

“Happy New Year” East York Strategy Planning Session

Tuesday, January 9, 7pm.

Location: Bethany Baptist Church, 1041 Pape Avenue at Cosburn

- Welcome and introductions of the 13 people (or so) in attendance, including rep's from churches, police from 54 Division, local politicians, schools, community groups and interested individuals. The meeting was Chaired by Rev. Jim Parker. Everyone was most pleased to welcome a new young adult member to our meeting

Updates

East York Mirror:

A “good news” article was published in the East York Mirror in December about the East York Strategy “Gun-free stores” initiative talked about at previous meetings. Also, in the EY Mirror’s “Year in Review” editions, EYS was mentioned twice (the Banquet article and the Toy Gun article). This kind of positive publicity was appreciated and deemed important in promoting our overall goals in the community.

More on Toy Guns: Westwood Middle School’s Principal mentioned the idea of having an article in the various EYS area schools’ spring newsletter that outlines the concerns with replica toy guns, and giving some basis for parents to consider NOT buying toy guns for their children. Everyone agreed that this would be a positive thing to pursue.

There was another suggestion that someone could approach the Thorncliffe Dollar Store to respectfully ask them to not stock toy guns in the future; this approach would be financially more sustainable than buying the guns from them!

Touchstone Youth Centre

Touchstone’s (shelter for homeless youth) attendance was down over the holidays, but Touchstone was now at capacity (32 youth). Concern was raised about that inappropriate comments coming from Touchstone youth (or believed to be Touchstone youth), and that there have been instances of drinking, smoking, etc going on in the laneway behind. The police officer noted that Touchstone youth do have some issues, but that other problems may get blamed on Touchstone youth that are actually committed by others. It was also noted that the Touchstone staff is very community-minded, and that the more we can positively interact with the Centre and its youth, the more this community will benefit.

Treasurer's Update: We are grateful for any donations that come to East York Strategy, and a few have come in. The Toy Gun initiative is all paid for, and we have a little “in the kitty” on which to proceed.

Grant Info:

Reported that EYS, in partnership with Eastview Community Centre and the Madina Mosque, has received a \$25000 United Way grant, toward the hiring of Youth Outreach Worker. A meeting among the partners is planned in order to iron out the details of the plan, and outline steps forward. We are still awaiting response from two Trillium grant applications.

School Report:

Westwood Middle School’s principal reported that Westwood is being used in the first and second week August for a football clinic/tryout, as well as with East York soccer. He commended St. Luke’s Anglican Church for their partnership with schools to provide Christmas baskets to the needy, and the middle school youth’s generosity during their recent charitable campaigns.

A member asked whether we were involved with the ESP (Empowered Student Partnerships) at area high schools. Except for the police officer present, everyone was unaware of their existence. We were informed that all 3 high schools have the ESP program, but with differing effectiveness. Core foci: 1) Teaching students to deal with conflict in non-violent ways, 2) Fostering positive relations between students and police officers. Everyone was open to their involvement, if any ESP students were interested.

Police, 54 Division

Report that calls were down, generally, in the EYS area in general, and the Pape/Cosburn area in particular. Continue to be supportive of various endeavours within EYS.

Programs

Monday Night Music Club -- exciting club sponsored by EYS and Woodbine Heights Baptist Church, free for all high school youth. It has been advertised among the high schools, Touchstone, and other places. The two core leaders spoke about his desire to bring skills and a love of music to the youth. Starts Monday, January 15 and proceeds each Monday thereafter.

Boys Recreational Basketball League

4 teams of Westwood Middle School boys, playing basketball over 7 Thursdays in Feb. - March, and then closing with a banquet on March 29. League is coordinated by Jim Parker and jointly sponsored by EYS and Bethany Baptist. Volunteers needed each night include 4 coaches, 2 referees, 2 scorekeepers. Location at Westwood School, and the Principals and Gym teacher are very supportive of the idea, and helpful in making it happen. B-ball league budget is approx. \$800, covered by 4 sponsors of \$200 each, and covers school permit, trophies and medallions, banquet expenses, and T-shirts for each player (with EYS logo printed on them). Future leagues are possible.

Addendum to meeting: sponsors of Bethany Baptist Church, Milk Mart Convenience, Stanbury's Pharmacy, and MPP Peter Tabuns are now confirmed. Forms to be given to Westwood youth Wed. Jan. 24, with registration commencing at 8:15am Friday, Jan. 26. First game: Thursday, Feb. 1.

Still spots open for referees and coaches... contact Jim Parker if interested (416-425-9472).

Knitting Club at Earl Beatty Public School:

Members of Church of the Resurrection (Woodbine Avenue) noted an interesting initiative to begin soon for Earl Beatty Public School students -- teaching knitting to students during lunch hour, 12 students for 1 day a week for 6 weeks. If this program is successful, they may begin chess or other similar activities. The principal from Westwood mentioned that a similar program had been very successful there.

Suggestions / Brainstorms

EYS wants to continue to consider ideas and spark like-minded interest, and be a collective "think tank" of positive programs and events to build a healthier East York-Danforth community. Members encouraged to "go for it" and take action on those things that are do-able for you and/or your group. EYS leadership and members are there to help in any way we can.

Future meeting: MPP Peter Tabuns suggested we ask Kevin from EYCC to come for a 1/2 hr to discuss our plans, consult, etc. (since we've had difficulty getting him to come for the whole 2 hr meeting.) Everyone agreed that we would benefit from hearing his wisdom and experience.

March Break:

Gym co-op between Bethany & Calvary Church? viewed to have some possibilities.

Talent Show? Westwood principal mentioned that pre-screening is key and that there really is a lot of work involved in one.

School gyms might be available the first day or two of the March break while they're doing cleaning in other parts of the building -- Westwood's principal will check and get back to us ASAP.

March / April -- Hold a Job Fair? (for both employment and volunteer opportunities). Peter Tabuns mentioned that he is researching Urban Agriculture as a possible youth employment opportunity, and also mentioned the HRDC Employment Grants (offers minimum wage subsidy to help employers employ youth during summer---employers get free work, youth get experience and are not idling, getting into trouble).

Peter and Ramonda to report back at next meeting

June: Fair / Picnic in a Park with Games, BBQ hot dogs, etc

* EYS will once again host the Outdoor Worship Service -- scheduled for evening of Sunday, June 10.

July: Canada Day -- should EYS rent a booth at a community event to raise awareness of our existence?

Christmas: collect and give out gifts for children and youth. Could also hand out gifts for birthday presents to children / youth.

Next meeting dates: Tuesday, January 30 (7pm), and Tuesday, February 27 (7pm).

Everyone thanked for coming.

Closing prayer of blessing on our community, safety for our police, and peace for all people.