

**A World Within a Block.**



## **Annual Report 2018 – 2019**

**St. James Town Community Corner**



## Message from the Steering Committee

This year the Steering Committee of the St. James Town Community Corner reflects on the many initiatives that we undertook to support the St. James Town (SJT) neighbourhood. Consistent with key objectives of the Strategic Plan of the SJT Service Providers' Network, the Community Corner advanced several projects that strengthened neighbourhood communications, resources, leadership and opportunities for civic engagement.

Neighbourhood demographics continue to shift due to the growth of new property developments and higher income residents at the same time that aging infrastructure in older buildings caused temporary and long term displacement of residents from their homes. In the midst of these changes the Community Corner, in partnership with residents, service providers and funders remains an innovative constant of health, social services and resident driven programming to people who call St. James Town home.

Specifically, in response to the fire at 650 Parliament, the Community Corner worked with several partners including The Red Cross, the City of Toronto and Community Matters to coordinate assistance to people affected by displacement. In addition, we responded to the temporary electricity and water outages in other buildings by coordinating an effective response for resident supports and communication with landlords. A Resident/Landlord Council was subsequently developed to provide leadership to address improved communication and prevention strategies in the future.

Last year we engaged residents in improving neighbourhood "green" space. Consistent with our efforts to support environmental initiatives, with funding from the City of Toronto, we launched the City's first Share and Reuse space in St. James Town. The Corner@240 is located in its own refurbished space and focuses on the 3 R's of recycling: Reduce, Reuse and Repair.

**Opposite: The Corner@240 refurbished space**



Other services and events that you will read about in the following pages include senior’s programming, improved access to health care for newcomers, Restorative Justice Youth Mentorship program in partnership with Peacebuilders Canada, a celebration of Black History Month, International Women’s Day and Mental Health Day in partnership with Health Access St. James Town.

As the winds of politics change so too do some of our more ambitious objectives around the development of a broader community vision for the well-being of St. James Town. Funding received last year for a Collective Impact initiative was cancelled. This has forced the multiple stakeholders engaged in this work to rethink our approach but not to retreat from the overall objectives of this project. We are committed to continue to work together to realize a vision for a healthy neighbourhood where people feel proud to live and call home.

Our annual Spring Gathering and St. James Town Festival provide us with the opportunity to communicate what we have been doing over the past year and to invite feedback from residents and partners. We were pleased to present scholarships to SJT youth who will be attending post-secondary studies, as well as awards to individuals to recognize their leadership as SJT change-makers.

The Steering Committee wishes to thank the many individuals, staff, volunteers and partners who have contributed to the success of the Community Corner. This success is only made possible by our dedicated staff who consistently bring compassion and professional know how to their work. We are inspired by the possibilities that can be generated by what is best described in the African proverb of “What we can’t do alone, we can do together”.

**Shirley Roberts**  
Coordinator  
Steering Committee

- **2018-2019 STATS**
- Number of new intake: **1 633**
- Number of client encounters: **19 188**
- Program participation: **8 661**
- Residents connected through Outreach: **2 902**
- Total units of service: **38 527**
- Avg number of programs: **24** /month
- Avg number of service partners: **18**
- Number of placement students **5**
- Number of volunteers **42**
- Placement students hours: **1 304**
- Volunteer hours: **2 037**



Left: A resident casting a mock vote at a Vote Pop-up event. Right: Resident participants during a Vote Pop-up event

**SJT SCHOLARSHIPS 2018:**

- 1. SJT Scholarship: **CREATIVE ARTS**  
Naqeebullah Barak
- 2. SJT Scholarship: **CREATIVE ARTS**  
Rachel Reesor
- 3. SJT Scholarship: **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**  
Fawwaz Sherefa

- **Service Providers’ Network Develops Strategic Plan**
- The St. James Town Service Providers’ Network undertook a collaborative planning session, key informant interviews, and a review of community engagement feedback to develop its Strategic Plan, which will guide SJTSPN activities over the next few years.
- **THE KEY PILLARS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN INCLUDE:**
- 1) Strengthening Communications, Resources & Leadership: supporting existing and new subcommittees, developing and strengthening communications platforms and identify resources to help further the work of the network and the community, etc.
- 2) Focus on Neighbourhood Level work through the engagement of diverse partners (e.g. non-profit, business, landlord, City, educational institutions, etc)
- 3) Population based activities: such as programming and supports for youth, seniors
- 4) Community Engagement and Advocacy: Strive for innovative and creative way to engage residents, support the development of a resident committee
- The SJTSPN will now work along with residents and other stakeholders to develop plans and work towards these goals.





Residents along with The Corner staff and representatives of the St. James Town Service Providers' Network, submitting the petition to designate St. James Town as a Neighbourhood Improvement area at the City Councillor's office

### Petition to Designate St. James Town as a Neighborhood Improvement Area

In March 2014, the City of Toronto identified and designated 31 neighbourhoods (out of a possible 140) as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) under the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 (TSNS2020). Based on various indicators of socio-economic need, NIAs are given priority status on public and private funding towards community development and sustainability.

St. James Town is not currently designated as a NIA, but a resident-led petition requesting the City to review its designation has been approved by the City Council. The review process is expected to take about a year. It is hoped that, after a decade of austerity, this extra funding will help to expand and improve a nexus of services which will give St James Town a much needed boost.

### SJT FESTIVAL AWARD WINNERS 2018

- 1. SJT Change Makers: **YOUTH**  
Randolphe Milne
- 2. SJT Change Maker: **SENIOR**  
Pearah Begum
- 3. SJT Change Maker: **NEWCOMER**  
Deeksha Gupta
- 4. SJT Change Maker: **WOMEN**  
Nusrat Reshamwala
- 5. SJT Change Maker: **MEN**  
Len Chimiente
- 6. SJT Group Award: **SMALL BUSINESS**  
Kumar Maddi



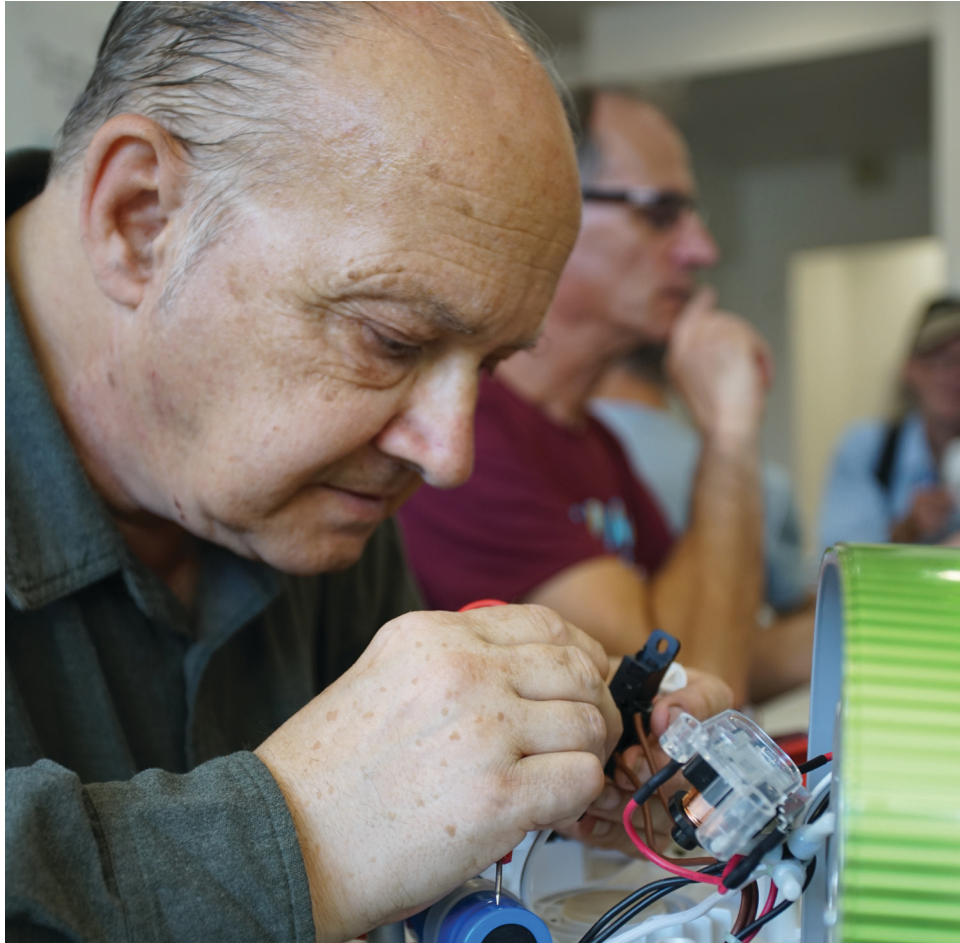
Residents, volunteers and organisers at the 'Back to School Donation Drive' for 650 Parliament street residents

### Back to School Clothing Drive for 650 Parliament Residents

After the devastating fire in 650 Parliament on the 21st of August 2018 which displaced approximately 1500 people from the high-rise block, many families have been struggling to buy their children school supplies for the new school semester. The Corner and Community Matters organized a 'Back to School' Clothing drive for Kids of 650 Parliament; they gathered donations in the form of new clothes, shoes, bags, school supplies, and gift cards.

With more than 35 volunteers from the community, including those from Trinity Church and The City staff, a three-day collection drive was conducted from the 29th to the 31st of August. The collected items were distributed to about 125 families, serving 221 children/youth on the 1st and 2nd of September. Apart from clothing and other essential items, the effort also mobilized gift cards worth a total of \$18,275 which were then distributed among 299 units of 650 Parliament. The initiative was a great example of the community rallying together to show their support and commitment to each other.





Volunteer fixer during a repair forum at The Corner@240

### Share and Reuse Space: The Corner@240

The Corner is venturing into a unique and innovative idea to provide residents with opportunities and avenues to make more sustainable and greener choices. The City’s first Share and Reuse Space will be launched at 240 Wellesley Street in St. James Town. The initiative is funded by The City of Toronto under their Community Reduce Reuse Project.

By tackling global climate issues at a local level, the space will focus on 3Rs – Reduce, Reuse and Repair. The primary focus of The Corner@240 is to help residents repair, reuse and repurpose items to prolong their life, hence saving money, effort and resources. The space will also feature a ‘Library of Things’ where residents can borrow items such as tools, kitchen equipment, party equipment, sports and camping equipment and board games for a stipulated period of time. We hope that by building an environment of sharing and trust, we can destigmatize the neighbourhood’s criminalized stereotype whilst simultaneously enhancing social connections within the community.



Peacebuilders Canada  
2018-2019 Annual Report

The initiative will also feature skill and capacity building for residents, enabling them to start their own income building initiatives. We are looking forward to collaborating with ‘Repair Café’, a grassroots volunteer organization that facilitates repair workshops and teaches key repair skills. Under the overarching umbrella of local sustainability, we hope this space will bring people together in new, innovative and unexpected ways.

### In Partnership with Peacebuilders Canada

On the 8th of February 2019, The Corner signed an Memorandum of Understanding with Peacebuilders Canada for the Peacebuilders Restorative Justice Youth Mentorship Program. This agreement highlighted the convergence of will and demonstrated that an on-going partnership will be built. As a result of the cooperation, The Youth Mentorship program was created at The Corner as an extension of the RYC (Restorative Youth Circles) program that is operated within the Restorative Justice (RJ) Program at Peacebuilders. Implemented by Peacebuilders Canada’s Youth Mentorship Coordinator, the purpose is to ensure youth have extended access to on-going mentorship and support upon completion of the RYC program.





**TOP:**

Residents discussing emerging issues and trends in the neighbourhood at the Spring Gathering 2019

**BOTTOM:**

A Popcorn stall at the SJT festival



# Celebrating the Community

**SPRING GATHERING**

On March 22nd 2019, more than 250 residents took part in the recent St. James Town Annual Spring Gathering. The event was a huge success, with the participants including residents, Community Ambassadors, volunteers and service providers. The theme for our 2019 Spring Gathering was “Resident Leadership and Collaboration”. The event began with Mihlikah, the founding member of Red Slam, an Indigenous Art 4 Social Change Movement, who engaged the audience with a land acknowledgement, reminding us of the importance in acknowledging how Canada’s past is continuing to unfairly impact Indigenous peoples today. SJTSPN Co-Chairs Sehr Athar and Robb Johannes then spoke about a neighbourhood petition to designate St. James Town as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area (NIA) under The City’s Strong Neighbourhood Strategy 2020. This would allow St. James Town to access funds and supports for community engagement and improvement. Health Access St. James Town, The Corner, and residents presented the neighbourhood’s response to crisis, laying out future plans for coordinated crisis response strategies that include the City and local neighbourhood organizations and residents. Linda Jackson, Executive Director of St. Michael’s Family Health Teams, presented awards to residents and other stakeholders for their exceptional service to the community. Residents then discussed and brainstormed the key issues in the neighbourhood and what can be done to address these. There were 5 topics that were discussed:

- A Neighbourhood Association to address community initiatives and needs
- Income generation and economic opportunities
- Harm reduction initiatives in the neighbourhood
- Inter-generational initiatives for youth and seniors
- Supporting and connecting newcomers

**FESTIVAL**

The planning and preparations for the annual and much loved St. James Town festival started in December 2017. A Festival Committee comprised of residents, Corner staff and representatives of the St. James Town Service Providers’ Network (SJTSPN) was formed to oversee the preparation and execution of the festival. Several Sub-Committees supported the Festival Committee in providing specific advice and recommendations. The festival was a collective effort by the community and more than 35 volunteers. The festival was held on September 8, 2018, at the public park behind 200 Wellesley St. E. There were a total of fifteen performances by both individuals and groups of residents who presented various cultural performances celebrating the diversity of culture and talent found within the community. The performers were selected through rounds of auditions hosted by the Performance Sub-Committee. There were also activities including face-painting, bike repair, games at the kids aea, bouncy castle and several other arts and craft activities specially meant to engage the children in the neighborhood. Nine food stalls were set up by resident food vendors who offered an ethnically diverse array of food reflective of the multiculturalism in St James Town. The vendors worked in collaboration with a community dietician from Sherbourne Health to create the menu and ensure a safe and healthy eating experience.



In support of community members who are dedicated to the improvement of St James Town, seven community awards were handed out to recognize their achievements as St. James Town Change-Makers and Advocates. Scholarships were also awarded to youth from St. James Town who are accessing post-secondary education.

Several service providers and community organizations set up their stalls where residents could enroll to receive required services. More than 30 individuals signed up for different services.

This year's festival showcased the cultural diversity, talent, work, ethics and unity of those in St. James Town. It was a resounding success that captured the essence of the community and we look forward to seeing what the next festival brings.

**OPENSTREETS**

The Corner successfully participated in the OpenStreet TO event on August 19th, 2018 and September 16th, 2018. This year's event was organised along Bloor Street between Grace/Christie to Sherbourne Street and Yonge Street between Bloor to Queen Street. The Corner played the lead role for the Sherbourne and Bloor St. hub with the support of the St. James Town Service Providers' Network (SJTSPN).

The Corner offered face painting, interactive games, an instant photo booth, a community performance from the Senior Chinese Dancers and information on resources was also available. The Corner team consisted of residents, volunteers, placement students and staff. Openstreets is a great avenue for St. James Town residents and partners to know and connect with other opportunities and avenues in the city.

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENT**

The Black History Month event was celebrated at The Corner on February 27th 2019. An eye-opening presentation told through pictures, quotations and biographies gave Black peoples' lived experiences of their arrival to North America. The talk educated the community on the historical injustices Black people have faced and how these injustices continue to oppress Black people today. It helped everyone to contemplate their own subconscious racial biases and brought the often sensitive topic of race to the forefront of community discussion. This was followed by a delicious jerk chicken dinner and a cheery celebration true of The Corner's spirit.

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Led by female staff, residents and volunteers, this hugely successful event, celebrated on March 8th, 2019 saw 100 participants arrive at The Corner to mark gender equality in both public and private spheres. Male colleagues and volunteers from the community cooked and served brunch for all of the participants. This was followed by a presentation focusing on several achievements and accomplishments by women across the world over the last year. The event successfully demonstrated and respected the diversity of the women in the community and showcased the resilience, determination and talents of women throughout history.

**TOP:**  
A volunteer painting a face  
at Open Streets 2018

**BOTTOM:**  
MPP Suze Morrison at the  
International Women's Day  
event at The Corner







**TOP:**

Chinese senior during a dance performance at the 'Senior's Social' at Dixon Hall

**BOTTOM:**

Residents alongside Paul from Repair Café Toronto at a Repair Event



**SENIOR'S SOCIAL**

The seniors of St. James Town came together on the 8th of March, 2019 for an afternoon of performances at Dixon Hall. Performances included singing, dancing, instrumentals, a group interactive meditation, and acting. A range of arts and crafts were on display. The event aptly represented the diversity and vibrancy of St. James Town and also allowed seniors in the community, who may struggle with issues of isolation, to socialize with one another. The event showed us that the community acknowledges and values seniors as an integral part of St. James Town.

**EID**

Eid, the "Festival of Breaking the Fast", was celebrated at The Corner with a community potluck meal in June 2018. Community members brought an assortment of delicious dishes to be shared amongst the sixty attendees. Sharing a meal as part of this important celebration helped St. James Town's Muslim community, alongside other people who were interested in learning more about the festival, to get together and form meaningful relationships.

**REPAIR CAFÉ**

On August 18th, 2018, The Corner, partnering with Repair Café and the Central Neighbourhood House, conducted a Mini Repair Café event for the residents of St. James Town. The event was held at Wellesley Community Centre and it attracted a steady crowd, 37 of whom were served by eleven volunteers who possessed different skills in repairing. Items ranging from household appliances to bikes and computers were repaired during the event. There was a buzz of activity as groups huddled between tables trying to repair the various items, nearly all of which were successfully mended. The event not only enabled residents to have their broken items fixed for no cost, but it also demonstrated and taught a number of key repair skills. The Corner plans to host more Repair Café events in the future at our new site -The Corner @240.

**YOUTH DAY**

Although engaging young people in St. James Town is often a struggle, Youth Day saw meaningful community connections being made through a fun-filled day of activities ranging from wheelchair basketball to painting an art mural. The Corner also organised a 'Resume Olympics' to help young people to shape and show off their experiences to future employers. We received positive feedback from the youth who enjoyed the busy and insightful day.



# Community Help

## TABLE TALK WITH CANDIDATES

The Toronto Municipal Elections were held on the 22nd of October 2018 and as a run-up to the election, candidates were busy campaigning in many communities including St. James Town. The St. James Town Service Providers’ Network (SJTSPN) alongside The Corner organised a ‘Table Talk with Candidates’ running for City Councillor of Ward-13. The event took place on October 19th, 2018.

Fifteen candidates running for City Councillor were present for the event which allowed residents to directly interact with them. The event was organised exclusively for Ward-13 and an estimated 50 residents took part in the discussions.

The event was designed in a way where each candidate contesting a seat would be able to interact with each and every resident taking part in the discussion. This allowed various issues and concerns to be voiced by the residents and in turn, the candidates responded with their views and understanding. Some of the major issues discussed included Poverty, Housing, Employment, Community Safety and Access to Health among others. The event offered residents the opportunity to voice legitimate concerns, engage in a productive dialogue with candidates about these concerns and generally have a larger impact on public policy. We plan to make this type of event a regular one in St. James Town, thus promoting civic engagement and inclusiveness in public policy making.

## COMMUNITY HOLIDAY PARTY

The Corner had a festive community event on December 19th, 2018 with food, games and toys for kids. Two hundred and fifty residents came together to dine and dance. Over 150 meals were served along with desserts and juice. The holiday celebration committee, volunteers, partners and Community Ambassadors worked tirelessly to make sure everything went as planned. Bell, our major sponsor for toys, also provided financial assistance for meals. The event showcased The Corner’s continuing commitment to bring the community together and allowed community members, volunteers and staff to show each other that they are valued and appreciated. The experience was new for many newcomers, as it was their first holiday season in Canada

## COMMUNITY MEETING FOR ST. JAMES TOWN RESIDENTS

Following the recent hydro and water shutdowns in several high rises in St. James Town on January 22nd 2019 and the fire at 650 Parliament in August 2018, The City of Toronto in partnership with Toronto Fire, City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, and The Corner, organised a public resident’s meeting to discuss tenant rights and updates on building inspections. This event took place in February 2019. At the event a tenant survey was organised to understand the residents’ needs and problems and an orientation was provided on how to use the City’s RentOSafe Program. This event helped to educate the community but also engage with The City and the Councillor for St. James Town, making politics more accessible and bringing the political sphere closer to home.

### TOP:

A family from the neighbourhood at the Community Holiday Party

### BOTTOM:

ACommunity meeting for St. James Town







**TOP:**

**Mind Matters: A mental health awareness event at The New Common**

**BOTTOM:**

**St. James Town Residents showing their support during the World Refugee Day event at Queen's Park**



**TAX CLINICS**

In April 2018, The Corner facilitated two tax clinics to assist people in understanding the often complex and confusing tax process. The first session was conducted by the Sri Lankan Accountant Association and the second one was by Amenda, a CRA Volunteer. These clinics help St. James Town residents overcome tax challenges by providing them with practical skills and advice.

**PAP CLINIC**

Two community pap clinics hosted on October 11th and October 16th 2018, were held at The Corner in partnership with Sherbourne Health. Twenty-one appointments were made, and a total of 14 screenings were provided to eligible clients during the Pap Clinics. These sessions can be critical in identifying early stages of cervical cancer which can therefore be treated more quickly and effectively.

**MENTAL HEALTH DAY**

Mental health day was celebrated on October 19th 2018 at The Corner through an annual Tea and Talk event. This is the fourth annual event that Health Access St. James Town (HASJT) partners have put together to celebrate the significant day. HASJT partners this year included: The Corner, Women's' Health in Women's Hands, SickKids Community Mental Health, Sherbourne Health and Progress Place. A total of 25 participants took part in the event. Addressing mental health is so important considering many of St. James Town's residents have mental health issues which are often overlooked. This event gives a voice to those who continue to struggle without support. We help to direct people towards professional mental health care and strive to keep the conversation open.

**FLU CLINIC**

Two flu clinics were conducted on November 7th and 9th 2018. In total 94 clients were given shots; 10 of them were seniors and 21 of them without an OHIP Card. Outreach was conducted by the Prevent the Flue Ambassadors. Despite being one of the leading causes of death in Canada every year, in 2017 only 33% of Canadian's used the flu vaccine. Complications arising from the Flu has the potential to cause serious illnesses, especially for young children, pregnant women and seniors.



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## FUNDERS

TCLN – Toronto Central Local Health  
Integration Network  
Ontario Trillium Foundation  
Toronto Employment and Social Services

Tower Renewal Office  
City of Toronto  
United Way

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## SERVICE PARTNERS

ACORN  
Alliance for South Asian  
AIDS Prevention  
Bleecker/Wellesley Activity Network  
Central Neighborhood House  
Community Matters  
Evergreen Brickworks  
Fred Victor  
Hospice Toronto  
Leacock Foundation  
Muslim Welfare Centre  
Nepali Literature Society  
North York Community House  
Peace Builders International  
Progress Place

Red Cross (650 Parliament donation)  
Reelworld  
Sherbourne Health  
Sickkids  
STEPS Initiatives  
Sunshine Seniors  
The Humane Society  
TNO – The Neighborhood Organization  
Toronto Public Health  
Unisphere Canada  
UofT  
Yonge Street Mission  
Youthdale

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## STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Amna Shah  
Hannah Goodbrand  
Lovlyn D'souza  
Maryana Tanyashyna  
Tanvir Kaukab  
Vickie Rennie  
Yogarajah Chelladurai  
Criss Habal-Brosek

Nalini Pandalangat  
Ravi Subramaniam  
Shirley Roberts  
Veronica MacDonald  
Jelani Matthew  
Wilma Sinnathurai 17-18 CHECK  
Sasha Cragg-Dore