



# ST. JAMES TOWN FESTIVAL 2015

## Final Report

### **1. Executive Summary**

The St. James Town Festival is an annual event put on by the St James Town Service Providers' Network (SPN), community members, and businesses. The SJT Festival, "A World Within A Block" provides an opportunity for residents to experience the diversity and multiculturalism that defines the community. The event details, planning and execution are explained to showcase the efforts and involvement of our subcommittees, sponsors, volunteers and participants.



### **Introduction**

Every year, the St James Town Service Providers' Network plays an important role in planning and delivering the St. James Town Festival. This festival displays St. James Town's diversity through music, dance, arts, crafts, food, sport competitions and a featured lineup of performances by local artists.



There's nothing like a challenging year to show people what they are made of. This year's cold weather and rain did not dampen the spirit of the dedicated and committed members of St. James Town.

### **Event Location**

The event took place on Saturday September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm, at St. James Ave and Ontario Street. Wellesley-Parliament Square graciously donated its property's green space and parking lots for the festival. The performance stage was located in the 240

Wellesley Street East parking lot. The kids' activities, board games, art activities, registration booths, agency tables, and food stalls were set up on the green space between the 260 and 280 Wellesley Street East buildings. The event venue was in the heart of St James Town and easily accessible to the community, hence provided a great place for people to celebrate.

### **2. Planning & Collaboration**

In June 2015, the SPN made a formal announcement that the SJT Festival planning committee was starting to plan this year's festivities. The Planning Committee also discussed continuing to partner with the Cabbage Town BIA, in order to increase our reach and reinforce connections

between the Cabbage Town and St James Town communities (which already intermingle). Urban Flair, a youth talent show also continued to partner with the St James Town Festival.

*Cabbage Town BIA:*



The Cabbage Town and St James Town festivals are held on the same day. Coordinators of both festivals met to discuss the partnership. As a result, the Cabbage Town BIA incorporated SJT Festival events/activities in their weekly announcements. The SJT Festival was also able to host a booth at the Cabbage Town festival.

*St James Town Youth Council:*

The St James Town Youth Council coordinates Urban Flair, an annual talent show where youth showcase their talents. Urban Flair developed their unique flyers and coordinated their performances, which were incorporated to the SJT Festival performance lineup. Amongst other items, major contributions from Urban Flair included activities and volunteers at the festival.

**Planning:**

The planning for the 2015 SJT Festival ran from June-September. Monthly meetings were held by the planning committee in June and July and meetings were held every other week in August and September. Attendance and representation varied at each meeting, but planning continued by activity leads remotely. The core of the planning committee consisted of:



Armela Marano ( <b>Donations Coordinator</b> )	Thornccliffe Neighbourhood Office
Cas Wilson ( <b>Performance Coordinator</b> )	Wellesley Community Centre
Christina Tran ( <b>Food Vendors Coordinator</b> )	Sherbourne Health Center
Deqa Farah ( <b>Agencies Coordinator, volunteer table</b> )	Fred Victor
Diana Mavunduse ( <b>Media Relations Coordinator</b> )	Dixon Hall
Gouri Mukerjea ( <b>Location &amp; City Resources</b> )	Sherbourne Health Centre
Ivo Jirgala ( <b>Volunteers Coordinator</b> )	Progress Place
Jason To ( <b>Planning Committee</b> )	Community Cafe
Kurt Aydiner ( <b>Location Coordinator</b> )	SJT Community Corner
Laheeb Akbarzad ( <b>Planning Committee Chair</b> )	SJT Community Corner
Mary Dalreen Paul ( <b>Planning Coordinator</b> )	SJT Community Corner
Michael Cavanaugh ( <b>Performance Coordinator</b> )	St James Town Arts
Nassim Vahidi ( <b>Planning Committee Chair</b> )	Women’s Health in Women’s Hands
Nivedita Balachandran ( <b>Planning Coordinator</b> )	Sherbourne Health Centre
Norma Khandaker ( <b>Volunteers Coordinator</b> )	Progress Place
Rasathy Yogarajah ( <b>Kid’s Activities Coordinator</b> )	Resident
Ravi Subramaniam ( <b>Permits &amp; Logistics</b> )	Thornccliffe Neighbourhood Office

Rick ( <b>Stage Coordinator</b> )	CNH Volunteer
Sarah Shi ( <b>MC &amp; Stage Coordinator</b> )	Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office
Paula Suelian ( <b>Sponsors &amp; Donors</b> )	Toronto Centre for Employment and Training
Sumitha, Junnat ( <b>Urban Flair Coordinator</b> )	Youth Council
Thanusha ( <b>Food Vendor Support</b> )	Volunteer- MPP Office
Yogarajah Chelladurai ( <b>Planning Committee</b> )	Resident

### 3. Awards and Volunteer Recognition

The SJT Community Awards were created in order to recognize exceptional contributions by community members and groups that have created 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](mailto: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 28th 2015 and reviewed all the nominations by rating them according to their contributions, activities and time devoted to the community

A new category for **Men** under **SJT Change Makers** was introduced.



A total of 9 awards and 2 scholarships were given to the following recipients:

<b>SJT Change Makers</b>		SJT Advocate	Shirley Roberts
Youth	Torja Istiaque	Local Business	Dominos – Paval Kanagathurai
Senior	Estela Campusano	Big Business	Medallion corporation- Yvonne Yorke
Newcomer	Mary Dalreen Paul	<b>SJT Scholarships</b>	
LGBTQ	Suhail Abual Sameed	Creative/Artistic Contribution	Maryam Hassan
Women	Rasathy Yogaraja	Community Engagement/Leadership	Sumitha Sivagnanasundram
Men	Tommy Haung		

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

- More awards can be considered for volunteers to recognize and appreciate the volunteers for various programs
- Outreach and awareness of the awards should be spread throughout the year.

#### 4. Outreach and Community Engagement

The event was promoted through flyers, outreach ambassadors, word of mouth, online and social media. Posters were placed on building message boards, public dashboards, 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



- Posters and flyers were updated on Facebook and Snap'd
- A media release was sent to different local community based newspapers.

The festival was also promoted by outreaching at Pan/Parapan Am and Open Streets Toronto events from July-September

#### Recommendations:

- The various community organizations in St. James Town can engage in outreach.
- Organize various activities like face-painting, henna, etc in the green space between 240,260 and 280 Wellesley St. East to engage more residents a month before the festival

#### 5. Resource Contribution/Budget

Budget Overview	
Reserve (2014)	\$3,902.20
2015 Business Donations	\$2,150.00
2015 SPN Donations	\$2,750.00
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$8,802.20</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,246.22</b>
<b>Difference (2016 Reserve)</b>	<b>\$3,555.98</b>

Expenses	Item	In-Kind Donations
Bouncy Castle	\$567.77	
Fire Truck Bouncer		Fire Department
First Nations Dancers	\$400.00	
First Nations Drumming	\$400.00	
Flyers Printing	\$181.07	
Food Vendor sanitation supplies	\$21.53	
Gifts/Raffle Prizes		Medallion Corporation
Hot Dogs, BBQ		Toronto Community Housing
Location/Venue		Wellesley-Parliament Square
SJT Awards and plaque	\$247.56	
SJT Scholarships x2	\$1000	
Sound system and equipment		Resident Volunteer

Stage	\$2347.96	
Tables & Chairs		Toronto Community Housing & St James Town Community Corner
Tents		Regent Park & SPN orgs
Volunteer Appreciation Supplies	\$80.33	Medallion Corporation
Volunteer pizza at Festival		Dominoes Pizza
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 5246.22</b>	

## 6. Festival Day Logistics

### Performances:

A World Within A Block featured 16 performances from various cultures/ethnic groups: Hula performances, First Nations drumming & dancing, classical Indian dancing and singing, Chinese dancing and singing, dances from the Bangladeshi cultural group, spoken word poetry, Tibet dance, Bengali singing.



Due to stage setup and testing, the performance schedule was delayed by one hour. The performances concluded at 6:00pm, due to the weather.



### Volunteer Coordination:

Roles and responsibilities were allocated to each volunteer prior to the festival. The festival map and the performance/activity schedule were handed out to the volunteers.

Four volunteer orientation sessions were also held leading up to the festival day. A total of 58 volunteers attended the sessions. The dates of the orientation sessions and the number of volunteers

at each session are listed:

- July 31 – 13 volunteers
- Aug 20 – 11 volunteers
- Aug 21 – 10 volunteers
- Sept 4 – 24 volunteers

The following is a breakdown of volunteers who registered for the festival:

- 22 registered via University of Toronto
- 66 registered via Survey Monkey and SJTCC outreach

A total of **90** volunteers participated at the festival. Volunteers received pizza from Dominoes, T-shirts and buttons.



## Volunteer Appreciation Party

A volunteer appreciation party was organized on to recognize and appreciate volunteer contributions. 40 volunteers attended and were entertained with games and slideshow of pictures from the festival. Certificates of appreciation were handed out to the volunteers followed by dinner and refreshments.



### **Recommendations:**

- *At each station a designated person must be positioned to coordinate the volunteers with their tasks and other needed information*
- *Extra generic volunteer buttons to be prepared prior to the festival to be given to volunteers who register on the spot during festival*
- *Additional food should be provided to volunteers.*

### 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. Though 25+ activities were planned for the event, most of the sports activities had to be cancelled due to the cold weather and rain. The following is a list of activities at the festival:



#### Arts

- Community Mural
- Flower Pot Painting
- Art Display
- Coloring and Painting
- Mural Tours
- Bird Mosaics

#### Kid's Activities

- Kid's Quiz – Mental Math
- Jumping Castle
- Button Making
- Face Painting

#### Others/Miscellaneous

- Eyebrow Threading
- Massage Therapy
- Henna
- Jewellery Making



The following activities were planned for the festival, but were **cancelled** due to the weather.

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 Active games           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Badminton</li> <li>- Hula hoop</li> <li>- Clean your room</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 Board games           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connect 4</li> <li>- Cards</li> <li>- Dominos</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bean bag Toss</li> <li>• Rangoli</li> <li>• Carom Board</li> </ul> |
|---|--|---|

- |                          |            |             |
|--------------------------|------------|-------------|
| - Duck duck goose        | - Bingo    | • Makup     |
| - Red light, Green light | - Chess    | • Tutorials |
| - Octopus                | - Checkers | • Balloon   |
| - Museum Relay race      |            | • Sculpting |

**Recommendations:**

- An indoor area can be used as a backup for hosting the board games and sports competitions in case of rain
- More visible signs and directions could be posted to direct to the activities area

**Agency tables:**

The following SPN agencies hosted a table at the event.

- The Hincks-Dellcrest Centre
- Progress Place Rehab
- Fred Victor
- Dixon Hall
- Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office
- St. James Town Community Corner
- Yonge Street Mission
- Centre for Education and Training
- Central Neighbourhood House Association
- Sherbourne Health Centre
- Women’s Health in Women’s Hands
- Hospice Toronto



In addition, the following agencies also had display tables at the event.

- Newcomer Women's Services Toronto
- Hear Right Canada
- NDP (Party)
- MPP Glenn Murray Office
- Collective Camera
- St. James Town LINC School
- St. Simon Church
- Toronto Public Health
- The Canada Bodhi Dharma Society
- Sunlife Financial Group



Two thematic tables were also created: The

health and wellness tent featured a variety of resources and was staffed by various agencies offering health services. And the Seniors Committee also hosted a joint table.

**Vendors:**

Local community vendors were invited to share their goods with the community. The following list outlines the various vendor stalls in the festival:

**Food Vendors**

S. No	Names	Items
1.	Chetna Joshi	Potato bread patty, veg samosa, cupcakes
2.	Bhoomiben Patel	Vada pav, Chinese veg noodle
4.	<u>Nusrat Reshamwala</u>	Pani Puri
5.	<u>Armida Sison/ Esperanza Calantog</u>	Halo halo
6.	Ruth Murao	Sushi

**Other Vendors**

S. No	Names	Items
1.		Eyebrow Threading
2.	Vinithra	Henna
3.	Vinithra	Hand Made Jewelry
4.	Nitty Singh	Face Painting

TCHC also offered free hot dogs and the use of their BBQ machine.



**7. Event Evaluation:**

The planning committee consisted of more members from different agencies and residents of the community, which helped to put forth wider and efficient strategies. The food stalls exhibited the multi-cultural taste of our community and were delicious. The diverse performances and art displays were very entertaining.

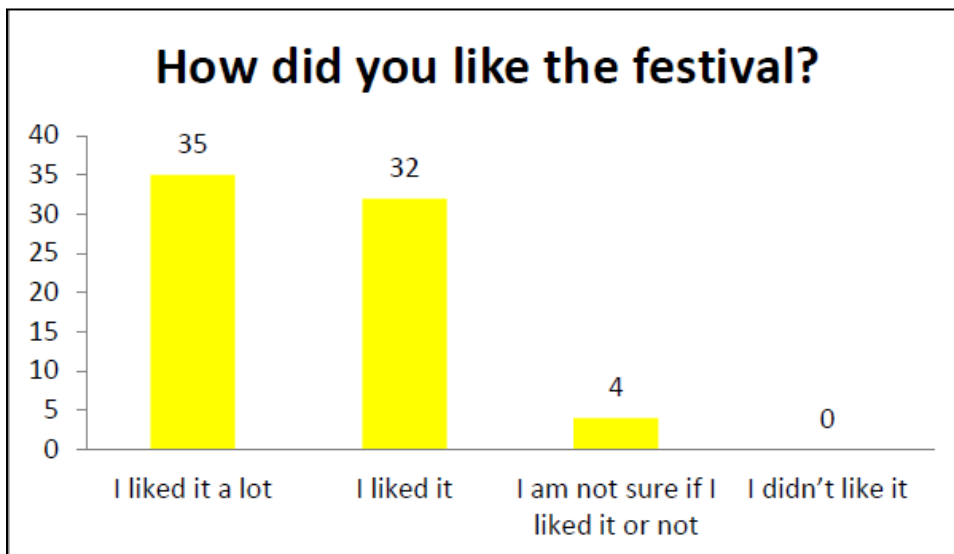
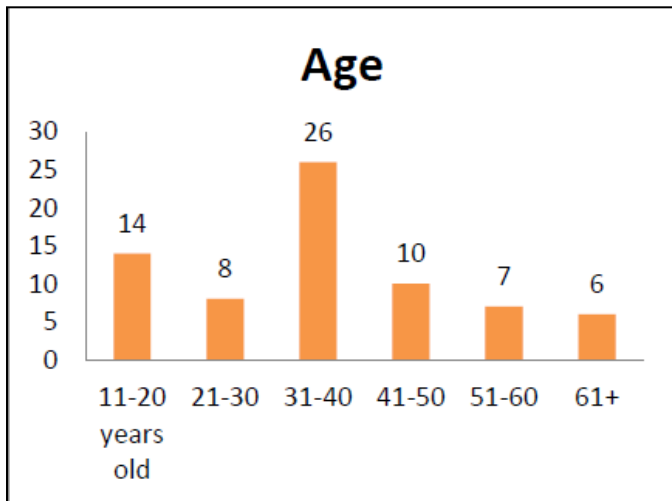
This evaluation summarises the experiences and responses of the participants, audiences and organizers. It sets out to assess the event’s impact on the community and learn lessons for future delivery.

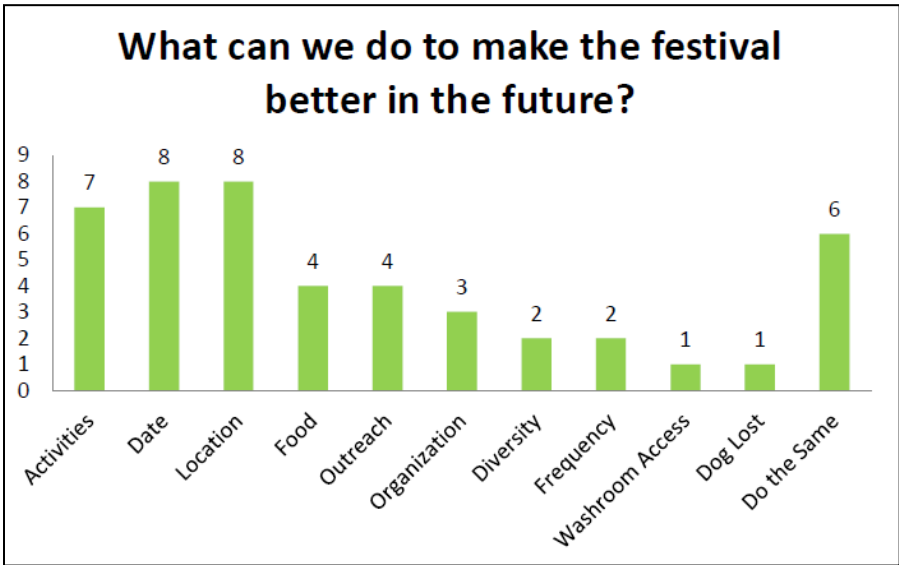
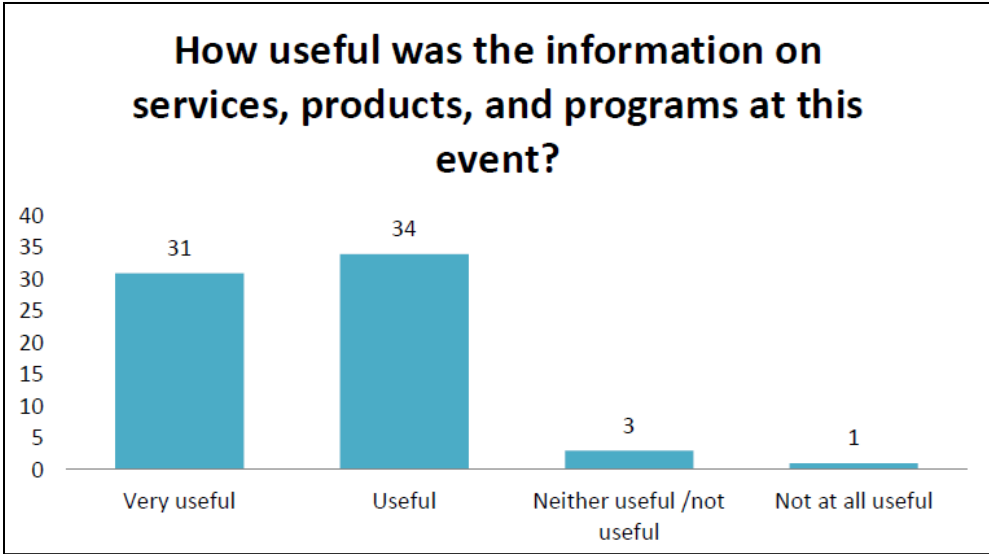
**Survey:**

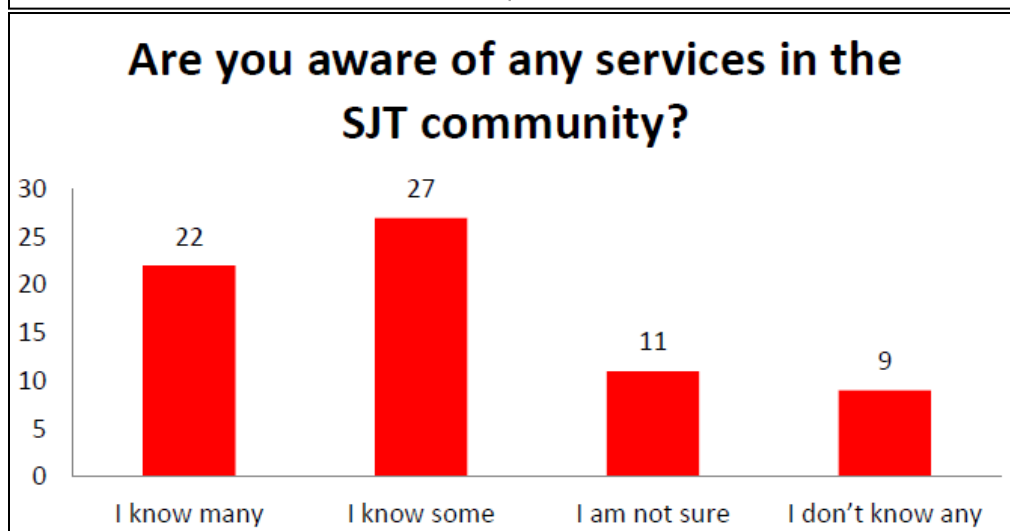
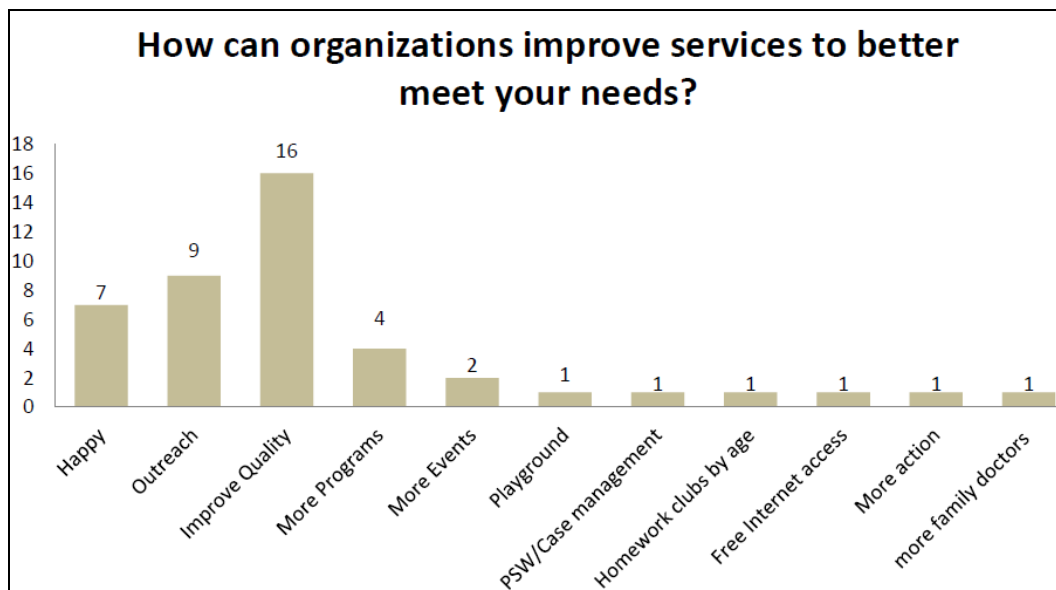
71 surveys were administered- 23 electronically and 56 hard copies completed. Three intake workers and one staff assisted participants with completing the surveys. Surveys were offered to

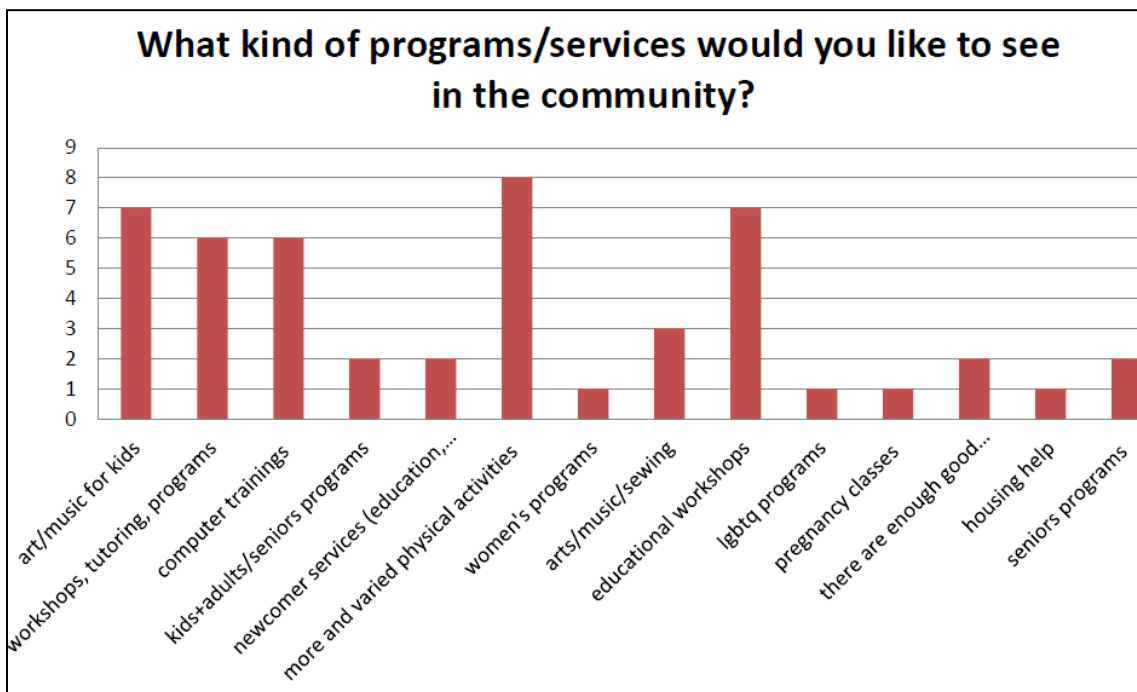
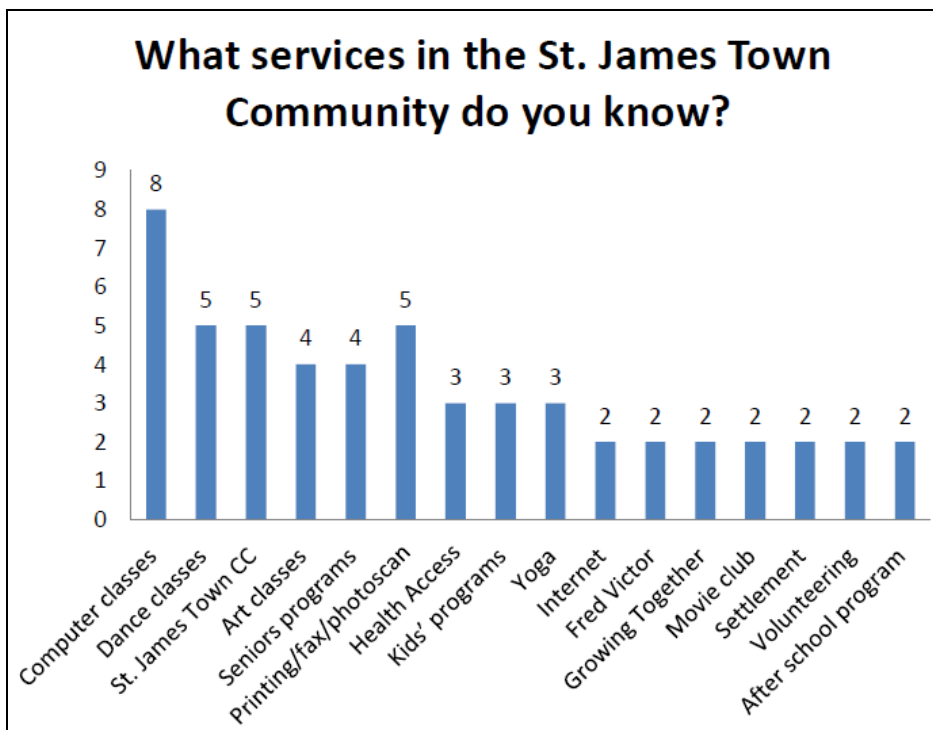


participants by Health Access Workers, who walked around the festival with hard copies. The following is a summary of the survey responses:









## 6. Evaluation Meeting

The Planning Committee held a debrief meeting in October where members discussed the festival's successes and suggestions for future improvements. Each member of the Planning Committee provided feedback to 5 questions (The time and date of the festival was ideal, The location of the festival worked well/flowed well, The coordination/organization of the festival went smoothly, The community was engaged well/participated, and other comments).

It was suggested by a large majority of Planning Committee members that the date of the festival should be earlier (late August or first week of September).

While committee members thought the location of the festival worked well to engage residents, some felt different areas of the festival were disconnected. One committee members also discussed safety concerns of placing agency tables close to buildings and directly below balconies as items on balconies could fall.

All committee members agreed that the festival was well organized/coordinated, and that the community was well engaged on the day of the festival.

However, other suggestions included more resident engagement in the planning process, to focus some outreach efforts on getting more residents to join the Planning Committee early on. A second suggestion was concerning performances, to explore the option of ‘ground-level’ performances. Planning Committee members felt the stage was a large expense, and performances on ground-level could be dispersed throughout festival grounds.

## 7. Archiving:

Communications and documents created for the festival exist electronically through the email address [sjtfestival@stjamestown.org](mailto: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 200 Wellesley St.

## 8. Next Year’s planning

The planning for next year’s festival (September 2016) can begin in the new year, with meetings by agency leads occurring every month for 5 months (January-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, 2015.

## 9. General Lessons learned:

Based on the survey results from the public and from the suggestions of the festival committee during the debrief meetings, the following points are noted for future improvements.

From public survey:

- *Festival day could be moved to August or first week of September to avoid bad weather conditions*



- *Location must be more convenient to setup main stage, so that people could watch the performances from other activity stalls. Separation of main stage from the activity area made it difficult for people to enjoy the performances*
- *Washrooms need to be made available*
- *The first-aid kit must be more easily accessible*

From committee members:

- *Fundraising and letters sent to the organizations, donors, etc must be initiated well ahead prior to the festival around the month of March.*
- *Tents, chairs and tables could be rented to avoid shortages and tedious transportation*
- *Street performances could be included to engage and attract more people*
- *Community members should be contacted and encouraged to work alongside agency leads in organizing the different stalls and activities*
- *More SPN members can be engaged in the planning and implementation of the SJT Festival*