



St. James Town Festival - 2023 Report





Introduction

The SJT Festival, organized by the St. James Town community in partnership with the Service Providers Network (SJTSPN) and The Corner marked its 11th. Held on September 9th, it was the second festival held post the pandemic. Staying true to tradition, the festival continued to coincide with The Cabbagetown Festival weekend. The central theme for this year's festival was "My Home, My Hood: A Kaleidoscope of Cultures" encapsulating the spirit of unity and cultural diversity within the St. James Town community.

This annual celebration has been a testament to our community's resilience, creativity, and unity. Join us as we recount the highlights, challenges, and the collective spirit that made this year's festival a resounding success. From cultural showcases to community engagement, this report encapsulates the essence of the St. James Town Festival 2023, highlighting its significance and impact on our neighborhood.

We would like to thank the SJTSPN member agencies, local sponsors, and hard-working volunteers and performers for executing another successful festival this year!

14 sub-committees meticulously planned and executed different aspects of the festival, with the core team consisting of dedicated members from the SJTSPN, The Corner Staff, and The Residents' Council. The subcommittees included:

- Awards
- Performances
- Fundraising
- Social Media & Live Streaming
- Volunteers
- Outreach
- Activities
- Branding
- Logistics
- MC & Stage Coordination
- Crisis Intervention
- Evaluation
- Registration
- Food & Non-Food Vendors



A new subcommittee was introduced this year, The Crisis Intervention Sub-Committee, aimed at guaranteeing a prompt and effective response to any emergency situations that might arise. Fortunately, we're pleased to report that no significant incidents were reported during this year's festival. Some unique features of this festival were as follows:

- In line with our commitment to environmentally friendly practices, we took a significant step by procuring two water stations. This eco-conscious choice allowed us to eliminate the need for single-use plastic bottles, contributing to a reduction in plastic waste generated during the festival. These water stations were placed were strategically positioned in key areas, providing festival attendees with convenient access to refreshing, sustainable hydration options.
- To promote healthier eating choices at the festival, we offered 260 combo meals of wraps and freshly made lemonade, prepared by our dedicated Catering Collective. This alternative to the traditional BBQ option not only encouraged a more nutritious dining experience but also showcased our commitment to wellbeing.
- Additionally, we implemented a streamlined system by providing food coupons to our valued volunteers and staff members. This approach helped prevent any potential confusion or chaos, ensuring a smoother and more organized food service throughout the event.



Fundraising and Donations

The Fundraising Committee took charge of creating and sending out requests for donations in cash or kind to local businesses and partner agencies. This year we received generous donations from the below mentioned individuals, organizations, and businesses in the neighborhood that enabled us to organize an enriching and entertaining event for our community. The donors and sponsors were featured on the festival website and on all promotional materials and were also given a shout out during the festival, as without their support, the festival would not have been possible.



The sponsors this year

SJTSPN MEMBERS

Dixon Hall	\$100
Hospice Toronto	\$500
Medallion Corporation	\$1500
Neighbourhood Legal Services	\$350
Progress Place	\$500
Sherbourne Health	\$2588
St. Michaels Family Health Team	\$1000
The Neighbourhood Group (TNG)	\$1000
The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO)	\$1500
The University Health Network (UHN)	\$500
Wellesley Parliament Square Apartments (WPSQ)	\$500
Woodgreen	\$1000
Community Matters	\$200
The Corner	\$1500
Fred Victor	\$350

INDIVIDUALS

David Jia	\$500
Javan Courtney	\$250
Lisa Kowalchuk	\$200
Nalini Pandalangat	\$100

BUSINESSES

BBQ Chicken	10 Meals
Domino's Pizza	15 Pizzas
Parliament Smokes and Gift	\$50
Pizza Pizza	10 Pizzas
Shalom Ethiopian Restaurant	Ethiopian Coffee
Tim Hortons	Coffee and Snacks

Festival Financial Summary

CONTRIBUTIONS AND REVENUE

ITEM	AMOUNT
Partner Contributions	\$14188
Vendor Registrations	\$240
Carry Over - 2022 Festival	\$11000
Total Revenue	\$25,428

EXPENSES

ITEM	AMOUNT
Stage and Sound	\$1500
Street Performers	\$600
Volunteer and staff Food	\$1088
Face Painting and Arts supplies	\$300
Plaques	\$900
Bouncy Castle	\$1500
Youth Scholarship	\$1000
Indigenous Performers	\$1500
Wraps and Lemonade	\$1000
Resident Co-Chair	\$2000
Drinking Water Stations (Capital Investment)	\$7002
Tent Purchases (Capital Investment)	\$3488
Gift Card for Performers and Artists	\$1025
Misc	\$234
Total Expenditure	\$22,903

TOTAL REVENUE	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	BALANCE
\$25,428	\$22,903	\$2,291

Outreach and Volunteers



Outreach plays a pivotal role in the festival planning process. Without proactive efforts in this regard, we would not be able to achieve our intended attendance goals and attract the desired crowds. Outreach activities started a little over a month ahead of the festival. Various initiatives were undertaken to enhance awareness, including the distribution of flyers, posting posters at prominent public locations such as poles, bus stops, and community bulletin boards, as well as on building notice boards. Furthermore, a door-to-door flyer distribution effort was carried out in three specific buildings to engage the local community.

Volunteers play a pivotal role in the festival's success, serving as its strong foundation. We are proud to have garnered the support of more than 40 dedicated volunteers for this year's event. Their commitment extended beyond the festival days, as they diligently assisted us in the pre-festival phase with outreach, cleaning, and preparations. During the festival itself, they contributed their time and energy to ensure its smooth operation, and after the festival, they remained with us for the teardown and cleanup activities. Their unwavering dedication is truly commendable and essential to the festival's overall success.

St. James Town Community Awards

Annually, organizations and individuals that have made significant and positive contributions to the St. James Town community are recognized and celebrated. This recognition takes place on the festival day, with awards and certificates being presented in the presence of fellow community members, creating a meaningful & inclusive atmosphere of appreciation and gratitude.

In response to this year's evolving circumstances and priorities, we made certain changes to the award categories, shifting away from the pandemic-centric focus of the previous year. We actively encouraged community members to nominate individuals whose contributions had brought about positive changes within the St. James Town community.

The award subcommittee meticulously finalized the selection of awards through a transparent voting system. Our committee took special care to ensure that all award winners were either present to personally receive their awards or had a representative on their behalf during the ceremony.



This year's awards categories and winner



St. James Town Champion - Seniors
Laura Cole (Right) receiving the award from Nick Gurevich

St. James Town Champion - Newcomer
Divya Sinha (Centre) receiving the award from
Barbara Dos Santos (Left) and Tatyana Watts (Right)



St. James Town Champion – Green Initiatives
Zoe Kende (Centre) receiving the award from
T Williams (Left) and Tatyana Watts (Right)



St. James Town Champion – 2SLGBTQ+
John Petruzzo (Centre) receiving the award on behalf of
Sanket Rane from Barbara Dos Santos (Left) and Tatyana
Watts (Right)



This year's awards categories and winner



St. James Town Champion – Food Security
Green Café team Viola Haraszt (second from
right), Gowthami Karunkaran (Third from right),
Rafat Rehana, (Forth from right) and Rohini Bagal
(Fifth from right) with Kristyn Wong-Tam
(Extreme right), Chris Moise (Extreme left) and
Tamara Este (Second from left)

St. James Town Champion – Youth
Ayana Gurmu (Centre) receiving the award on
behalf of Lalisa Gurmu from T Williams (Left) and
Tatyana Watts (Right)



St. James Town Champion – Advocate
Richard Lee (Right) and Grayson Lew (Centre)
receiving the award from Nick Gurevich (Left)



St. James Town Champion – Social Enterprise Innovator
Sujen Sivagnanasundram (Right) receiving the award
from Tamara Este (Left)



This year's awards categories and winner



St. James Town Champion – Big Business
Hafiz Munir (Right) receiving the award for Tim Hortons from Tamara Este (Left)

St. James Town – Youth Scholarship
Asrar Mohammed (Right) receiving the award
from Nalini Pandalangat (Left)



St. James Town – Youth Scholarship
Alex Yehdego (Right) receiving the award from
Nalini Pandalangat (Left)





1. Performances

This year's festival hosted 22 performances consisting of a variety of children's dances, fashion shows and myriad performances by adults including our beloved seniors; who inspired everyone with their energy, zeal, and talent. Children of different ages showcased their talent in beautiful and colorful costumes, danced and sang delightful songs for the enthusiastic audience who cheered them on wholeheartedly. This year we also had an enthralling performance by 'True Colors', a creative safe space for 2SLGBTQ+ BIPOC, newcomers, and their allies, which further made the festival an even more diverse, inclusive, and community-centric event. The adult performers were given an honorarium, and the children were given school bags along with school supplies such as stationery, notebooks etc. sponsored by the Toronto Police Services.

2. Activities

As our tradition, this year's festival featured a diverse range of engaging activities designed to captivate attendees of all ages. Our program boasted a captivating performance by the Shadow Land Theater's stilt walkers for the first time at our festival. A delightful Fire Truck exploration opportunity for the children, generous backpack giveaways courtesy of the 51 Division Police, and raffle draws for all those who filled in the registration and evaluation forms. A creative canvas painting station where festivalgoers inscribed the words "My home" in their respective languages. Attendees also enjoyed complimentary face-painting, a henna booth, a lively bouncy castle, and delicious treats like ice cones, cotton candy, and popcorn. Furthermore, several agencies took the initiative to provide enriching experiences. They offered kid-friendly interactive games, tailored activities for seniors, valuable dental hygiene education for the public, and crucial Fire Safety education at their respective booths. These added dimensions to the festival ensured that there was something exciting and informative for everyone in attendance.

3. Vendors

This year, for the first time, the planning committee decided to introduce an application fee of \$20 collected at the time of submitting the application to help support some of the tenting and logistical costs. The festival saw participation from eight food vendors who served delicacies such as jerk chicken, samosas, burgers, pani puri, cupcakes, vada pav, and chicken biryani. Among others were representatives of different nationalities and cultures from amongst our community and five non-food vendors. Some of whom sold items such as jewelry, clothes. There were others who shared valuable information about programs and resources which would benefit our community members.

St. James Town Service Providers' Network (SJTSPN)

The St. James Town Festival is organized every year by community members in partnership with the St. James Town Service Providers' Network (SJTSPN), which consists of over 40 agencies and resident ambassadors working collaboratively to support the St. James Town community. The Network leads the development and implementation of a coordinated plan for a vibrant, empowered, and healthy community, and is celebrating its 25th year of operation in St. James Town!



Join Us Next Year!

The St. James Town Festival this year was a bigger than ever. It is an event that is truly for-the-community, by-the-community, and of-the-community, thus in the future, we would love to have more members of our community join us in various capacities during the planning phase which begins a few months before the festival, and at the execution phase on the day of. You can contribute to the festival in the coming years by putting up a stall as a vendor, performing at the festival, taking on the role of the emcee for the day, joining the planning committee, being a volunteer, or by simply being there and attending and enjoying the festival. To know more about the festival, the St. James Town Community Corner, or the St. James Town Service Providers Network, or to know how to get involved in next year's festival, please send an email to festival@stjamestown.org