

**Annual Report
2014-2015**

**Ralph
Thornton
Centre**



What the Ralph Thornton Centre means to our community...

For over a century, the iconic building that is now the Ralph Thornton Centre has played an important role in the life of South Riverdale. Initially it was Postal Station G, and now for over thirty years it has been a community hub and Town Hall. The Ralph Thornton Centre has enriched, shaped, and sometimes transformed the lives of everyone who has stepped inside its historic walls.

This year, our Annual Report focuses on “What the Ralph Thornton Centre means to our community” – to the children and young people, families and community members who share this vital community hub. We asked our community, particularly its youngest members, to share their thoughts with us.





The Ralph Thornton Centre means helping shape my community:

“Community Matters” provides a framework for RTC to continue our tradition of connecting community members around issues and information that is important to them.

Over the last year RTC hosted a number of Town Hall events and community forums. These events were wonderful opportunities to strengthen our partnerships with other agencies and organizations in the neighbourhood. We partnered with agencies such as Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre, WoodGreen, and the South Riverdale Community Health Centre (SRCHC) to host a forum on housing. We worked with the community group Planning South Riverdale to host a ‘Community Matters’ forum on development and change in the retail mix in the area.

We have strengthened our partnership with our tenants, the Queen/Saulter Toronto Public Library and the South Riverdale Child-Parent Centre (SRCPC) by hosting two service provider forums and community information fairs on children’s programming in our neighbourhood, sharing both information about existing programming and strategizing to address emerging needs. Over 30 service providers and close to 100 parents and children participated in these events.

Together with our community partners, RTC sponsored both municipal and federal All-Candidates meetings, with over 150 attendees at each of these lively, engaging sessions. Participants have commented positively on our model, noting that ‘it provided an interactive experience which is different than the usual debate-style meeting.’ Our goal is to make information more accessible for residents, and to provide a forum for residents to engage with local candidates on issues that matter to their community.

Children, Programs, and Planning
A Community Info Fair

Join us on September 3 for a community services fair, providing information for parents of children 0 to 12 years on Riverdale’s children activities



Ralph Thornton Centre
Thursday September 3, 2015, 5:00 – 7:30pm
765 Queen St. East, 2nd floor
416 392-6810

Light Refreshments, Children’s Play Area

Sponsored by:
Toronto Public Library
South Riverdale Parent and Child Centre
Ralph Thornton Centre



Election 2015:

Toronto-Danforth All-Candidates Meeting

Tuesday, September 15, 7:00-9:00 PM

Ralph Thornton Centre, 2nd Floor Auditorium, 765 Queen Street East

Moderator: Kerry Bowser (Executive Director, Eastview Neighbourhood Centre)

All Registered Candidates have been invited to participate – confirmed candidates to date are:



Elizabeth Abbott
Animal Alliance
Environment Voters
Party

Julie Dabrusin
Liberal Party

Craig Scott
New Democratic Party

Chris Tolley
Green Party

Format: Each Candidate will give a 5 minute opening statement. The audience will then have the opportunity to participate in a smaller group discussion on one of a number of issue areas, including:

- Environment;
- Income Inequality and Income Security;
- Social Determinants of Health, including Housing;
- International Affairs and Human Rights.

The Ralph Thornton Centre is accessible (elevator access to the second floor, and accessible washrooms), and interpretation will be provided in Cantonese and Mandarin. Childcare will be available if requested by Friday, September 11. To request childcare, or for more information, please contact info@ralphthornton.org or call 416-392-6810.

This event is sponsored by the Ralph Thornton Centre “Community Matters”, Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre, Nellie’s and South Riverdale Community Health Centre.



The Ralph Thornton Centre means sharing my time and skills:

Our volunteer program continues to be a vital part of the Ralph Thornton Centre. Over 180 volunteers committed over 5200 hours of their time over the course of the year. These people help with programming such as the mentor program, our after-school program, our exchange loft, as well as with many special events, administration of the centre, and special guests who donate their time.

The Chinese Mentor Program and the after-school program have both benefited from the energetic contributions of local youth volunteers. RTC was able to say thank you to our volunteers in a variety of ways this past year, through gifts, fun outings, sweet treats and a fabulous party.





The Ralph Thornton Centre means trying new activities:

Our status as a ‘Playing for Keeps’ hub through the Toronto Foundation has provided our community with the opportunity to receive training at George Brown College that prepares local residents to become community leaders. With these newly developed skills, Playing for Keeps Ambassadors have hosted neighbourhood games for their fellow residents. The ‘games’ included cooking classes, sports and recreation, and arts-based sessions.

The Toronto Foundation also provided us with a ‘Try-A-Sport’ grant. This funding allowed us to partner with City of Toronto Parks and Recreation to throw an ‘End of Summer’ games day for the camps in the area. 100 children got to try fun activities like Archery, Soccer, Rugby, Parkour, Ball hockey and Basketball, all hosted by local grassroots sports organizations.

The Ralph Thornton Centre means access to technology:

The Exchange Loft, our drop-in computer space, has steadily become busier and busier. Through many pilot programs and community outreach it was determined that a model that seems to work best for the users of the Exchange Loft is to offer one on one tutoring sessions and free access to a bank of computers. Our volunteers each choose an area where they feel most comfortable coaching people, and users of the space book one-hour sessions with the volunteers. The most popular sessions are assistance with resume writing and computer training. Our volunteers have developed strong relationships with community members they have assisted and many book ongoing weekly sessions because they enjoy the assistance so much.





The Ralph Thornton Centre means celebrating community:

The Ralph Thornton Centre loves to meet our community. One of the best ways to do that is through celebrations. Most of these enjoyable events are opportunities to build our partnerships with many other neighbourhood agencies. Both “Neighbours Together on Canada Day” and the “Lunar New Year Celebration” are partnerships among all three orders of government in this area, plus organizations including Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre, WoodGreen, East End Legal Services, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, City of Toronto Parks and Recreation, Bridgepoint Health, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (East Toronto). These two events draw hundreds of community members who come out to enjoy performances and fun activities for kids. After close to 20 years these events have become neighbourhood traditions.



The Tree Festival in Leslie Grove Park, strongly supported by Councillor Paula Fletcher (below) has become another annual event RTC enjoys being a part of, providing an opportunity for children to make “Grass Heads” – a very popular children’s activity.

RTC sits on the Riverside Business Improvement Area (BIA) Marketing Committee, where we help to plan many neighbourhood events. The large annual street fair “Eats and Beats” takes place each spring on the same weekend as Riverdale Art Walk. This year, RTC offered a “Coffee House” in the auditorium, complete with coffee from “Klink Coffee,” a social enterprise supporting ex-offenders, and a “mugging” fund-raiser that generated \$500 towards RTC’s food security work.

RTC also continues to lead the Halloween kids costume parade that happens annually along Queen Street East. This event is supported by the BIA, local businesses, and community agency partners.

The inaugural Riverside Wine Fest, hosted by Chef Scott of Culinary Adventure Tours and the BIA, was deemed a success, with a great attendance and positive feedback from participants and organizers alike. RTC hosted a wine tasting as part of the Festival, and we look forward to continuing to play an important role in this weeklong event.



The Ralph Thornton Centre means improving access to food:

RTC has been supporting various community led initiatives. The Riverdale Food Working Group (RFGW) has initiated and supported a range of activities in our local neighbourhood such as workshops, movie nights and the Good Food Markets – including the Good Food Market which takes place Thursday afternoons right outside RTC -- and Harvest Meals. RTC has helped to support these initiatives through volunteer support, providing space, and having a presence on the RFGW committees.



The Ralph Thornton Centre means working for social and economic justice:

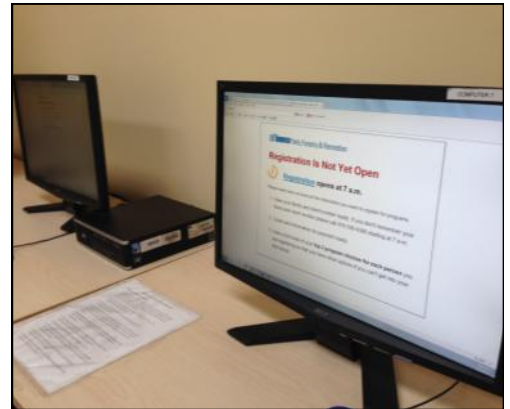
The Health and Strength Action Group has been a grass roots group in the neighbourhood for 6 years now, focusing on issues related to poverty reduction. The members all have lived experience and they support advocacy campaigns such as Put Food in the Budget, the Fair Fare Coalition, Commitment 2 Community, and the minimum wage campaign. This group does amazing work offering workshops to help others understand some of the causes of poverty and they attend actions and government meetings to advocate for better rights. RTC provides support and resources to help keep the group active and animated.



The Ralph Thornton Centre means building community:

In **Rivertowne**, over the past year, RTC continued our long history of work to support this diverse community. Important to mention is the work of Ulli Groppler, Rivertowne Community Development Supervisor. Ulli worked tirelessly with the community to support community engagement activities such as the Amazing Race, community clean ups, the 'Hoops, Hops and Hopes' program, and community led initiatives such as the breakfast program, SWAG girls basketball, homework club, annual BBQ and holiday dinner. This 'on the ground' work was complimented by Ulli's ability to bring together key stakeholders such as community agencies, city divisions, police, TCH and the city councillor's office.

Since Ulli's departure in December, RTC has continued to support a range of community development initiatives in Rivertowne. Responding to the needs of local residents RTC supported the start-up of a Good Food Market in the Rivertowne community. Led by community leaders, including Joan King, and a range of volunteers, the market supported food access and community engagement through the sale of affordable, nutritious food.



The Ralph Thornton Centre means a place to feel confident:

The Mentor Program has continued to successfully deliver support to Chinese newcomer children from Grades 1 to 6 in learning the English language and smoothing their transition to Canada over the past year.

The mentor program was fully enrolled and attended throughout the year with a continuing waiting list. There are three sessions a year, serving a total of 345 individuals (112 mentees, 83 volunteers, 150 parents), with the children's attendance rate being over 98%. Throughout the year we hosted a number of public events, workshops, conferences, and distributed a variety of publications. This increased our contact with the community to a total number of 765 participants.



“My son got the first A in the school exams after attending the program. I can’t believe that he progressed a lot!”

“I feel that my daughter is more confident in trying new things in her studies and made less mistakes in her work!”

These kinds of comments are the best rewards for all our mentor program volunteers and staff. The children and youth volunteers mutually benefitted from the program. Some of the youth volunteers also struggled during their own settlement time, but fortunately received support from community, school, mentors etc. They were glad to have an opportunity to give back to the community while improving their own leadership, communication, teaching, and problem solving skills.

“For the past few months, I have been volunteering as a tutor for this program and it has been an immense privilege and extremely rewarding experience that I will treasure forever! The children come in with so much enthusiasm and it is gratifying to watch them blossom and grow during their time here. They not only gain valuable language skills that will ultimately aid in their academic journeys and futures, but they meet new people, gain communication skills and confidence, and get emerged in new cultures which in turn help them adapt to this new chapter of their lives.”—Heba

“For many of us, coming to a totally new country can be an overwhelming experience. Imagine how difficult it may be for the children... I benefited from the program at RTC because it showed me how important it is to aid new students to adjust to a new environment, make connections and feel empowered to take charge of their own success.”—Evian

The mentor program also partnered with Frontier College, the South Riverdale Community Health Centre, Toronto Public Library, and other partners in delivering workshops, sharing resources, making connections, and supporting effective referrals.

The Ralph Thornton Centre means RAC Camp!

The Riverdale Adventure Camp provided the opportunity for eighty children a week, for nine weeks during the summer, to spend a week engaging in a variety of safe, supervised, fun activities. With the support of Metropolitan Community Church Toronto (MCCT) and generous individual donors, we were able to expand the program from eight to ten counsellors and extend it by one week, to provide targeted opportunities for children from LGBTQ families as well more children from our immediate local community to participate.



The Ralph Thornton Centre means a place to meet:

Since its establishment, RTC has provided a place for local community organizations to meet – for social and recreational activities, to plan and implement advocacy and public awareness campaigns, to share skills and resources, and to simply have fun. Over the last year, we have welcomed a number of new users, including Toronto Neighbourhood Centres, the St. John’s Ambulance Therapy Dog Program, and, during the Pan Am Games, the 519 Church St. Sunday Drop In.

The Ralph Thornton Centre means a place to grow:

In September 2015, RTC reintroduced an after-school program, in partnership with Eastview Community Neighbourhood Centre Boys and Girls Club, offering after school care for local children 6-12 years of age.

The Ralph Thornton Centre continues to provide a home for the South Riverdale Child-Parent Centre, a vibrant, vital community resource, as well as the Queen/Saulter Branch of the Toronto Public Library. We value our continued, strengthening relationships with both of these important institutions.



The Ralph Thornton Centre means transition and change:

Over the past year, RTC bid farewell to **Ulli Groppler**, who had been Rivertowne Community Development Supervisor, and to **Sandra Partridge**, long-time RTC Receptionist. We want to acknowledge and thank them for their significant contributions to the Centre and the community, and wish them all the best in the next steps in their life journeys. We've welcomed Program Director **Maria Moutsatsos**, Receptionist **Rose Scher**, and Executive Director **John Campey** as new members of the RTC team.

We also want to acknowledge the contributions of departing RTC Board members;

Maggi Redmonds, who has served on the Board for six years in a variety of capacities and given countless hours to ensuring that RTC remains a vital, value-based community resource. We will be always grateful for Maggi's mentorship and strong leadership during some of the Board's more challenging times;

Chris May, who played an important role in ensuring the Centre's governance, communications, and fund-raising capacity was updated and strengthened, with particular emphasis on his efforts. In particular, we are excited for the results of the Centre's website redesign, a process that Chris was close to;

Derek Chan, who brought his expertise to bear on the Finance and OP&E Committees. Derek was our board financial expert, ensuring that a steady hand was guiding our financial decisions; and

Adrienne DeFrancesco, who championed our fund-raising, membership, and policy development work. Adrienne was a strong representative for the community as well as a vocal advocate for diversity and inclusion efforts. All of them will be missed, and their support of the Centre is greatly appreciated.

The Ralph Thornton Centre means improved, effective governance:

Since approving the Centre's Renewal Plan at the last AGM, the RTC Board has moved forward to develop, approve, and implement a robust governance and policy framework, as well as strategies to move the organization forward in a number of key areas such as communications and information. Key milestones have included approval of a Privacy Policy, a draft Executive Limitations Policy, and a Data Collection Policy and Evaluation Strategy. The Board and its active committee structure has provided important support and guidance for RTC through a period of significant change and transformation.

Ralph Thornton Centre Board of Management, 2014-2015

Hongmei Cai, Derek Chan, Maggi Redmonds, Graham Chernoff (back row, left to right), **Linda Chebichii Mackay, Michele Harding, Jennifer King, Andrew Chong**, (front row, left to right (William Arthur King Stuebing, honorary Board Member, in Snugli), **Cynthia Fleming** (front with Copper)
Absent: **Adrienne DeFrancesco, Chris May, Chris Shantz.**



Audited Annual Financial Statement of Operations

For the year ended December 31st 2014

Administration/Core City Funding* Revenue

City of Toronto	666,465
Toronto Public Library	39,364

Program Revenue

Province of Ontario	-
Government of Canada	8,815
City of Toronto	43,890
Foundations	28,500
Donations/Fundraising	1,266
Rentals/User Fees	22,342
Other	78,173

Administration Expenses

Salaries and Benefits	446,418
Materials and Supplies	88,577
Purchase of Services	170,834
Amortization of capital assets	1,003
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	(1,003)

Program Expenses

Salaries and Benefits	145,203
Materials and Supplies	2,217
Purchase of Services	20,883
Amortization of capital assets	9,109
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	(8,210)

Total Revenue **888,815**

Total Expenses **875,031**

Total Surplus/(Deficit) **13,784**

* Administration/Core Funding: This is the funding RTC receives from the City of Toronto to keep the building open and accessible to the community—it covers basic salary and benefits as well as hard costs such as insurance, utilities, and maintenance costs.

Ralph Thornton Centre Board of Management

Hongmei Cai

Derek Chan

Graham Chernoff

Andrew Chong (President)

Adrienne DeFrancesco

Cynthia Fleming

Councillor Paula Fletcher

Michele Harding

Jennifer King (Vice-President)

Linda Chebichii Mackay

Chris May

Maggi Redmonds (Secretary)

Chris Shantz (Treasurer)

Ralph Thornton Centre Staff

John Campey (Executive Director)

Peter Dyett (Weekend Reception)

Ted Ellis (Weekend Reception)

Susy Glass (Volunteer Coordinator/Community Animator)

Mark Johnson (Maintenance)

Maria Moutsatsos (Program Director)

Jason Oulds (Weekend Reception)

Rose Scher (Reception)

Ian Sieunarine (Maintenance)

Janice Zhang (Mentor Program Coordinator)

Sajida Khardri (Summer Admin Support)

Ivy Sik (Summer Admin Support)

President's Report

As we send our kids and relatives back-to-school this September, it offers each of us a chance to reflect on the year that was and decide in what ways we can grow and be better this upcoming year. Governance boards should be no different, and the Board at RTC has worked hard over the year to grow.

One of this Board's many responsibilities is to ensure that responsible leadership is in place. Strong leadership ensures that programs are delivered effectively to our targeted demographics. We fulfilled this task this year by undertaking an extensive hiring process over the fall and winter that led us to our current Executive Director, John Campey. John's presence at the Centre has brought a new life within these halls and he constantly inspires me, and those around him, to be better.

In addition to this accomplishment, this past year we continued to implement the results of our Renewal Process that was developed in 2014 and launched at last year's AGM. In a few years the results of this plan will be brought to the membership for your review as we renew again in 2017. Key to the Board's success in delivering on our Renewal Process is the hard work of Maria Moutsatsos, our dedicated Program Director. Her work and dedication to the Centre and the community are exemplary. I am always amazed at her ability to deliver complex programming each time she reports to the Board.

Lastly, the Board has begun to turn its head to policy development to ensure that there is a comprehensive framework for both governance and operations of the Centre; a small sample of which is discussed above. Going forward we hope to deliver more of the same.

In short, it has been a busy year for the Board, but one in which I think we have matured.

A small note to those who deserve thanks for the great year the Centre has had:

Thank you to our dedicated team of staff who ensure the lights in this Centre remain on and that the Centre's mission is being delivered.

Thank you to our members and volunteers; it is through your dedication that we continually deliver excellent programming to the communities we serve.

Finally, thank you to the Board for their hard work this year. It has been my absolute privilege to lead such a dedicated team of volunteers.

Andrew Chong

President, Ralph Thornton Centre Board of Management



Executive Director's Report

To start, I would like to express my thanks to the Board for their strong support since I began my role here as Executive Director in January. Board President Andrew Chong has been particularly helpful. All members of this Board have dedicated significant time and talent to their leadership role at RTC, and it has really made a difference. I also very much appreciate the important contribution and strong support of the RTC staff – a “small but mighty” group, all of who have gone beyond any reasonable expectations to help move us from transition to progress in a very short time.

Personally, I'm very proud to have the opportunity and responsibility of building on the long legacy of programming, advocacy and community service of RTC. In my first few months here, that has included:

- Supporting the great work of the Mentor Program, led by Janice Zhang, which continues to provide a vital opportunity for Chinese-speaking children to work with mentors to strengthen their language, academic, and social skills.
- Continuing to host important community conversations, under the staff leadership of Susy Glass.
- Building on the successful participation of RTC in local food security initiatives, led by Program Director Maria Moutsatsos, to expand our “Good Food Market” to an additional location in Rivertowne;
- Supporting the continuation of RTC's involvement in community engagement and support of the Rivertowne community through some significant transitions in responsibility and resourcing, with Maria picking up significant responsibilities to ensure continuity and support.
- Seeing significantly increased community use of the “Exchange Loft” public access computer bank, as well as growing use of RTC space by a diverse range of user groups – both of these supported by our Reception staff person, Rose Scher.

When I arrived at RTC, I was most impressed by how well maintained, clean, and appealing the physical space is. It's very clear that our two Maintenance staff, Mark Johnson and Ian Sieunarine, both take great pride in how the building looks and is maintained, but also in every aspect of our overall success.

We've also had strong support from both the political and administrative arms of the City of Toronto – Councillor Paula Fletcher, her amazing staff, and Costanza Allevato and the other

City staff responsible for supporting our operations have all worked very hard to ensure that RTC continues to be a vibrant community hub. Interim Executive Director Glen Brown also merits sincere thanks.

Over the past few months, I have worked to strengthen links with our local business community, renew ties with other community institutions such as the agencies and schools serving our area, and to start to find creative, fun ways of reaching out to existing and potential partners. We're working more closely with the Public Library branch and the South Riverdale Parent Child Centre.

We've initiated a fortnightly electronic newsletter – the RTC Update, and we're more active on social media. We've re-established our after school program, and expanded our summer RAC camp to be more inclusive of children from local families with limited incomes, as well as children from LGBTQ families. We're partnering with Nellies' to better serve many of the women that they support, and we've just received additional City funding to renew our work in the Rivertowne community.

We're trying out new ideas such as our Sunday evening “Date Night,” and have initiated some new fundraising opportunities, such as the participation of RTC in the Scotiabank Waterfront Marathon. We've even reached out to our four-legged community – RTC is now a location for St. John's Ambulance to conduct evaluation for their Therapy Dog program.

I'm excited about what has been accomplished over the past year, and look forward to seeing the progress that such a committed, engaged Board, a dedicated, hardworking staff, and a supportive community can accomplish in the coming year. Thanks to everyone for your continued support.

John Campey

Executive Director



Thanks to our Funders and Partners

City of Toronto
Toronto Foundation
Toronto Community Housing
Toronto Foundation for Student Success
Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund
Riverdale Share
Human Resources Development Canada
Metropolitan Community Church Toronto

Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre
519 Community Centre
Nellie's
Riverside BIA
South Riverdale Community Health Centre
Toronto Neighbourhood Centres
WoodGreen

Ralph Thornton Centre

765 Queen St. East
Toronto, ON M4M 1H3
416-392-6810
Fax 416-392-0025

www.ralphthornton.org

www.facebook.com/RalphThorntonCommunityCentre

Twitter @ralphthornton



Ralph
Thornton
Centre