

Inner City & Youth Initiatives Committee

A brief look at the history of our partnership.....

In 1992 the Rotary Club of Hamilton assigned a priority to the needs of inner city neighbourhoods and the agencies that serviced them. In keeping with their strategic direction, a focus on disadvantaged youth emerged and led ultimately to the creation of the Child Poverty Task Force, which is the predecessor to the Inner City School Committee (May 29th, 2002). The Inner City School Committee is comprised of Rotarians, community members interested in the concept of community development and a Public Health Nurse.

In 1997 a Rotarian from this committee approached an elementary principal at Robert Land School, in the Keith neighbourhood, and asked, “What can we do to help”? The simple request for “apples and dictionaries” has developed into a proud community driven partnership between the Rotary Club of Hamilton and the citizens of the Keith Community with the majority of activities pertaining to the students at this school.

The following projects were identified from a review of the minutes:

- In 1999 the community saw the first hands on project, which involved the greening of the school playground
- Redevelopment of North Central Community Park – a \$5,000 contribution from the Rotarians that was supported financially from the City of Hamilton, which resulted in a \$60,000 playground, being built instead of a baseball diamond that saw little use by the community.
- Peer mentoring by Rotarians who contributed an hour a week in assisting with literacy and math skills for students
- Christmas Breakfast has been organized since 1999 and Rotarians have ensured that there are small gifts for all the students at the school
- 1,028 students have been able to participate in day trip activities over the past 3 years. This number prior to Rotary involvement was 0.
- For two years in a row there has been a presentation of music in the park – “Jazz on Mars” – where high school and elementary bands participate in friendly competition. This event is held during school hours and into the early evening enabling the entire community to participate. The community, according to their own determined needs, used fund-raising proceeds from this event.

- The Art Gallery of Hamilton offered an eight-week art program for students via the coordinating efforts of The Rotary Club
- The homework club has been provided with a new TV and VCR as well as second hand computers.
- Since 2001 the Rotarians have taken two classes on a conservation walking tour which finishes with a BBQ provided by Rotary Club?
- The Mom's kitchen was provided with a stove.
- Since 2001 the Rotary club has funded the YMCA to lead a 3:1 arts, crafts and gym program at Robert Land.
- A homework club was started in 2002 to provide support for children with their homework – this was identified after a lengthy search to find a project that would be identified as a “Major Project” for the Rotary Club of Hamilton. The homework club is administered by the YMCA and is offered four evenings each week. Fund-raising efforts from the YMCA also covers the direct costs of this program.
- In 2001 the three-week Summer Literacy commenced in four elementary schools. Sanford, King George, Gibson and Robert Land. Thirty children at each site are assisted in the preparation for getting back to school endeavouring to overcome the learning lag that occurs for some children over the summer months. This program was funded by the City of Hamilton, The Hamilton Community Foundation (in the first year) The Rotary Club of Hamilton and administered by The Hamilton YWCA.
- Annually the Rotary Club of Hamilton is contributing over \$30,000.00 to the various projects and matching funding opportunities in the Keith Community. Rotary Club dollars have helped leverage grants from the Hamilton Community Foundation, the City of Hamilton, private donors and The Samuel and Saidye Bronfman Family Foundation, more than doubling the Rotary Club contribution annually.

The closing of Robert Land School....

In 2004 the school closed and many of the students would start to attend Benetto School or Sanford Avenue School. The Keith Neighbourhood Committee remained and support from Rotary continued.

Rotarians met with the Principal at Benetto School to start similar programs that were offered at the former Robert Land School. There were partnerships with other groups already existing at Benetto.

Rotary operated the following projects at this school:

- Summer Literacy
- Weekly literacy/reading volunteers
- Christmas celebration

The partnership and desire of Rotary to do more was not met with open arms from school administrators. The ICYIC began a process to connect with a school to form an ongoing partnership. The selection process included data from Public Health, HWDSB and HSPRC to find a school and community in great need.

Sanford Avenue School was identified and through various meetings a relationship formed. In 2006 a new school was built and the students from Sanford Avenue School moved into their new school "Cathy Wever School".

Since 2005 the following projects and initiatives have occurred:

- Peer mentoring by Rotarians who contributed an hour a week in assisting with literacy and math skills for students
- Annual Christmas Lunch (Turkey lunch, entertainment and goodie bags for all 700 students)
- Funding to support the daily nutritional snack program, yearend education trips and or literacy projects
- After School Curling Program
- Support of the Bay Area Science Fair with Grade 7 & 8 students
- Daily healthy snacks are provided for every student at Cathy Wever School and for participants of the BINGO to Better Health program, funded through the *Partners in Nutrition program*. Healthy snacks ensure students & Bingo kids have energy to enthusiastically participate in educational & fun activities!

In 2008 a formal partnership was created between the Rotary Club of Hamilton and the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board to benefit Cathy Wever School.

The Rotary Summer Literacy Program has grown into a program that is supported by the HWDSB and the City of Hamilton. The program has grown to a full day – six week program operated for 2000 young people. The program is operated out of Cathy Wever School.

In 2007, a grant was received by Rotary from the Hamilton Community Foundation to form a community Hub. The Wever Community Hub was formed with support from Rotary. The Wever Community Hub with the assistance of Rotary has secured over \$160,000 from the HCF Tackling Poverty Together Fund to provide resources and break down barriers in the Wever Hub.

Through the support of the TPT grants, additional grants, donations, and with the assistance and support of Rotary the Wever Community Hub has grown. Several programs has blossomed are available to residence and youth in the Wever Community free of charge: Bingo to Better Health, Hamilton Basketball Association, Wever Beaders, Sparks' Girls' Exhibition Basketball Team, Wevers' Weavers and Healthy Cooking on a Budget Workshops , Mom and Me and Femme Fit to name a few of the many programs.

The partnership and leadership of the Rotary Club of Hamilton has benefited this community greatly. Rotarians continue to be the voice of the community, building on the strengths of leadership, removing of barriers as required and the ideal of Service above Self.