



RALPH THORNTON
COMMUNITY CENTRE

2019/2020



ANNUAL REPORT

VISION MISSION VALUES

OUR VISION Working to ensure a more vibrant, diverse, inclusive, liveable, participatory, healthy, and equitable Riverdale.

OUR MISSION The RTCC is a gathering place that welcomes, connects and engages the community in all its diversity.

OUR VALUES

Inclusion and Respect: The RTCC supports and adheres to the City of Toronto Human Rights and Anti-Harassment Policy. We operate in a manner which models ethical, respectful and inclusive service delivery and employment practices, encourages diverse perspectives, and ensures equitable treatment for all. The RTCC promotes social inclusivity in all its activities and programming.

Equity and Social Justice: The RTCC supports, acts and advocates for solution-focused policies and systemic changes that create long term improvement and fairness for all within our community and the larger society.

Collaboration and Partnership: The RTCC works collaboratively and in partnership with individuals, groups and organizations to achieve our mission and vision. We work in ways that engage community members, foster on-going relationships and build the strengths of the whole community.

Capacity Building: The RTCC supports community members, especially the more marginalized, to increase their ability to solve problems, define and achieve their objectives and fully participate in and contribute to community life.

Community Building: The RTCC actively promotes the building of relationships and collective action across and between our diverse communities to strengthen the whole.

PROGRESS PRIORITIES

RTCC's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan identified six priorities. Over the past year, we have worked to address them in a variety of ways:

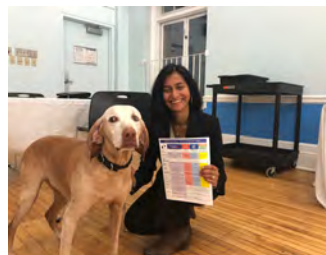
Civic Engagement

FEDERAL ALL-CANDIDATES MEETING AND VOTERS GUIDE

In partnership with *Applegrove* and *Eastview Community Centres*, RTCC hosted All-Candidates meetings for the 2019 Federal election. One was a "traditional" all-candidates meeting, the other, held at RTCC, was an Open House 'meet and greet' attended by all of the candidates (*and Copper, the RTCC Social Media Hound*).

ANIMAL KINGDOM VOTE

As part of our civic engagement focus, the children's programs at RTCC organized an "animal kingdom" vote, with 'polling stations' at the July 1 Canada Day celebration in Riverdale Park



Educational Supports

The Mentor Program was fully enrolled throughout the year of 2019, with a continuing waiting list. The program attendance rate is over 98%. This is one of the indicators that shows the success of the program. The total number of participants for all activities was 1230.

The program met its goals of building the self-confidence and self-esteem of at-risk Chinese speaking children. The program evaluation showed that parents indicated that many children got higher marks at school after attending the program, and other parents indicated that their children felt safe to learn when working one-on-one or within a small group setting, then became more open to others and felt more comfortable when interacting in an English-speaking environment. Some children were able to take risks while facing challenges in learning or take the initiative to seek help.

The youth mentors reported increased confidence in working with children & community at large, a broader range of skills and experiences, and found it rewarding to establish new friendships and to help children grow and develop while developing their own skills. One of the outstanding examples is a long-term volunteer who was accepted by U of T Medical School and who sent us a letter to express gratitude for the mentor program's support.

The program also addressed service gaps in our community. Families with English language barriers, and that have young children, require extra support to integrate. Parent workshops, translations, service referrals, and information sharing were conducted to ensure parents and families were aware of community services, and able to access them. It supports parents to better parent their children in the Canadian context.

Our partnerships with Toronto Public Library, South Riverdale Child-Parent Centre, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, Toronto Star, ROM, AGO, CNE, Kids up Front and Toronto Neighbourhood Centres, among others, have helped strengthen our capacity to deliver this service to the community.



In 2019, the program not only provided direct services to the children who enrolled in the program, it also provided extended service to parents and children who are on waiting list, such as periodic check-ins, information updates, referrals, invitations to our special events, and Christmas gift applications, to help them stay connected. In 2020, due to COVID-19, the Mentor Program shifted to operate virtually in May, reaching 180% of capacity when summer camp started!

There were more than 35 participants attending the program each day, including more than 20 children and 15-17 youth volunteers. Positive feedback from children, youth and parents poured in. They were very happy with how RTCC and the program quickly responded to the changes, moved forward to help them stay connected, and continued to create opportunities for children and youth to learn and develop during this difficult time.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

The After School Program was at full capacity with 30 children registered for the 2019-2020 school year. We resumed the safe walk at Dundas P.S. as well as continued the safe walk from Morse Street P.S. During Program, the children participated in weekly cooking and baking and preparing their own healthy snacks to enjoy.

Every Thursday they participated in open gym at Jimmie Simpson where they could enjoy gross motor activities no matter the weather. While at RTCC, we spent time using our computer lab, using homework help and preparing art & crafts. The children explored various artists preparing for an art show planned for April 2020. The art show was cancelled due to RTCC's closure in March, however we were able to showcase their art in the Saulter Street Stairwell Gallery (Amateur Classics – Oct. 1st to Oct 14, 2020).

Thanks to the generosity of “Kids up front”, we are able to visit the Royal Ontario Museum, Art Gallery of Ontario and Museum of Illusions during our PA day Camps! Following the closure due to the pandemic, the program went online for Fun & Games meet ups on Zoom. The staff prepared and implemented activities online twice per week where the children could get together from the comfort of their own homes until the end of June.

RAC CAMP

This summer, we provided two unique summer camp experiences for children 6 - 12 years old during the month of August. RAC Virtual Camp & RAC In-Person Camp were free of charge and offered four different streams. These four streams included spots for Rivertowne Residents, Local Low Income children, LGBTQ2S families & open to all.

Our RAC Virtual Camp ran every morning from 10:30 am to 11:30 am. Campers participated from home using the Zoom platform. The children experienced similar activities to our in person summer camp but online. All supplies were hand delivered to their homes the Friday before the camp session by our camp staff. RAC In-Person Camp was held at RTCC daily in the afternoon from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. To ensure the safety of staff and campers we followed strict safety precautions.

Camp was the only program held at RTCC in August as the Centre was closed to the public. All staff and campers were required to complete a health screening and temperature checks each day and drop offs and pickups were staggered at the side door. The staff planned a fun, engaging and safe in person summer camp experience. There were 2 Groups; maximum of 2 staff and 8 children per group. Groups were in separate rooms with their own washroom facilities.

VOLUNTEERS AT RTCC

Many of RTCC's programs grew in 2019. Despite the work stoppage due to COVID-19 we still engaged many community members in the last year. From June 2019- June 2020 86 volunteers contributed 3802 hours to support the Centre's programming.



Above: RAC Camp 2019
Below: RAC Camp 2020



BRINGING OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER



NON PROFIT RECOGNITION DAY

RTCC works in partnership with other community organizations to make many local 'special events' a success:

- RTCC hosted Toronto's first Non-Profit Recognition Day luncheon
- **The Antler Breakfast** – this annual fund-raiser for the Rivertowne Breakfast Program, in partnership with **TO Food Tours**, the Riverside BIA, and Rivertowne Safety 1st, raised over \$6,000 in 2019
- In 2020, many community events that are a part of our community calendar were cancelled or moved online. RTCC looks forward to their return in the coming year!

STWM



HALLOWEEN



RTCC OPEN HOUSE

ANTLER BREAKFAST



TNC EQUITY FORUM

LIBRARY 40TH BIRTHDAY



DRAG QUEEN STORYTIME



REPAIR CAFÉ

- **Repair Café** – At the July 2019 event, almost 100 items were fixed.
- We celebrated the 40th anniversary of the **Queen/Saulters Library** with a "surprise" party
- **Halloween Party** – the rain didn't stop over 200 children and families participating in a range of fun activities.
- **RTCC Open House** – involved over 20 RTCC user groups, and brought over 300 people into the building to showcase the programming that takes place in the building.
- **Promoting business 'communities'** RTCC provides a venue for events like the "*Indigenous and Ingenious*" Show and Sale, and the *Caribbean Street Food Festival* – showcasing entrepreneurs from Toronto's diverse communities.



MARGARET'S PEER TRAINING GRADUATION

BRINGING OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER

LUNAR NEW YEAR



Financial Literacy

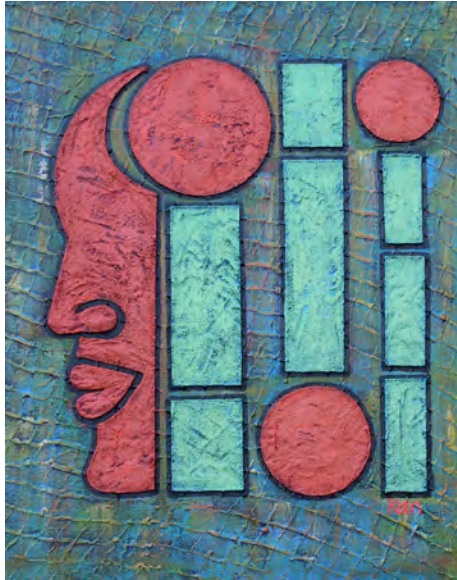
TAX FILER CLINIC

RTCC's 2020 Tax Clinic looked very different this year due to COVID-19, which made in-person appointments impossible. In April, the Toronto Neighbourhood Centres "Financial Security through Tax Filing" partners met to discuss ways to move our tax clinics online. On May 7 we were able to re-open the RTCC tax Clinic virtually. About 50% of our previously booked clients still required appointments.

Since May, two RTCC staff have been offering appointments to community members either via online meetings or, if clients were not able to participate in a videoconference, they could drop their paperwork off at RTCC and we completed their tax return over the phone with them.

The 2020 Tax Clinic will be continuing to offer a few appointments a week throughout the year.

As of Sept 24, 2020 the tax clinic had assisted 44 individuals with their returns, with a total of \$151,966.51 coming back to low income recipients in our community.



THE STAIRWELL GALLERY

The impressive heritage marble staircase at the Saulter Street entrance is finding new life as the "Stairwell Gallery" – providing a free venue where a diverse field of artists display their work for a six week long exhibition.



Technological Aptitude

EXCHANGE LOFT

RTCC's Exchange Loft, our public access computer bank, continued to provide many individuals with access to computers, internet, fax, telephone, and other basic office services. COVID-19 has required a reconfiguration of that space with half the number of computers to facilitate physical distancing. Since our re-opening after Labour Day, we are seeing a steady increase in the use of this important service.

In 2018, the Exchange Loft saw 1225 unique users, for a total of 5872 visits over the year. In 2019, the number of unique users increased to 1512, for a total of 7034 visits - an annual increase of over 20%. This is clearly a much needed service in our community - one we are working hard to maintain during the pandemic.

RTCC FINANCIAL REPORT

	2019	2018
Administration Revenue*		
City of Toronto	756,386	734,021
Toronto Public Library	39,894	39,364
Total Administration Revenue	796,280	773,385
Program Revenue		
Grants		
City of Toronto	55,838	46,750
Government of Canada	33,857	26,578
Foundations	14,843	14,000
Other	13,035	13,240
Donations	22,530	21,898
Fundraising	19,831	22,243
Rental Income	56,186	33,133
User Fees	103,143	72,445
Other Revenue	17,974	7,007
Total Program Revenue	337,234	257,294
TOTAL REVENUE	1,133,514	1,030,679
Administration Expenses*		
Salaries and Benefits	654,719	637,793
Materials and Supplies	85,558	78,865
Purchase of Services	56,003	56,727
Total Administration Expenses	796,280	773,385
Program Expenses		
Salaries and Benefits	227,715	211,948
Materials and Supplies	23,812	17,835
Purchase of Services	56,878	55,225
Amortization of Capital Assets	1,990	2,506
Total Program Expenses	310,395	287,514
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,106,675	1,060,899
TOTAL SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	(26,839)	(30,220)

* Administration/Core Funding: This is the funding RTCC 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.



RTCC BOARD OF MANAGEMENT:

Hamdi Jimale, Councillor Paula Fletcher, Ejay Tupe, John Bradford, Megan Lorius, Janet Routliffe, Caleb Edwards, Julia Peters, Alan Lennon (President) Sharon Ho, Ryan Acayan, Ed Nagy (Missing) Christine Chen

RTCC STAFF:

Grace Cameron (Reception); John Campey (Executive Director); Andrew Fuller (Children's Program Support); Susy Glass (Volunteer Coordinator); Colleen Gray (Manager: Strategic Initiatives); Glenn Gustafson (Business Manager); Wenlin Huang (Reception); Robin Irwin (Children's Program Support); Mark Johnson (Maintenance); Lainey Little (Children's Program Coordinator); Ebrahim Lulat (Children's Program Support); Amber Marsden (Children's Program Support); Jason Oulds (Weekend Maintenance); Maia Richards (Children's Program Support); Rose Scher (Reception); Ian Sieunarine (Maintenance); Mariah Wheeler (Children's Program Support); Janice Zhang (Mentor Program Coordinator)

CONTRACT, CASUAL AND RELIEF STAFF:

Drew Dopwell, Conley Downey, Dominick Downey, Nicoletta Ioannidis; Stephen Devine, Mark Kovats (Bookkeeping); Stephen Bunt (Information Technology) Ulli Groppler (Rivertowne Community Development)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As Dickens wrote in 1859, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times" (A Tale of Two Cities), he wasn't describing 2019-2020 for the Ralph Thornton Community Centre but he could have been.

Beginning in the summer of 2019, RTCC launched a period of excellent programming, well-used facilities and balanced, if not better than balanced, books. And then there was March 13, 2020 – when the city announced that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all community centers were closed for the foreseeable future.

Before going into the year, I want to thank the board and staff for their support of my presidency during this difficult year. We are a group of diverse, disparate individuals who have all contributed enormously to the success of RTCC. I would like to acknowledge in particular the contribution of those who are leaving or have left the board –

Janet Wilson

Hamdi Jimale

Ed Nagy

Sharon Ho

Megan Lorius

Bill Somerville

Their contributions to the Centre cannot be overstated.

Thanks to the work of the past few years, we were able to continue to meet the objectives of our strategic plan. We were involved in the fall federal election holding all candidates meetings and a variety of votes before the election itself.

We continue to support the provision of the democracy fundamentals program in collaboration with Toronto Neighbourhood Centres. Our educational support programs including the Mentor Program, After School Program and PA day camps continue to be popular with both children and their parents. Our exchange loft continues to be a well-used and important community resource. As we moved into the third year of the plan, we were planning to focus more on what RTCC could do in the area of Affordable Housing as well broaden our activities in other areas. The fact that we have a plan has allowed us to focus on doing what we can in these key areas and supporting the community where we can.

However, all plans run into difficulty. The Centre was completely closed from mid-March until August. During that time, we continued to provide our staff with salary so that their lives would not be completely undermined by the pandemic. Management held weekly virtual staff meetings to ensure that staff members were alright and up to date on developments. In a very small way it can be read that other than meetings/tax clinic/summer camp, the staff weren't doing much else during the closure. During this period, staff maintained online communication with parents/kids in the After School Program and conducted the Mentor Program entirely online. Staff offered volunteer labour to Mustard Seed so that their lunch programme could both continue and expand during the pandemic. Staff worked with

management to develop a COVID reopening plan for the center which is now being implemented.

It cannot be emphasized too much how fortunate RTCC is to have a group of workers so committed to the well-being of the Centre and the community. Thanks to their work we were able to complete our commitments around the Tax Clinic, develop a hybrid summer camp and successfully run it in August and prepare for a reopening in September.

While we are ready to go with programming in the new environment, our finances have, not surprisingly, taken a serious hit. Our program revenues, room rental revenues and fundraising revenues were virtually all zero for the past six months. At this point, our challenge will be to rebuild our room rental base and fundraising capacity so that we can expand the programming we have provided to the community in the past.

The contributions of the Board, the staff, the volunteers and the members of this Centre have been again remarkable. It has been an honour to have had led such an effective and hardworking team and I look forward to working with our newly constituted board over the next months. We had been moving forward for part of this year and are ready to move forward again as the pandemic recedes. Ralph Thornton will be different – but it will still be our community centre.

Alan Lennon
President, Board of Management



RTCC's mission is to be a 'gathering place.' Community residents packed the Riverdale Auditorium to hear about plans for the Ontario Line

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It seems that everything we do takes twice as long – and often costs twice as much – to provide service or support to half as many individuals! Working from home, distancing, the need for personal protective equipment, masks, ventilation, and so many other changes have created real barriers to accomplishing our goals, but RTCC staff, Board, and volunteers have worked together to restore programming that serves the needs of our community.

COVID-19 has forced us to work differently, and to partner in new ways. We have made new and valuable connections with community partners like Mustard Seed, and made us more aware of the challenges faced by the local businesses who comprise our BIA partners, our local schools, and the other agencies that serve local residents. We are truly 'all in this together!'

As always, I want to express appreciation to the staff team at RTCC – who have responded to the pandemic with flexibility, creativity, solidarity, and commitment. The

Looking back at last year's Annual Report was a reminder of a world- and a Centre – that now seem like they are from another era. Everything has changed, but so much remains the same.

leadership and support of the RTCC Board, and the shared sacrifice of all RTCC staff, enabled us to support all of our staff and avoid layoffs through the spring and into the summer.

Despite the uncertainty created by almost daily change – the number of COVID cases in the City and Province, the different regulations in 'Stage One, Stage Two, and Stage Three,' rapidly changing information about what was safer and what was a greater risk of transmission – the RTCC staff continued to come together to maintain and restore programming – pivoting to offer programming online, moving from group programming to individual support, and making "Zoom" an integral part of our lives.

I continue to be grateful for the support that RTCC receives from our dedicated Board of Management and committed staff, from our community partners (particularly Toronto Public Library and the South Riverdale Child-Parent Centre) and funders, from the City of Toronto and our City Councillor Paula Fletcher, and the many volunteers who support our governance, programming, and outreach. The Ralph Thornton Community Centre is a beautiful building, but having the building closed for so many months showed that it is so much more – it is also the people who make it a vital community hub.

John Campey
Executive Director

MANY THANKS!

*Thanks to our Board of Management,
Centre staff, Funders, Partners, Volunteers and
Community Members for your continued support.*

Funders and Partners: City of Toronto, Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre, Human Resources Development Canada, Jimmie Simpson Recreation Centre, Nellie's, Ralph Thornton Community Organization, Riverside BIA, Riverdale Share, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, South Riverdale Child-Parent Centre, Streetcar Developments, Toronto Community Housing, Toronto Foundation for Student Success, Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund, Toronto Neighbourhood Centres, Toronto Public Library - Queen/Saulter Branch, WoodGreen Community Services

The Ralph Thornton Community Centre is an agency of the City of Toronto, operating under an independent community Board of Management. RTCC appreciates the over \$750,000 per year in core operating funds, along with major capital project funding, provided by the City.



Cover Photo: The COVID-19 pandemic meant that much of our lives moved online - and "Zoom" became the way that a great deal of our business - and programming - was conducted. Our Mentor program moved entirely online, with Mentor Program Coordinator Janice Zhang training mentors, students - and their parents - how to use this online platform.



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