

StreetHealth

COMMUNITY ART OFFERS CONNECTIONS AND HOPE

Due to the pressures of poverty, many Street Health clients cannot afford activities that are enjoyable or that simply foster a sense of community. An increasing number of our clients are seniors who also deal with isolation, limited supports and fixed income. Creating opportunities for people to come together and volunteer was part of the client recommendations from Street Health's 2017 client survey.

Realizing how the opportunity for artistic expression can foster social inclusion and individual wellbeing, Street Health's Community Mental Health Worker Ruhullah Nassery and drop-in Art Group Facilitator Dan Buckley helped identify that clients are interested in these opportunities. Thanks to funding through the Seniors Community Grant Program, Street Health was recently able to involve clients in a community inspired and created artwork.

Working with Red Dress Productions, the project began with art engagement consultations including sessions at five community partner locations. During these workshops, themes and images focused on the need for connections, hope and health. Once the design was agreed on, the hands-on art creation was open to all community members. As participants commented during

these sessions, "having some time to hang out, and enjoy yourself, by being involved in the creation of a colourful, collective effort, provided a no pressure, enjoyable and rewarding activity". Both clients who are familiar with Street Health's services and wider community members helped build the mosaic panels which are now a permanent installation on Street Health's street-facing gate.

Many thanks to those who supported this project especially Red Dress Productions and the clients and community members who provided their ideas and energy to create these mosaics. We also thank the Government of Ontario, Ontario Arts Council, community partners: All Saints Church, CRC, Houselink Community Homes and Regent Park CHC, Starbucks Coffee Canada, David Mintz Catering and AYS Party Rentals.



Toronto Public Health's *Toronto Overdose Information System* recently released geographic stats that tracked "Calls to Paramedic Services for Suspected Opioid Overdoses" (August 2017 to January 2018).

The four Toronto intersections with the highest volume of overdose calls during this period are all within 800 meters of Street Health.

One essential part of the overall response to this opioid crisis is making sure that folks have a safe and accessible place to dispose of used needles. **With the installation of this exterior drop-box, Street Health is now in a position to increase community safety, even when our offices are closed.**