



Jane Street Hub: Positioned for Excellence

The Hub is a one-stop shop for social and health services and community space: family doctors, community kitchen, Early Years and children's programs, employment and settlement services, youth groups, women's programs, leadership training and much, much more.

By Michelle-Ann Hylton

Situated on the corner of Jane Street and Trethewey Drive, the Jane Street Hub is the place to be for Weston-Mt. Dennis residents. The hub came together thanks to the efforts of many community organizations and dedicated residents. It's a blend of services; a partnership between six agencies working together to strengthen the community of Weston-Mt. Dennis. The Hub is a "one-stop shop" for social and health services as well as accessible community space.

Just shy of six months old, the Hub is the new satellite home for lead agency Unison Health and Community Services and its partners: Midaynta Community Services, Yorktown Child and Family Centre, Macaulay Child Development Centre, North York Community House and COSTI Immigrant Services.

Visit the Hub to take advantage of employment services, family support services, access to family doctors, counselling and other health services, health promotion programs, Early Years programs, settlement services, youth engagement programming and women's programming — to name just a few of its services.

The Hub also offers ways for Weston-Mt. Dennis residents to get actively involved in improving

their community. As part of its commitment to residents, the Hub will ensure and prioritize available community space for resident-led groups and programs that cater specifically to area residents.

Although it's still new, the Jane Street Hub is already familiar to many nearby residents and clients, as it has hosted several successful events and programs. A multi-cultural community kitchen, diabetes prevention workshops, after-school physical activity programs for children, young fathers' support groups and leadership training are some of the activities currently running out of the Hub. Additionally, the public has enjoyed two opportunities to tour the Hub: a community Open House in November 2010 and the Hub's official launch in January 2011.

The Hub is made possible by contributions from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, the Toronto Central LHIN and United Way Toronto. It's more than a health and social service centre; it's a long-term investment in the Weston-Mt. Dennis community. With Unison's vision of "Healthy communities" as its guiding force, the Hub is positioned for excellence. It's poised to develop, enhance and showcase the untapped talents of those living along its perimeter.



The Jane Street Hub is located at 1541 Jane Street.

For more information on the Jane Street Hub please contact: Matt Brubacher, Community Engagement Coordinator, 416-645-7575 ext 2430, matt.brubacher@unisonhcs.org.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

New Members Wanted

Spring Into Health: Message from the CEO and Board Chair

Drum Roll Please...: Pathways to Education™

Health Care Services for Streets to Homes Clients

Legal Support for Our Clients

Get Ready for the Bathurst-Finch Community Hub!

How is Unison Setting Priorities?

"We Are Family": Profile of a Health Champion in Our Community, Abdi Mohamed

Tips for Healthy Eating, with a Recipe

Dates to Remember

Special insert: Up-to-date calendar of Unison programs and services



New Members Wanted!

You are invited to become a member of Unison Health and Community Services. There are benefits and privileges of membership!

- Members have the right to vote at our annual general meeting
- Members receive regular updates about our programs and services
- Membership is a great way to help strengthen your community
- Membership is a great way to connect with others in your community
- Members receive a special Unison t-shirt

The membership fee is \$1 for one year. Sign up today! Get a membership form from the reception desk, or call Ana Garcia at 416-787-1676 ext 257.

Spring Into Health

Welcome to the spring/summer issue of *Unison Voice*.

As days become longer and brighter and the weather gets warmer, why not follow nature and spring into action towards a stronger and healthier you? Spring brings so many opportunities to improve your health so just pick one or several: spend more time outdoors, go for walks with your family, start biking, or eat more fresh locally grown foods.

If you are looking for tips on staying healthy, need a specific service in your community or would like to join a new group, Unison is a place to go. With a wide variety of services and programs, our staff will make sure you get the support you need within our organization or will refer you to the right program in your neighbourhood. In this issue, you will find our program updates, healthy-eating tips and recipes and dates to remember.

And as we continue working on improving our services and bringing helpful information to you, we try to stay informed by you to ensure our programs respond to the needs of the communities we serve. Read an update on our environmental scan in this issue of *Unison Voice* and stay tuned for its results. In this issue we also introduce a Health Champion column to acknowledge contributions of various community members towards building stronger and healthier neighbourhoods.

So this spring you can make a commitment to become a health champion yourself either by working on improving your own health or getting more involved in the life of your community. All of these are building blocks of healthy communities.

In health,

Andrea Cohen, CEO

Michael Rethazi, Board Chair



Drum Roll Please...

We are proud and excited to present our very first Pathways to Education™ graduating class!

by Jessica Silver

This is a monumental year for the Pathways to Education program in Lawrence Heights—it's our very first graduating class! Our Grade 12 students are graduating secondary school and are about to go on to do great things.

Pathways supports students with mentorship and guidance, as well as financially, as they plan the first steps of their careers. The application process for colleges and universities finished in early January, and Pathways students had to make some very important decisions about their futures.

Twenty-three of our Pathways Grade 12 students applied to college through the Ontario College Application System. They applied to a wide array of programs in a wide range of fields—108 different programs at six different schools, in fact! George Brown College was the most popular choice of schools, and nursing was the most popular choice of programs.

As well, 39 of our graduating students completed their university applications with the Ontario University Application Centre. This group applied to 139 different programs at 13 different universities. The most popular school choice was York University, and the most popular program choice was again nursing.

Students are now awaiting responses from their selected schools and programs, and working hard in their last semester of high school. Near the end of the school year we will be holding a celebration for our Grade 12 students and their families. We want to celebrate their successes up to this important milestone and wish them the best on the next chapter! The entire Pathways team is immensely proud of the dedication that all of our students and their families have demonstrated in striving for their goals, and all they have achieved. We're confident that their experiences will further contribute to the ongoing process of building a healthy community in Lawrence Heights.



Raise a Healthy Child Starting from the Early Years!

Parenting is not always easy and comes with a lot of questions. Join one of our Early Years programs for parents with young children and we will help you find the right information and resources.

The **Baby and Me** program meets every Tuesday, 1 to 3 p.m. and includes circle time for singing with your baby and a discussion topic. The **Young Parents** group meets on Wednesdays, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. and offers childcare and supper. Both groups provide TTC tokens where needed and take place on the third floor of the Lawrence Height site. For more information about our programs and services, please check the program calendar or go to our web-site www.unisonhcs.org.



Health Care Services for Streets to Homes Clients

Half of our formerly homeless Streets to Homes clients are registered for health services at Unison, and getting the support they need.

By Kam Lau and Frances Lerson

The referral of **Streets to Homes (S2H)** clients to primary health care services at Unison's Keele-Rogers site is now in full swing. Fifty percent of our formerly homeless S2H clients are now registered for health services at Unison. This encouraging outcome is the result of a well-planned and coordinated effort between the S2H and primary health care teams. Our goal: at least 70 per cent of S2H clients connected to the primary health care team. As well, S2H clients will also be connected to and access service from other chronic disease management and prevention programs.

The *Street Health Report 2007* confirms that generally as a group,

homeless people have poor physical and mental health, and live in the most stressful of circumstances, in isolation and despair. Our S2H clients often have complex social and medical histories, which resulted in their homelessness. The report recommends innovative approaches to improve access to primary and preventive cares for homeless people, as part of integral solutions to curtail homelessness.

Unison adopts a flexible, inclusive, client-centred health-care approach to provide needed support to our S2H clients. We address the complex care issues of each individual. In early February 2011 a team of

primary health and allied health staff were introduced to clients during the weekly community kitchen program. S2H clients learned that they could book their first medical

appointments during the time they would normally be at the Keele-Rogers site for the weekly lunch event.

Many S2H clients have reported satisfaction with their new access to health care. They receive support and encouragement, and have flexibility to make alternative arrangements if necessary.

Our care team includes members from both the primary health care team and S2H team, and facilitates ongoing client ease of access to services, support and care. The project will undergo an interim review in June, and final evaluation will be conducted in September.



Legal Support

Our legal staff helps clients with social assistance, immigration, housing, human rights and employment issues.

By Vinay Jain and Alastair Clarke

Unison is pleased to house a **community legal clinic** at our Keele-Rogers site. We practice in many legal areas, and look to best serve the needs of individuals and organizations in our community. For example, the legal staff at Unison can assist with social assistance appeals, immigration and refugee cases, housing issues, human rights applications, employment issues and other legal matters.

More than 350,000 Ontarians depend on income support through the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) every month. But, approximately 85 per cent of applicants are refused at the first stage. The path to receiving benefits can be long and stressful, and full of legal challenges. For applicants who qualify for legal help, Unison provides free assistance and representation at the Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT) to people with disabilities. With our support, clients are successful in the majority of their cases.

In addition to the SBT, we represent clients at the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), the Criminal Injuries and Compensation Board (CICB), and other tribunals.

To qualify for our services, you must live within our local area of Toronto, as well as qualify under our low-income cut-off (LICO) guidelines. If your legal question is outside our expertise, we will do our best to provide a referral to the most appropriate professional. If you live outside our area, we will refer you to your local community legal clinic. Please call us and we will try to help.

For organizations, the legal clinic also provides training to staff and front-line workers. We regularly present in all our areas of expertise to ensure that our partner organizations are up-to-date with legal issues.

"We Are a Family": Profile of a Health Champion in Our Community

Abdi Mohamed plays many important roles in his community.

By Daniela Mantilla

Abdi Mohamed has a lot of roles in Lawrence Heights. He is on the support staff at Sir Sandford Fleming Academy and the Lawrence Heights Community Centre, chairman of the East African Community Association, a member of the Sir Sandford Fleming Academy school council and a community basketball coach. But amidst all these roles, the most important one he has is that of father. He's a father to his six children, and a father-figure to the organizations and groups that he contributes to, and to the Lawrence Heights community as a whole.

Abdi describes his vision of a healthy community as being "like a family,"

Get ready for the Bathurst-Finch Community Hub!

After years of planning, the hub will open its doors next spring, offering health services, community programs, and beautiful new indoor and outdoor spaces.

By Amy Katz

Watch for it: a beautiful new eco-friendly building, opening its doors in the spring of 2012. It's the **Bathurst-Finch Community Hub (BFCH)**, which will be located next to Northview Heights Secondary School at Bathurst and Finch.

Imagine a place where you can visit a family doctor, drop your children off for a mentorship program, pick up fresh vegetables from a farmers' market and take part in a community meeting or conversation circle—all in the same day. A place with vibrant, accessible programs and supports for youth, seniors and people who have just arrived in Canada. A place with lovely outdoor spaces where you can sit and dream, and shared indoor spaces open to community groups. A place that belongs to all of us, and where everyone feels at home.

Unison—along with a team of dedicated architects, project managers, community agencies and residents—has been working hard over the past few years to make this dream a reality. We're getting closer to our goal!

Here's how the BFCH will work: The second floor will house a satellite community health centre. It will be home to Unison staff that will include a family doctor, nurse practitioner, chiropractist (foot specialist), social worker, health promoters and community workers.

The first floor will house a variety of community agencies (see sidebar) and shared community spaces, including a kitchen, classroom and meeting room. And outside, we will have an active community and learning garden that will serve as a bridge between the hub and Northview Heights Secondary School.

We are incredibly proud to be working with the Bathurst-Finch community on this exciting project. And there are many ways for community members to participate! If you'd like us to add your name to a new BFCH e-news list (coming soon), please email: bhub@unisonhcs.org. If you are interested in the Northview Community Garden, and would like to find out more about how you can participate, please e-mail amy.katz@unisonhcs.org.

Who are the Bathurst-Finch Community Hub partners?

Many agencies will participate actively in the BFCH. Anchoring partners will have permanent space in the hub. Supporting partners will have access to office space. In addition, many community agencies and groups will have access to the shared spaces. The BFCH anchoring and supporting partners are:

Big Brothers Big Sisters Toronto
Circle of Care
CUIAS (Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid)
Downsview Services to Seniors
Family Service Toronto
JVS Toronto
Kababayan Community Centre
KCWA Family and Social Services
Hong Fook Mental Health Association
North York Community House
North York Women's Centre
Unison Health and Community Services (lead agency)

How is Unison Setting Priorities?

We're carrying out an environmental scan to find out the top priorities for programs and services in all the neighbourhoods we serve.

By Jen Quinlan

It's Unison's first year as an organization, so we're carrying out an environmental scan across the neighbourhoods where we work. The scan explores neighbourhood needs, strengths and opportunities.

A reference group of residents and staff from community agencies staff helps guide the process and makes sure the results are meaningful to a wide audience. The main purpose of the scan is to help Unison's Board set our strategic framework in the spring. In addition, other agencies and resident groups will be welcome to use the public report of our findings in their own planning and community organizing.

As Unison's community health planners, we have been busy working on the scan for the past several months. We conducted over 850 surveys with community residents. We asked them about their top community service needs. We also conducted focus groups with over 100 residents and agency staff to gain further insight into neighbourhood issues. These consultations allowed us to identify a series of community needs, and recommendations on how to best meet them. When the scan is complete, we'll publish a report about it on Unison's website. We will also be holding a public event to share our results.

If you are interested in getting more information about the scan, please contact Jen Quinlan, jen.quinlan@unisonhcs.org, 416-787-1676 ext 255, or Gillian Kranias, gillian.kranias@unisonhcs.org, 416-787-1676 ext 254. We look forward to seeing you at our event!

where everyone has his or her role and works together to make the community better. For Abdi a healthy community can exist anywhere; it's all about setting high expectations for the kind of community one wants and getting involved to make it happen. He has those expectations and envisions those roles for himself, other community leaders and everyone else in the Lawrence Heights family. He sees himself and others as advocates, ensuring that the work done by agencies to support community members is effective and supports those that are most vulnerable.

Being a father, Abdi's focus is naturally on children and youth. In his vision, the community—including parents, schools, programs and other

actors—rises up to support every individual to succeed. And the key to that success for Abdi is education, which he believes extends far beyond school.

Abdi recalls the collective work that it took to bring programs like Pathways to Education™ to Lawrence Heights. He cites the mobilization of the community for this purpose as an example the Lawrence Heights family at its best! He is a firm believer that "it takes a village to raise a child," and he is confident that Lawrence Heights is that kind of village. "No one should be left alone to fail," he asserts.

Abdi is a proud father, both of his children and all that they have and



will accomplish—but also of his other family, the Lawrence Heights community, and all it has accomplished collectively to build a healthier community and what it will continue to do in the future.

Tips for Healthy Eating

It's no mystery! Follow these healthy eating tips to get back on track to good health.

By Gayatri Chopra

Make breakfast the most important meal of the day: A good breakfast can provide you all the nutrients you need to start your day. Breaking your (overnight) fast not only increases your alertness and concentration but also makes you feel less hungry during the day. Some options for a healthy breakfast are: whole grain toast with nut butters, fruit smoothies, cheese and whole grain bread with fruit, or cereal with milk and nuts.

Add whole grains to your diet: Grain products provide energy. Whole grains are a source of fibre. Fibre makes you feel fuller for longer periods of time, lowers cholesterol, manages blood sugars and aids in digestion. Try substituting the rice in your favourite recipe with other whole grains like quinoa, bulgar or wild rice. Make your sandwich on multigrain bread.

Colour your plate: Load up on vegetables and fruits. Vegetables and fruits are powerhouses of nutrients and fibre. And, they are low in calories. Enjoy a variety of seasonal vegetables and fruits with every meal. Try to have at least one dark green vegetable such as spinach, kale, callaloo or broccoli and an orange vegetable like carrots, pumpkin, squash or sweet potato everyday.

Include low-fat dairy products: Low-fat milk products are sources of calcium, vitamin D, B-vitamins and protein. Have a cup of milk or low-fat yogurt with fruits for a snack.

Choose lean protein and meat alternatives: Enjoy a variety of lean meats and meat alternatives prepared with small amounts of healthy fats. Meat and alternatives are a good source of protein, iron, B-vitamins and zinc. Add different meat alternatives such as tofu, beans, lentils and nuts to your diet. Have at least two servings of fish each week.

Choose healthy fats: Fats are essential to a healthy diet. They absorb some vitamins and can bring your good cholesterol up. But, watch the amount and kinds of fats you eat. Some fats such as vegetable oils, nuts, flaxseed, non-hydrogenated margarines, and avocados are unsaturated and are good for you. Excess fat can lead to weight gain, build up in your arteries and increase your bad cholesterol.

Redesign your plate: Portion control is key to healthy eating. Try healthier portions by re-designing your plate. Fill half of your plate with vegetables, one quarter with grain products and the other quarter with meat or alternatives. Have a medium-size fruit for dessert.

Stay hydrated: Drink plenty of fluids. Always quench your thirst with water. Limit the intake of fruit juices to half a cup.

Eat together as a family: Sharing meals as a family is fun and helps to build lifelong healthy eating habits in children. Don't be afraid to ask kids to help you with meal preparation, and enjoy some delicious family time!

Quinoa and lentil pilaf

Quinoa is a whole grain rich in protein, iron and fibre. Try this simple recipe using quinoa and seasonal vegetables. We cooked this recipe a few times with our Back on Track workshop participants and each time we had great reviews. Some of the comments were:

"I am amazed how simple it is to cook healthy."
 "I am surprised that we can prepare a healthy meal with simple ingredients."
 "It's yummy!!"



Ingredients

1 cup	quinoa
1 cup	lentils
¼ cup	onion, diced
1 tbsp	garlic, crushed
2 cups	baby spinach
½ cup	mushrooms (button or cremini), chopped
½ cup	broccoli, cut in small florets
½ cup	cauliflower, cut in small florets
½ cup	carrots, diced or cut in thin strips
½ cup	red / yellow / orange / green peppers
2 tbsp	fresh cilantro, chopped
2 cups	water
	salt and pepper

Directions

1. In a medium sauce pan, heat oil over medium heat. Add garlic and onions and sauté for five minutes.
2. Add all other vegetables except the spinach and cook for 10 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
3. Using a strainer, rinse quinoa and lentils under cold water and drain well. Add quinoa and lentils to the vegetables and stir for one minute.
4. Season with salt and pepper. Add water and bring to a boil.
5. Add baby spinach. Cover and reduce heat to low and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the liquid is absorbed.
6. Garnish with fresh cilantro and serve hot.

Our Locations



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JT **Jane-Trethewey**
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PE **Pathways to Education**
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 Phone: 416-787-6800



DATES TO REMEMBER

Unison Health and Community Services will be closed:

- Friday, April 22, 2011 Good Friday
- Monday, May 23, 2011 Victoria Day
- Friday, July 1, 2011 Canada Day
- Monday, August 1, 2011 Civic Holiday
- Monday, September 5, 2011 Labour Day

VISION:

Healthy communities.

MISSION:

Working together to deliver accessible and high quality health and community services that are integrated, respond to needs, build on strengths and inspire change.

Unison VOICE is a publication of Unison Health and Community Services
 12 Flemington Road, Toronto, ON M6A 2N4, 416-787-1661

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Editor: Oleksandra Budna, oleksandra.budna@unisonhcs.org
 Layout: Pass It On Communications Inc., www.passiton.ca