah Chelladurai	Resident
Gouri Mukerjea	Culture Link
Michael Cavanaugh	St James Town Arts/Community Matters
Ravi Subramaniam	Thornccliffe Neighbourhood Office
Tamer Ibrahim	UforChange
Diana Mavunduse	Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Services
Rasathy Yogarajah	Resident
Kurt Aydiner	SJTCC
Edwin Huang	CNH
Jeanie Son	YSM
Gajanee	Youth Council/Resident
Koushi	Youth Council/Resident
Nassim Vahidi	WHIWH
Cathie Jones	Rosar Morrison
Bhim Rana	WCC
Laheeb	SJTCC
Amal Khanafani	Resident

3. Awards and Volunteer Recognition

The St James Town Festival started a new initiative in 2014- The SJT Community Awards. These awards were created in order to recognize exceptional contributions by community members and groups that have resulted in creating positive changes in the St James Town community.

Calls for nominations were open for two weeks (Aug 12-Aug 25), with nominations being accepted electronically (emailed to sjtfestival@stjamestown.org) and in hard copy (drop box at St James Town Community Corner). A selection committee consisting of 2 SPN staff and 3 community members made the final selections.

A total of 33 nominations were received.

The selection committee met on August 27th 2014 and reviewed all the nominations by rating them according to their contributions, activities and time devoted to the community

A total of 8 awards and 2 scholarships were given to the following recipients:

2014 SJT Change Makers:

- Amal Kanafani: Newcomer Category
- Shaheen Kauser: Women's Category
- Sneha Adhikari: Youth Category
- Yogarajah Chelladurai: Senior's Category
- David Garcia: LGBTQ Category
- Mehdiya Hassan: \$500 Scholarship- Outstanding Creative Leadership
- Mounhizha Zannullah: \$500 Scholarship- Outstanding Community Engagement and Leadership
- Smart Development St James Town: SJT Advocate Award
- Youth Council: Grassroots Organization Category
- Wellesley Parliament Square: Big Business Category

Recipients were presented with an award on the day of the festival. A communal plaque was also made with the recipients from each year engraved. This plaque will be displayed in a community space, visible to residents of St James Town.



Recommendations: *Following the selection process, the committee made the following recommendations for future awards:*

- *Nominees should include their activities/accomplishments on the nomination form as the person nominating may not know the extent of the nominee's contributions*
- *Explore new categories: Men's category, and a Family category- for SJT families contributing collectively*
- *The timeframe for nominations shall be longer and start at least 8 weeks before the selection process.*
- *The scholarships can be split into four parts (\$250 each) instead of two individuals. This way, more youth will be encouraged*
- *Outreach and awareness of the awards should be spread throughout the year.*

Awards committee should start the planning 3-4 months before the festival (with strong outreach regarding calls for nominations starting 4 months before the festival)

4. Outreach and Community Engagement Process

The event was promoted through several means. Word of mouth, online and social media, and other traditional outreach methods were utilized to reach out to a larger audience. Posters were placed in the buildings on message boards, public dashboards in the community, in businesses, and areas allocated for posters in St. James Town.

- Over 2000+ A4 and half page sized flyers have been distributed in the community.
- 250 posters (12x18”) were published and distributed
- A media release was sent to different local newspapers such as, Toronto Sun, Inside Toronto, Toronto Star, Global & Mail, CP24, CTV, and local community based newspapers. The media release was also translated into Farsi, Urdu, Chinese, Tamil, Nepalese and Arabic.

The festival was also promoted by outreaching at other events:

- August 6th, MPP Glen Murray Community BBQ
- August 10th Sunday in the Regent Park
- August 11th at Ryerson (to recruit volunteers)
- August 17th, Himalayan Mela (annual Nepalese Festival)
- August 31st, Open Streets Toronto



***Recommendations:** Resident engagement should be done throughout the year and should be active/participatory in nature (e.g.: friendly sports competitions leading up to the final teams competing at the festival, artwork created and displayed throughout the community before the festival, flash mob style practices culminating in a flash mob at the festival, SPN led trivia contests with prizes given at festival, building vs. building competitions, scavenger hunt throughout the community with clues to festival activities/organizations in the SPN, art crawl through St James Town, outreach at Open Streets Toronto, engage students at the local schools through a poster designing competition). Residents should also be actively recruited to be members of the planning committee, with a resident and SPN staff member collectively coordinating the festival sub-sections.*

5. Resource Contribution/Budget

Enclosed is a breakdown of the 2014 Festival Budget:

Budget	
Reserve (2013)	\$3500
Donations	\$5075.00
Expenses	\$ 6183.53
Difference	\$2391.47

The festival received many in-kind contributions. Some notable ones included:

- **Yonge Street Mission:** Stage (\$2000), printing of flyers/pamphlets
- **Hospice:** complimentary therapy, printing of flyers/pamphlets
- **TCHC:** Equipment (tables/chairs), BBQ, hot dogs, buns
- **Wellesley Community Centre:** Space, Staffing, equipment (tables/chairs)

Monetary contributions were received from the following agencies:

Donations	
Choice Catering	\$150
City Hope	\$250
CNH	\$250
Community Resource Connections of Toronto	\$250
Dixon Hall	\$250
Domino's Pizza	\$150
face furniture	\$50
Hear Right Ontario	\$250
Hinks Dellcrest	\$250
Ms. Sherine El-Zeinab/Mr Khalid Alshakergi	\$150
Nettleship hardware	\$25
Progress Place	\$250
Sherbourne Health Centre	\$250
Silayan Group	\$150
St James' Cemetary & Crematorium	\$200
TNO	\$250
Toronto City Mission	\$250
Toronto Humane Society	\$250
Toronto Public Library	\$150
w78 optics and orthotics	\$150
WHIWH	\$250
Woodgreen Community Services	\$150
Xiamen Newsound Technology	\$250
Y4Change	\$250 ** (notealized)
Youth Employment Services	\$250
	\$5075

A reserve of \$2299.40 is with Sherbourne Health Centre

In-kind donations were also received through staff and community member contributions. Some staff and community members went above and beyond in the planning and implementation of the festival:

- **Amal Khanafani** (Resident)- business vendor/donation recruitment

2014 expenses as outlined:

Expense Item	\$
jumping caste	\$634.59
art supplies	\$92.26
tshirts	\$450
banner	\$82.49
poster/logo printing	\$15.98
awards	\$365.9
statue transport	\$200
Volunteer food (day of)	\$74.08
festival survey	\$11.99
susha	\$200
native	\$550
button maker	\$629.93
flyers	\$250
scholarships	\$1000
Break Dancing	\$500
native women (Drum)	\$400
Visual Arts (pharaoh)	\$60
standing banners	\$516
Volunteer appreciation	\$242.38
	\$6275.60

- **Gajanee Sivapatham** (Resident)- youth coordination
- **Koushi** (Resident)- youth coordination
- **Rasathy Yogarajah**(Resident)- performance and activity recruitment
- **Shaheen Kauser** (Resident)- food vendor recruitment
- **Yogarajah Chelladurai** (Resident)- performance and activity recruitment
- **Maria Samreen** (SJTCC- Volunteer) – Volunteer Coordination
- **Bhim Rana** (Wellesley Community Centre)- Permit and space/equipment allocation
- **Cathie Jones** (Rosar Morrison)- business vendor/donation recruitment,
- **Gouri Mukerjee** (Culture Link)- performance coordination
- **Kurt Aydiner** (SJTCC)- equipment, organization/business recruitment
- **Laheeb** (SJTCC)- Event planner
- **Michael Cavanaugh** (St James Town Arts/Community Matters)- art coordination
- **Nassim Vahidi** (Women’s Health In Women’s Hands)- performance organization,
- **Nivedita** (Sherbourne Health Centre)- Event planner
- **Ravi Subramaniam** (Thornccliffe Neighbourhood Office)- permit and overall support
- **Sabri** (Thornccliffe Neighbourhood Office)- performance organization,
- **Tamer Ibrahim** (UforChange)- stage and sound system set up, MC for the day

6. Festival Day Logistics

Performances:

This year’s festival featured 27 performances from various cultures/ethnic groups, for example: Hula performance, native drumming, classical indian dancing and singing, Chinese dancing and singing, dances from the Silayan cultural group, break dancing, Nepali dancing, Bengali singing. Truly, the performances represented the St James Town community, and the festival theme: “A World Within a Block”.

Due to stage setup and testing, the performance schedule was delayed by one hour (slated to start at 10am, the performance schedule started at 11am). Despite the delay, the performances concluded at 6:30pm (with Urban Flair from 5-6:30pm). Challenges included performances arriving late/too early. Despite a detailed performance schedule, performers went on as groups arrived.



***Recommendations:** Performers should have one point-person and this person’s contact information should be given to the SPN staff member coordinating performances. .*

Volunteer Coordination:

Volunteers were recruited through schools, universities and registered using an online questionnaire (via Survey Monkey). Three volunteer orientation sessions were also held leading up to the festival day. The following is a breakdown of volunteers:

- Ryerson University 35 registered, 5 showed up, University of Toronto 15 registered, 20 showed up (5 with reference), George Brown 8 registered, 7 showed up, Seneca College

5 registered and no one showed up. High school 10 registered, 8 showed up. 8 Volunteers from Urban Flair and 2-3 volunteers from St James Town through Amal (resident).

Volunteers received pizza from Dominos, T-shirts, buttons, and breakfast.

Following the festival, volunteers were invited for an appreciation day. 55 volunteers attended and were provided with dinner, and a certificate of appreciation.



Recommendations: Volunteers should be given clear roles and responsibilities tailored to the tasks they are doing. All volunteers should be given the performance and activity schedule and festival map weeks before the event.

Activities

Activities at the festival were diverse in scope. The stage (and MC) also functioned as a way to promote different festival activities that were happening throughout the day. The following is a list of activities at the festival:

Sports Competitions

- Ping Pong
- Soccer
- Chess
- Dominos
- Scrabble
- Bean Bag Toss

Arts

- Community Mural
- Flower Pot Painting
- Pharaoh Art Display
- Community Art display
- Mural Tours
- Interactive collage on “Home”

Kid’s Activities

- Coloring Books
- Jumping Castle
- Button Making
- Kid’s Quiz
- Face Painting

Others/Miscellaneous

- Zumba
- Dance Workshop
- Wool Puppet Making
- Hair Cuts
- Massage Therapy
- Henna



Recommendations: Greater awareness of activities can be generated by clear signs pointing to the information booths, announcements throughout the day, and volunteers informing residents of the activities available.

Agency tables:

Members of the SJTSPN were invited to host a table at the event. In addition, Hear Right Ontario, Native Women Resource Centre, Community Café, St James Town Ars, Toronto Humane Society, Silayan Group, Woodgreen Community Services, Toronto Public Library and MPP Glen Murray also had display tables at the event. A new initiative this year was a theme based tent called the health and wellness tent. This theme based tent featured a variety of resources and was staffed by various agencies offering health services.



Recommendations: Next year's festival can feature more theme-based tents that reflect the SPN's committees and SJT community (e.g. youth corner, senior's section, newcomer tent, etc)

Vendors: Local community vendors were invited to share their goods with the community. The following list outlines what was available

S. No	Names	Items
1.	Kamlesh	Dhokla, Aloo Vanda
2.	Brishna	Afghani Rice, Salad Tandoori Chicken,
4.	<u>Shaheen</u>	Chicken Biryani
5.	<u>Shahnaz</u>	Samosa Chicken, Vegetable
6.	Shazia	Chicken Biryani
7.	Humaira	Chicken Chana, Nan Mix Vegetable
8.	Nasreen	Fruit Carving
9.	Ben Ferrer- Silayan	Cookies, Soft Drinks
10.	Josphine- Community Cafe	Fresh Vegetables, vegan foods
11.	Vickie Rennie	Hamburgers

Other Vendors

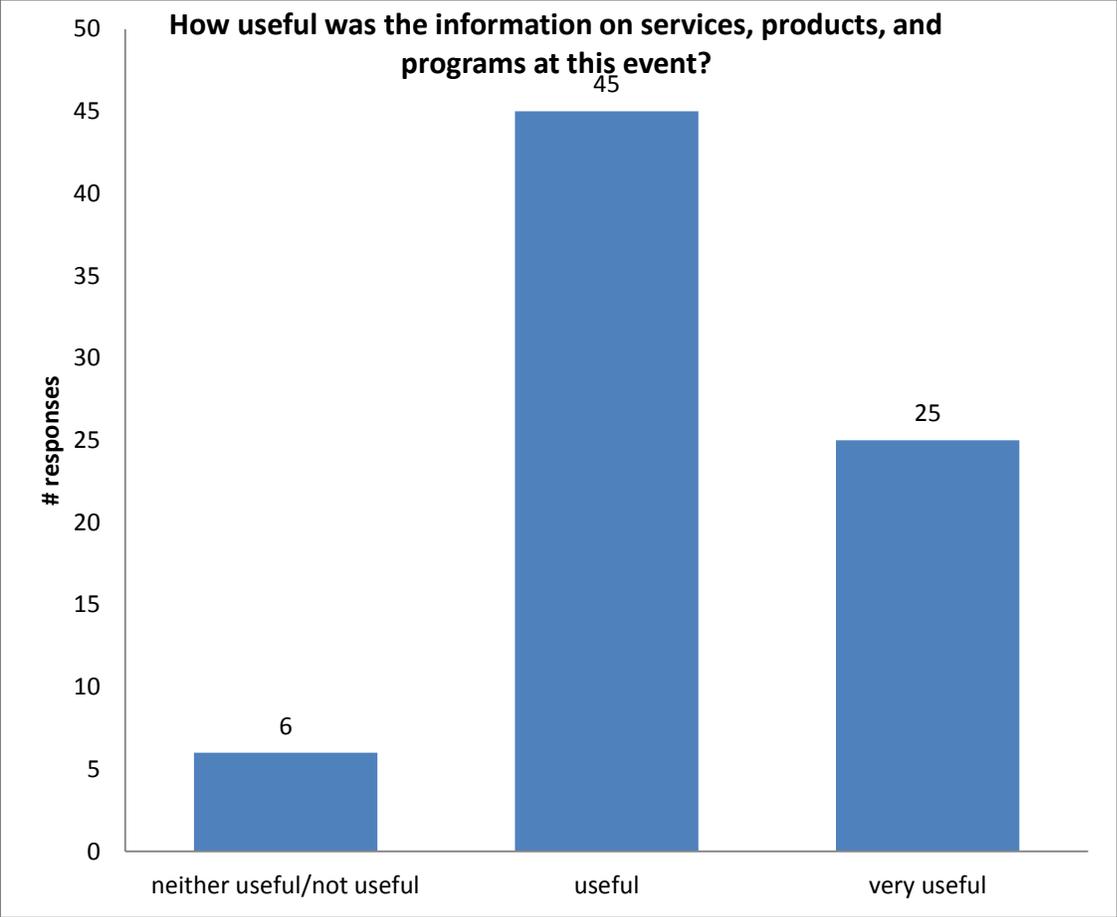
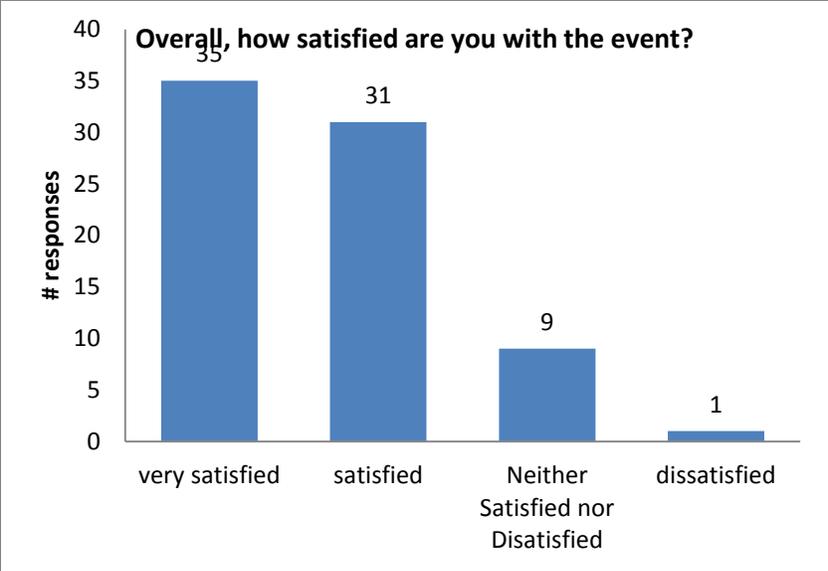
S. No	Names	Items
1.	Shamim	Hair Cut
2.	Nasreen	Henna
3.	Mar Mar	Hand Made Jewelry
4.	Elizebeth Rexlo	Hand Knitted Baby Stuff

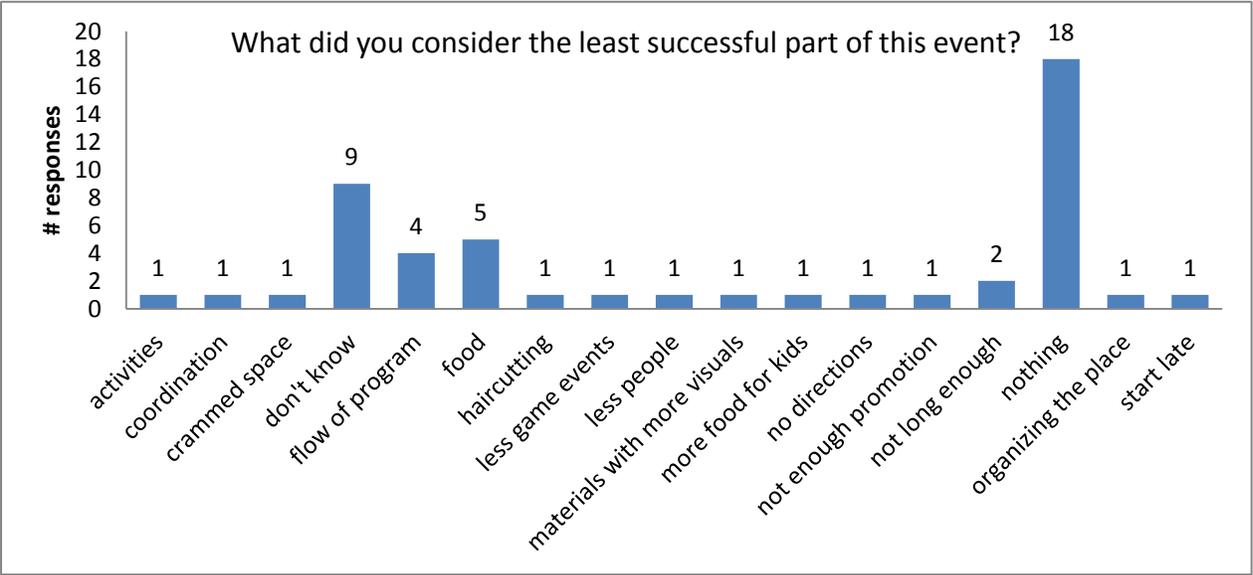
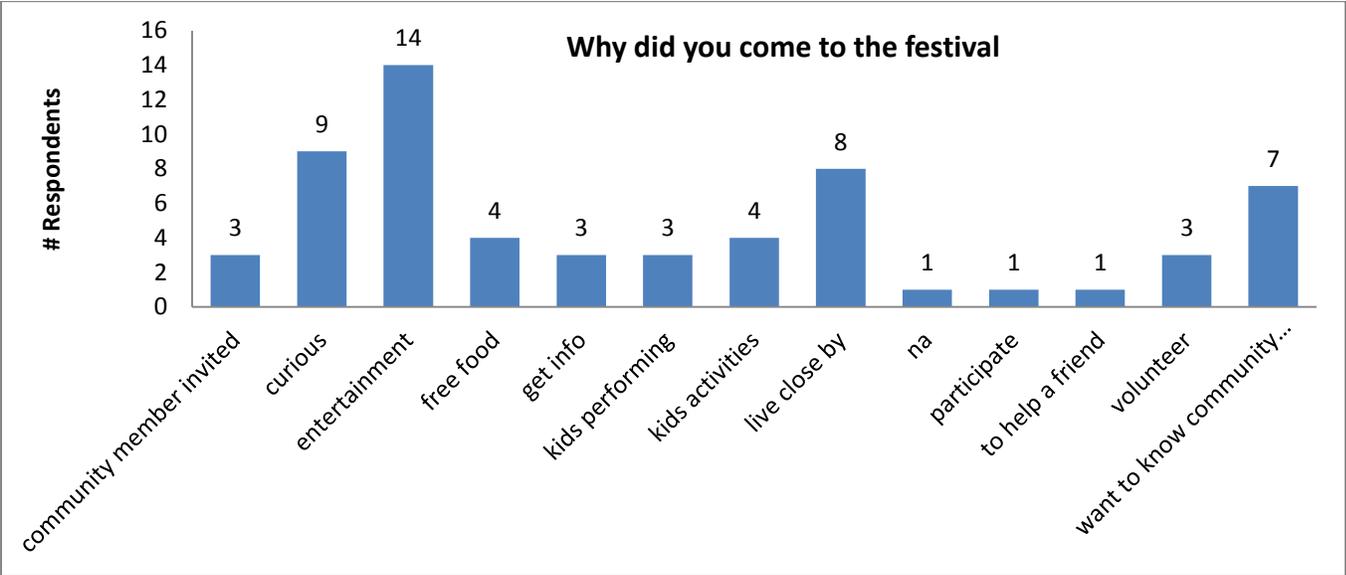
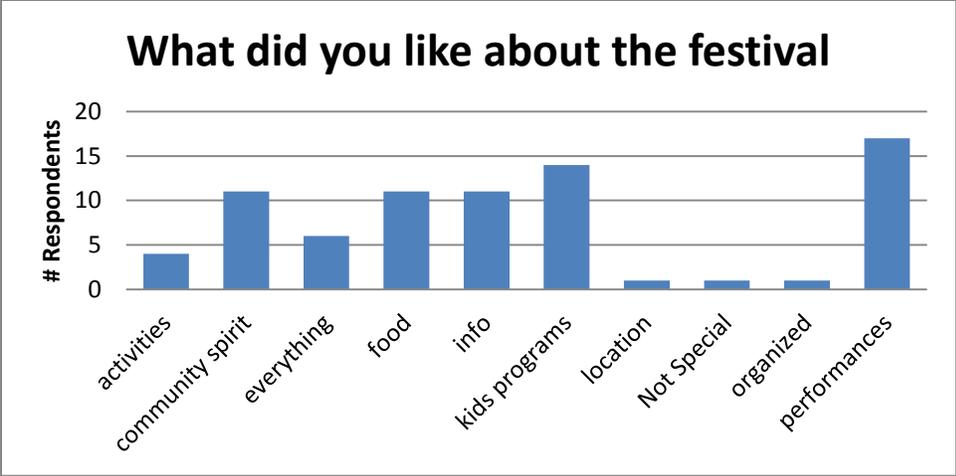
TCHC also offered free hot dogs and the use of their BBQ machine. However, a lack of coordination of the bbq resulted in the festival not offering this option. Community members did take the hot dogs and buns as free giveaways.



Recommendations: Food vendors should have a collective meeting a month before the festival to coordinate what will be available at the festival. The food available at the festival should also reflect the cultural diversity of the SJT community. TPH health inspectors also need to be contacted 3 months before the festival to ensure protocols are followed.

Survey: 79 surveys were administered- 23 electronically and 56 hard copies completed. Three intake workers and one staff (Jalajah from CRCT) assisted participants with completing the surveys. Surveys were offered to participants by Intake workers who walked around the festival with hard copies and/or with iPads (so people could fill them out electronically), and were available at the Health and Wellness tent. The following is a summary of the survey responses:





6. Evaluation Meeting

The Planning committee held a debrief meeting on September 26th, 2014 where members discussed the festival's successes and

7. Archiving:

Communications and documents created for the festival exist electronically through the email address sjtfestival@stjamestown.org. Hard copies are in a folder at the St James Town Community Corner. Online shared file systems (google docs) were used to share the development of an activities list, business/food vendors, and organization/business donations. Equipment such as banners, display boards etc. are in the basement of TCHC.

8. Next Year's planning

The planning for next year's festival (September 2015) can begin now, with meetings by agency leads occurring every other month for 6 months (October-March). Meetings can escalate to every month for 3 months (March-May) and a meeting every other week from (May-September).

The collaboration with Cabbage Town festival can be reviewed and planning can begin in October, 2014.

9. General Lessons learned:

- SJTSPN Agency leads should be assigned to take a coordination role in each of the following areas:
 - Business/vendor recruitment
 - Performances
 - Activities
 - Outreach
 - Volunteer recruitment/organization
 - Organization recruitment
 - Equipment recruitment and tracking
 - Food vendors
 - Permit applications
 - Budgeting
 - Overall operations/logistics

Community members should be contacted and encouraged to work alongside agency leads in each of these areas

- Requests for city resources (EMS, Fire Trucks, Police, Permits, TPH Health Inspectors) should be initiated 3 months before the festival