

Chair's Report December 13, 2010

Partnerships

Toronto Public Library (TPL) is currently partnering with a Neighbourhood Action Team that includes Breaking the Cycle, Prevention Intervention Toronto (PIT), Humber College, City of Toronto, Somali Youth Association of Toronto and Frontier College in a new program called **Re-LINK**, to be hosted at Albion Branch. Re-LINK will reengage young people aged 16-24 in the Jamestown area who have dropped out of high school or are involved in the criminal justice system. Through literacy and GED (General Educational Development) tests attainment the program will increase their employability by providing them with access to postsecondary education, trades, and sustainable employment.

TPL facilitated 18 employment skills internship opportunities during July and August through the provincially funded **Summer Jobs for Youth Program**, operated through Tropicana Community Services. Sixteen of the youth completed the full six-week program, each working 35 hours per week. The internships took place in 17 branches and in the Library's eServices department, where youth worked with the Web Team. The Summer Jobs for Youth Program is funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and is designed to address employment barriers for young people between the ages of 15 and 18 who are living in priority neighbourhoods, by providing them with a first job experience. Library staff embraced the program, and TPL has gained a reputation as an excellent participant in the program. In 2010, Tropicana received a total of 3,080 applications from youth; 891 youth were placed and 870 youth completed their placements. The Library intends to participate in Summer Jobs for Youth again in 2011, if the opportunity is available and appropriate arrangements can be worked out.

The Black Creek Living History Project at the York Woods Branch launched their website on November 30. This unique online resource, which preserves the history of this diverse and vibrant Toronto neighbourhood, features six months of work by local seniors and teens in the Jane-Finch area. The project's website, torontopubliclibrary.ca/black-creek-history, showcases and celebrates the local history of the Black Creek community through collected oral history interviews and photographs. The Black Creek community includes the area north of Hwy. 401, east of Weston Road, west of Keele Street and south of Steeles Avenue. The project is funded in part by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors program.

Capital projects

The beautifully **renovated Cedarbrae Branch** reopened on December 6, showcasing a redesign that has created an accessible, welcoming environment with improved customer service and more access to technology and collections. Renovated branches typically see a significant increase in usage after reopening to the community. As one of the busiest district branches in the city, it is an indispensable resource for the Scarborough

community. Designed by Makrimichalos Cugini Architects, the renovated branch features our first automated express check-in and sorting system. The branch also has more accessible community space, barrier-free access, meeting rooms, more public access computers, a new KidsStop, a vibrant Teen Zone, an outdoor reading garden, and a Poetry is Public is Poetry installation, an initiative of the city's Poet Laureate.

Recent public consultations at Bridlewood and Mount Dennis branches brought out members of the community to hear about and provide feedback concerning the relocation of Bridlewood and the renovation of Mount Dennis. After a brief closure, Bridlewood will move within the Bridlewood Mall to a space that is 50 percent bigger than its current location in the mall. Mount Dennis is scheduled to close for renovations late this year, reopening in 2013 with a redesigned interior space featuring improved programming and community meeting space, a new Teen Zone, a new KidsStop, and increased study space and access to computers and the Internet.

Programs

The Appel Salon continues to thrive with recent visits by authors Salmon Rushdie and Michael Ondaatje filling the room to capacity. Ondaatje interviewed Eleanor Wachtel on 20 years of hosting CBC Radio's Writers & Company as part of a sold-out fundraiser for PEN Canada and the Library Foundation.

Library Foundation

Give Joy, the latest incarnation of the foundation's **Honour with Books program**, encourages people to make donations in the names of loved ones. The inaugural Give Joy campaign invites people to make donations to the foundation in the names of book lovers in their lives in lieu of traditional holiday gifts. The foundation sends a holiday-themed acknowledgement card to each honouree. Launched on November 22, the campaign has so far raised \$2,585, and 238 cards to honourees have been sent out. The campaign goal is to raise \$10,000.