

RYSASUN

Hot News for Cool Youth

June 2007

RYSAs (ree-sah)



Intergenerational Forum

Alice Huang

Seniors and teenagers seem to be two very separate groups of people. When asked to describe each other, endless stereotypes are mentioned. However, on March 1st, 2007 Richmond Youth Service Agency and McMath Secondary School hosted an Intergenerational Forum which helped prove these stereotypes wrong. Melanie Tremblay, RYSA's Youth Centre Manager, and a group of Leadership 11 students from McMath organized and planned for this successful event. The

purpose of this forum was to bring together the seniors and youth and discuss the reasons why they are so disconnected from each other and what could be done to improve this situation.

Thanks to Richmond's Mayor Malcom Brodie, the event started off with a great introduction. He began by explaining the importance of maintaining good relationships between...

Continued on last page...

Street Beet: Who do you think is more prone to being a victim of violent crime: seniors or youth? Why?

Compiled by Kim Co

"50/50 because seniors are more vulnerable and less likely to successfully defend themselves therefore making them more prone for an easy target. But youth are also prone to violence because of exposure to factors such as unstable households and media" – Joan, age 15

"Seniors because they can't protect themselves." – Dominique, age 13

"Youth because most people respect seniors but youth get into gang fights." – Erika, age 14

"Youth because they're tinier and weak. But seniors too because they're...old."

- Iola, age 16

"Seniors because of their old age, some people look at that with respect but others use it as an advantage." - Serwaah, age 15

"Youth! D'uh! Because nobody cares about the seniors! Except me...I love seniors."

- Anne, age 15

For more hot reads, check out www.richmondyouthcentre.com



Richmond
Youth Centre

Justice Doesn't Have to Be Served Behind Bars

By Alice Huang



Despite what we see in the media, the most crimes committed by youth are not violent in nature. Incarceration—serving jail time—has become a less popular sentencing objective for young offenders. In the past, there was no opportunity for young offenders to understand the impact of their crime. Victims received little closure for their difficulties. Today, restorative justice is gaining momentum as an excellent alternative to help young offenders address their problems and pay restitution to their community.

Restorative justice is not a new concept, but it has only increased in popularity in the past few years. Most crimes committed by young offenders are minor offences such as theft and mischief. Youth who commit these minor offences are usually referred a community justice forum by the RCMP or a probation officer. The Youth Criminal Justice Act, which is the criminal law of youth ages 12-17, encourages the use of “extrajudicial measures” as alternatives to the court process. “If young offenders go through the court process, they won’t hear from their victim and won’t understand the impact of their actions,” says Haroon Bajwa, coordinator for the Restorative Justice Program at Touchstone Family Association. Restorative justice makes the offender take responsibility for their actions and gives the victim a chance to voice their feelings and experience closure.

Participation in a restorative justice program is optional and the offender must admit to the offence before participating. During a Restorative Justice Community Forum, the victim, offender, supporters, and a facilitator will discuss the impact of the offender’s actions and collectively decide on a suitable resolution for the offender. Misunderstanding and negative stereotyping can occur between the victim and offender, particularly if they are of different generations. Restorative justice strives to create a mutual understand-

ing between all parties affected. Young offenders realize the impact of their crime on their victim’s life and society as a whole. A facilitator will maintain a neutral role in encouraging discussion and guiding the participants to decide on a resolution (sentence) for the offender. Resolution commitments can include community service, counselling, writing an essay, or a job search. Community justice forums can be held in many environments, such as a school or workplace, which are more calming than a rigid courtroom setting.



However, Canada still has the highest rates of youth incarceration among developed nations. But if restorative justice is so effective at rehabilitating first-time offenders, why isn’t it used more often? Haroon Bajwa believes societal beliefs limit restorative justice’s effectiveness: “Restorative justice’s long-term growth and success depends on overcoming very large obstacles, such as the public’s attitude on crime and how it should be dealt with, as well as the bias of political, legal, economical and informational institutions that traditionally favour the historically established court system.” There is still a negative assumption that restorative justice is too “soft” on the offender, when in fact, it is very difficult for the offender to meet their victim. However, as the benefits of restorative justice are made evident, more people will seek extrajudicial measures as a way to fully rehabilitate and reintegrate young offenders back into society.

Facts courtesy of the Touchstone Family Association and the Canadian Department of Justice

**Do you want to volunteer
but need flexibility?
Then join RYSA’s Volunteer
Youth Crew. Email Eugene
at eugenel@rysa.bc.ca
to sign up.**

For more hot reads, check out www.richmondycyouthcentre.com



**Richmond
Youth Centre**

Becoming Naomi León

Erica Li

Can we ever become somebody else? Can we just step into their shoes and live their lives? Do we really understand the connection between our grandparents and us?

What does Naomi go through every day with her grandma? How does her grandma feel about raising Naomi?



Meet Naomi Soledad León Outlaw, an elementary school student living with her grandma and her younger brother. She loves spending the nights with her grandma and brother in a park trailer surrounded by caring neighbors and wildlife. Her favorite pastimes: making lists and carving soap. Life is beautiful, until Naomi's mother, Terry Lynn, unexpectedly shows up and tries to break the close-knit family apart. [Becoming Naomi León](#) is about a girl's struggle to keep the bond strong between in her family, even if the family is only her, her brother, and her grandma. Throughout the story, we are able to feel the grandmotherly love and protection. By experiencing the novel through Naomi's eyes, we are able to enlighten ourselves about issues between youths and seniors.

Young at Hearts

Erica Li

A place like home, not home but close. The smell of dinner, the feel of warmth, the chatter of friends. As I walked through the glass doors, I could hear the low clattering of spoons and forks, the smell of dinner, the calming yellow walls and fancy decorations; the smile of my friend in greeting. Paige Qin volunteers at Rosewood Manor, a seniors' home, where she assists mealtimes and socializes with the seniors. As I proceeded down the corridors to the special care unit with Paige, I was astonished by the simple but beautiful layout of the manor. The flowery paintings and elaborate furniture lightened my mood and refreshed my weary mind. I met two lovely grandparents there, Sylvia and Jim Wood. At Rosewood Manor, they admit they are "more appreciative" of youths because when they were young and working, they were too busy with their own life to really interact with youths.



However, they say they learned a lot more in Rosewood by interacting with the volunteers. Jim eyes' twinkle as he tells of his and his wife's favorite pastime: traveling. They have been to everywhere, England, Germany, New York, and Nairobi – just to name a few. As Paige says, Sylvia, Jim, and the seniors are still "young at hearts". Paige chose to help out at Rosewood Manor because she enjoys helping people and giving "back to the community as the seniors themselves have made lots of contributions". She has learned a great deal there, and is still learning more about the facts of life and about seniors. She believes that in connecting with seniors, Richmond will be the best place to be.

If you would like to broaden your knowledge about Rosewood Manor, visit

<http://www.rosewoodmanor.org>

For more hot reads, check out www.richmondyouthcentre.com



Richmond Youth Centre



Questions?
Suggestions?
Story Ideas?

Contact

Eugene Lim at 604-271-7600 ext 155
OR
eugenel@rysa.bc.ca
The Richmond Youth Centre is located
at 4-11220 Voyager Way, Richmond

FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER CLUB

Mounds of mouth-watering meals have made their way out of the youth community kitchen and into the bellies of bouncing and bubbly youth this spring. We've created (and eaten) everything from Aloha Burgers to Japanese noodle bowls to Banana Boats to homemade pizza.

There's lots to do at the Richmond Youth Centre after your belly is full and warm and fuzzy. We've got movies, theme nights, parties, crafts, karaoke, games, sports and whatever your imagination leads you to.

The Youth Centre is a safe, drug-free environment for youth to hang out with other teens.

Please check out our website www.youthcentre.com for weekly updates.

Next Dinner Club will be held **Friday June 22nd, 2007 from 3 pm to 7pm.**



Intergenerational Forum ...continued from page 1

generations and the programs that Richmond offers to keep the seniors and youth connected.

At the forum was also a great guest speaker, Keith Pattinson, former Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Lower Mainland. He captured the audience's attention with his humour and shared very inspiring stories. Keith Pattinson stated that "trusting relationships between [seniors and youth] change the world for the better. Convince yourself to work together to make it happen." At one point, Keith asked the youth and seniors to have a conversation about important figures in their life. Students were really interested to share their future goals with the seniors during this discussion.

After a short break, the seniors and youth were organized into small discussion groups. Important topics were discussed such as

"What can seniors and youth do to stay

connected?"

The two greatest responses were that they would like to bond through technology and story telling. Many of the seniors felt that the younger generations can help them with the use of computers. The youth showed high interest in the stories the seniors shared. This valuable information will be used by the Richmond Youth Service Agency to create program that will enable the youth and seniors to stay connected.

Overall, this forum was very successful. Most of the people who attended said they were highly satisfied with the quality of the forum. One student said "the one-on-one conversation was very touching! I've never met the woman before but her words of wisdom were so inspiring." Through this forum the seniors and youth gained knowledge about each other and realized that they aren't so different after all.

For more hot reads, check out www.richmondyouthcentre.com

