TROPICANA COMMUNITY SERVICES
INSIDER
SPRING 2018

Sharon Shelton Awarded MP Shaun Chen's Canada 150 Medal

Congratulations to our very own Sharon Shelton, Executive Director of Tropicana Community Services! She was a recipient of MP Shaun Chen's Canada 150 Medal which was awarded to outstanding community leaders.

The medal presentation ceremony took place on Friday March 2, 2018 in the auditorium of Agincourt Collegiate Institute and was well attended.

Thank you Sharon for your outstanding contributions and service to the Scarborough North Community!

WEEKENDS OF LEARNING

Under the leadership of Bernadette Hood, Manager, Youth Development and Education and Marc Tremblay, Education Program Coordinator, Tropicana's Weekends of Learning have kicked off 2018 with a focus on bringing more opportunities and training for children and adults.

At the core of the Weekends of Learning, is tutoring which runs from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm on Saturdays and focuses on the essential skills of numeracy and literacy for children in grades 1 to 12. In order to keep attendance steady, new initiatives have been introduced, such as the Tropicana Dollar Rewards program. "Tropicana Dollars" can be gained by being on time, participating in class, demonstrating leadership development and showing improvements in class. These "dollars" can be traded in for prizes and discounts on programs or students can save them over the summer and see if they gain interest. Our children continue to grow academically thanks to the watchful eyes and strategic planning of our tutors who give more than is asked of them.

Following the tutoring program, the chess club continues to teach the importance of math and thinking skills, led by chess master, Mr. Carl Veecock.

After chess, youth can participate in the STEM program, which teaches the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. The STEM program is conducted by TAST Academy and gives children the opportunity to participate in hands-on experiments (such as creating slime) and understand how different experiments work.

If children do not wish to participate in STEM, the Wing Chun Martial Arts program for ages 8 to 14 is being offered at the same time. Wing Chun is a form of martial arts that teaches self-defence and how to be strategic. The Wing Chun program is conducted by Derek Chan of Ko Fung Martial Art.

The Weekends of Learning series has also introduced a new computer programming course that will follow the programs listed above. This program will teach children various types of programming languages and will also include an introduction to Photoshop and Premiere.

No weekend would be complete without the steelpan program which is instructed by Andrew Jackson. Andrew's fine ear, attention to detail and teaching methods, has helped make the program a staple at Tropicana for a number of years. Many times, parents will hear the wonderful sounds of the steelpans and become inspired to enroll their children in the program.

This year, we have also introduced complimentary workshops for parents. On March 3, 2018, we kicked these off with the help of our friends from TD bank who conducted a financial literacy workshop. The workshop was well received and will be ongoing as we endeavor to teach the importance of financial literacy to all of our clients and supporters.

Tropicana is now accepting applications for the 2018/2019 programs. For more information, visit us online, or contact Marc Tremblay at 416 439 9009 ext. 260, or via e-mail at mtremblay@tropicanacommunity.org

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT HAZEL LORD

Hazel Lord has been volunteering as a tutor with Tropicana's Increase Your Success Tutorial Program since April 2012. Ms. Lord is one of our truly dedicated tutors and works diligently with the Grades 5 & 6 students. She is responsible, reliable and resourceful and connects with her students on various levels. Ms. Lord has a positive attitude and a pleasant demeanour which make it easy for her to connect with the students, parents and her fellow tutors. She incorporates creative ways to make learning fun and interactive, especially through home-made games and activities that capture the concepts that are being taught. Ms. Lord works in tandem with Joseph Rouse to offer a variety of lessons and materials to bring clarity and understanding to the students.

Even though our program focuses on Mathematics and Language Arts, Hazel extends students' learning to Science. She implemented an annual STEM Challenge in which teams are coached and then compete in the final challenge for prizes which are donated by Ms. Lord and her friends. As the contest grows closer, the anxiety and competitive spirits heighten. Parents are invited to see their children in action. Scientists judge this event, congratulating everyone for their dedication and performance.

Students like being in Ms. Lord's class because they are kept academically and socially informed, engaged and challenged. She is well-prepared and communicates with parents on their children's progress, advising them of ways to support and enhance their children's learning.

Ms. Lord is a natural leader and students connect with her teaching style. She recently also shared that a part of the reason she has been with the program for so many years is because she learns a lot from the kids. They provide an honest perspective and in some cases, she sees an unparalleled desire to improve themselves. She also noted that the Tropicana environment creates a camaraderie among tutors that is anchored in the desire to help improve the outcomes of students from grade 1 to high school and when they "get it" or improve in their times tables, then you know that your efforts are worthwhile.

We appreciate all that Ms. Lord brings to the Increase Your Success Tutorial program and Tropicana says a heartfelt THANK YOU to her!

GRAND RE-OPENING OF THE LAB POWERED BY FREEDOM MOBILE

On Saturday February 2, 2018, The Lab was officially re-launched as The Lab Powered by Freedom Mobile.

Bernadette Hood, Manager, Youth Development and Education welcomed the crowd and Sharon Shelton, Executive Director, spoke about Tropicana's partnership with Freedom Mobile, which has taken a great interest in developing Tropicana's clients in the field of multi-media.

With the re-launch comes new programming, new opportunities for all ages and a new look. The facility will be more interactive, clients will have the opportunity to provide regular feedback about the type of programming that they would like to see, and more information will be posted, including inspirational quotes from clients and staff.

One-on-one sessions can be booked with the new facilitator, Nolan White and clients can call to schedule sessions which are free of charge. Currently, clients can learn about Adobe programs, including Photoshop, InDesign and Premiere, or basic computer skills and an introductory to Outlook.

On Friday evenings, The Lab Powered by Freedom Mobile will be utilized by the Video Game Club. The Video Game Club provides an opportunity for youth ages 10 to 19 to share their interest in video gaming culture and creates a space for these individuals to explore their interest in computer sciences.

On Saturday mornings, a coding program, delivered by TAST Academy introduces children in grades 5 and up to computer languages, including JavaScript, HTML, and Python, among others.

2ND ANNUAL YOUNG MEN'S HEALTH AND WELLNESS CONFERENCE

On November 18, 2017, Tropicana held its 2nd Annual Young Men's Health and Wellness Conference at Tropicana's Centre of Excellence. This full-day event enabled young males to take part in discussions about physical health, mental health/emotional wellness, financial health, healthy communities/community violence and sexual health/sexual consent. Hosted by radio personality, Creative Director at G98.7 and community activist "The Juiceman" Jonathan Shaw, the event included facilitators from FuturFund, Zero Gun Violence Movement, Just Think 1st Initiative, Urban Rez Solutions, Ontario Basketball Association, Planned Parenthood Toronto and Wellness Circle. Conference attendees also enjoyed a keynote address by Artist, Educator, Brand Specialist and Creative Director, Femi Lawson, who spoke about his path to success and encouraged youth to follow their dreams.

EXCERPT FROM FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM A START FOR LIFE PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

The following is an excerpt from feedback received from one of our START for Life participants, upon graduation from the counselling program. The START for Life program provides instruction through reflective discussions, role modeling and demonstrations to enable participants to strengthen positive social skills, anger control and moral reasoning.

"First, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Melanie, Josette and Jennifer and my fellow colleagues.

What is anger? Anger is a natural human experience and there are times when the reasons that trigger our anger are genuine. Have you ever been angry? Angry energy can be beneficial if you manage it in a positive way. [In so doing] it will enable us to enjoy a healthier relationship and a lifestyle with less stress.

Practicing effective communication and good conflict resolution techniques will allow us to communicate our boundaries to others so that we are less likely to create frustration and anger in our relationships. They help to not do things in a way that provoke the anger in others. Walking is my gateway to reduce anger. So, walk with me, please. Walk away from arguments that lead to anger. Walk away from thoughts that reduce your worth and the people that put you down. Walk away from fear of failure. Walk with a positive attitude.

In order to realize changes, one must change oneself. Always delay judgment and do others as you should, despite what they [have] done to you. Give others the privilege to explain themselves. Check this. It is no coincidence; "anger" has five letters and so does "happy". "Negative" has eight letters and so does "positive". "Right" has five letters and so does "wrong". "Failure" has seven letters and so does "success". "Cry" has three letters and so does "joy". Take control of your actions."

-Harry

Events and Programs

Blooming at TEC

Now that spring has arrived, there are lots of events and programs blooming at Tropicana Employment Centre.

The Scarborough Community Job Fair took place on Wednesday, February 28th at Scarborough Civic Centre. This job fair was a collaboration between Tropicana Employment Centre and the City of Toronto. More than 680 job seekers showed up to meet with employers such as Garda World Security, Old Navy, Rogers Communication, Michaels Canada, The City of Toronto, Home Depot, Canadian Tire, and the University of Toronto. The employers were impressed by the professionalism of the job seekers who attended the job fair.

The Retail Career Pathway PEAK Basics program at TEC is currently accepting applications for participants. This program is a FREE, 16 week training and work placement that helps youth secure a career in the Retail Customer Service Sector. If you know of any youth who might be able to benefit from this program, please have them contact Nicole James by email at njames@tropicanacommunity.org or by phone at 416-439-9009 ext. 238.

The Pre-Apprenticeship Program for Autobody and Collision Damage Repairer is also accepting applications. This FREE program provides participants with an introduction to the Autobody trade, Level 1 Autobody and Collision Damage Repairer course at Centennial College, 6 weeks of pre-employment training, a 12 week paid work placement with an employer, and a toolkit and course materials. To participate in this program, youth must have an OSSD (Grade 12 diploma or equivalent), be between 18 and 30 years of age, be legally entitled to work in Canada (with SIN card), and possess a valid Ontario Driver's License. Any youth who are interested in applying for this program should contact Suad Dualeh by phone at 416-491-7000 ext. 209 or by email at sdualeh@tropicanaemployment.ca .

GIVE A MONTHLY GIFT TO TROPICANA COMMUNITY SERVICES !

Your monthly donation will make a difference in the lives of youth, newcomers, people of Black and Caribbean heritage and others in need.

You can donate monthly through pre-authorized gifts by credit card (Visa, MasterCard and Amex) or by submitting a void cheque for pre-authorized payments through your bank account.

Simply let us know the amount that you would like to give, and where you would like to designate your gift. Information about your monthly donation can be provided to us by fax, mail, phone, or online through canadahelps.org.

Be sure to include your name, address and telephone number so that we may properly acknowledge your gift and provide you with a charitable tax receipt.