



Press Release

CACHCA 2011 Community Health Award

June 9th, 2011

CACHCA Recognizes Ontario Youth for Community Health Innovation

This afternoon, the Canadian Alliance of Community Health Centre Associations (CACHCA) awarded its 2011 Community Health Award to teens from the Gateway Community Health Centre (CHC) Youth Jazz Ensemble in Tweed, Ontario. The pan-Canadian award was presented at an international health conference being jointly hosted by CACHCA, the Association of Ontario Community Health Centres (AOHC) and the US National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) in Toronto. This year, CACHCA joined efforts with these other leading healthcare associations to host this international conference focused on global leadership in community-oriented primary health care, with attendees coming from across Canada and the United States, as well as Australia, Belgium, Brazil, England, South Africa, Sweden and a dozen other countries to share their experiences in advancing comprehensive primary health care solutions, including CHCs.

Located in Tweed, Ontario, Gateway CHC is one of 73 CHCs in Ontario, and one of roughly 300 spread across Canada. Doug Stevenson, a health promoter at Gateway CHC, noted that when CACHCA released its call for Community Health Award nominations in early 2011, he and colleagues saw the opportunity to submit a video describing the success of the Gateway CHC Youth Jazz Ensemble, featuring the students playing music and talking about how the band has become important to them and their health.

“For almost all of these kids, it was the first time they had ever attempted music,” said Doug. “So to see how far they’ve come - not only individually, but also as a team - has been truly inspiring. That’s why I wanted to make sure we made a video of the program, in the hope that their story would inspire others as well, making the connection between youth programming and health.”

At today’s award presentation, CACHCA’s Chairperson, Jack McCarthy, stated that the GCHC Youth Jazz Ensemble exemplifies “community engagement for health” and noted that the pan-Canadian award underscores CACHCA’s commitment to helping shift Canada’s health system from one that merely treats illness to one that does a better job keeping Canadians healthy in the first place.

“CACHCA presents this Community Health Award to recognize the importance of community involvement in health, and the way that CHCs act as places that bring individuals and families together to achieve and maintain health. By helping local youth build confidence and by equipping them with healthy coping and learning skills, the GCHC Youth Jazz Ensemble is doing much more than making sweet music – it is keeping youth healthy and preparing them for healthy lives, in healthy communities.”

Lyn Linton, Executive Director of Gateway CHC said that the inspiration for a music program for local youth came from receiving donations from the community in memory of Alberta Young, a local leader. “Over the years, Alberta and her family have shared their musical talents in the Tweed area, inspiring others to share theirs, and we want to keep this spirit alive,” noted Linton. Describing how Tweed residents have enjoyed many community concerts hosted by the Young Family, Linton said “that being inspired is one thing but seeing the Gateway CHC Youth Jazz Ensemble program become a reality is another.” The Board of Directors, employees and the Young Family confirmed that having a music



program for their local youth was a positive way to engage students in an activity that promoted education and provided youth with a forum to enhance academic achievement, and develop self-esteem and self-confidence while working within a team. Lyn credited Carrie Salsbury, Program Director for moving the program from an idea to reality and for obtaining the start up funds from the Trillium Foundation. Jessica Hudson, Music Director and the students worked together to make the first year of the program a success. “It is truly uplifting to see these young individuals come together to play music, and at the same time gain tools for healthy lives,” said Linton.

The Gateway CHC Youth Jazz Ensemble has been funded by the Trillium Foundation for three years and has also been supported through a donation from Tim Horton’s. Program Director, Carrie Salsbury said “we have another two years to obtain financial sponsors so the program can continue so both Doug Stevenson and myself will be calling on local businesses and clubs to garner some support”.

To view a video from Gateway CHC Youth Jazz Ensemble visit the CACHCA YouTube channel at:
www.youtube.com/user/CACHCAandRCACCS

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