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Meta Foundation Journal



8th Annual Walk & Run

Our annual Family Walk and Run event took place in June and raised \$135,000. In addition to its role as a fundraiser, the event is a healthy and enjoyable way for families to stay active, and to support the goal of promoting the community involvement of people with special needs.

Our special hockey guest this year was Curtis Joseph from the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Thank you to everyone who supported us!



He's Humble(d) – Meta's Own JUNO Reggae Recording Artist of the Year

By Sylvie Rzadkowski



The Meta Centre is proud to have 2009 JUNO Award winner, Simon Vassell, as a member of the staff. His sophomore album Everything earned him Reggae Recording Artist of the Year. Simon is a day program instructor at our Vaughan location. He spoke recently with Sylvie Rzadkowski, coordinator at the Vaughan site.

Message from the Executive Director Success is More than Just a Sum

We can measure accomplishment by any number of different factors when it comes to a fundraising event. Just the amount of money an occasion brings in can sometimes be the lone qualifier. Other times, intention and enthusiasm – regardless of money totals – are more than enough to say that the event is “successful.”



Our first-ever *Walk It Forward* 5 kilometre walk fundraiser was held in June; organized by our Staff Development Committee. The large turnout of Meta Centre employees made this the sort of success that causes me to beam with pride.

Walk It Forward came about because our staff wanted to raise money to help some of our residential clients go on real vacations that many of them have never experienced before. They wanted to give back somehow to those who could benefit the most. It's this sort of dedication our employees have for the people we help that makes the venture exceptional.

An event like this goes far beyond the revenue it generates. While every dollar raised is important, much more is earned from the goodwill and commitment displayed by the staff. The money pledged is generous and appreciated but there's more to be thankful for as well. The coming together and working for people with special needs is a decent and inspiring thing to do and there's so much to show for it.

Our measure of success isn't reliant upon achieving a certain dollar amount. The teamwork and excitement for the task at hand determines what the impact will be. A monetary value can't be put on these qualities and rightfully so because they're rare jewels.

I congratulate, applaud and thank those whose efforts in the staff-driven *Walk It Forward* brought it to its triumphant conclusion. Those who'll benefit from this thank you too. Their lives have improved a bit more because of you.

Oh – and not that it's the most important thing – I also want to mention that *Walk It Forward* brought in very close to \$5000! Quite the successful day all around.

Staff Raise \$4900 for Client Vacation Fund!!!



More than 160 Meta Centre staff participated in the first-ever *Walk it Forward* fundraising event that contributed \$4900 toward clients' vacations. The Meta Staff Development Committee organized the June event with the proceeds going to the Staff Fundraising Committee.



Staff generously collected pledges from family and friends and walked up to 5 kilometres to support the goal of helping our residential clients enjoy vacation experiences. Staff members, Pedro M. collected the most pledges and Carla A. brought in the most money!

Meta's Own JUNO Reggae Recording Artist of the Year

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By Sylvie Rzakowski

Some people can easily trace back when their "Eureka!" moment was. Three-year-old Simon discovered his passion for music after hearing Johnny Nash's Tears on My Pillow for the first time. It was love at first sound. He remembers bringing the 45 rpm (revolutions per minute) record wherever he went – for those too young to remember, that's how music was heard way back then, on hissy scratchy vinyl platters spinning round and round on a record player, believe it or not. He carried the record around everywhere similar to kids who might have a security blanket always nearby.



Simon was born in Manchester, England and moved to Toronto when he was 4 years of age. His music trajectory continued to unfold when in third grade he scored the highest marks in his school for a musical aptitude test. Later in high school, he bought a guitar and taught himself how to play by ear. All this was accomplished without any particular musical background in his family.

His first composition was at age 17; he attended weekend community dances and used this

opportunity to perform his first song. When asked what he likes to write about, he replied that he writes from a "simple point of view." Working with individuals at the Meta Centre has been a source of inspiration for him in this regard. He described the mindset of the people we work with at Meta as "beautiful" and has observed how simple things such as ice cream or nature affect them.

"If I wasn't doing this work, my music wouldn't be the same. It would still be reggae [but] they influence me," Simon said.

Simon is always writing music. He envisions working more independently rather than through a record label as it would give him more freedom in going in whatever direction he chooses. Right now, he's still exploring. He would like to see reggae become more recognized as a mainstream musical genre rather than as a novelty.

Simon's other interests go beyond music. He would like to be more involved in speaking at high schools to help break stereotypes of 'high risk' neighbourhoods. In his spare time, he likes to be with his daughter, play soccer and of course, visit the music studio to connect with other musicians.

Before becoming the Reggae Recording Artist of the Year, Simon's other recent accomplishment was the opportunity of travelling to Japan in October 2007 where he gave three performances. This was the farthest place he ever played and it caused him to realize that it's possible for anything to happen.

When his name was announced as having won a JUNO, Simon described the moment as "surreal." He said he had a feeling he was going to be announced as a winner because they changed his seating from where he was originally seated so he could be closer to the stage. His thoughts were of his community. He said he felt anxious and nervous – feelings he usually doesn't have.

What does the future hold for Simon? He hopes to still be recording his music and that he'll be doing it independently having more ownership of his music. But for now, he's enjoying things as they are.

"I'm not famous or anything," he said. "I like it like that."

Weekend of Fun!!

Emily Provincial Park

By: Stacy-Ann and Alanna

It was the 19th of June, and the weekend was here,
 The van was packed and the skies were sunny and clear.
 The group from Morningside headed out for fun,
 Hoping the trip would be filled with laughter and sun!
 When the group first arrived it was time to eat,
 Once the tents were up, everything looked so neat.
 The day was filled with games at the lake,
 With the sun nice and hot it was hard not to bake.
 The evening was filled with food over the fire,
 After songs and ghost stories it was time to retire.
 The group headed off to sleep in their tent,
 Until morning arrived and the rain was sent.
 A little rain would not spoil our fun,
 Although quick to the car we did run.
 From morning to night it continued to rain,
 Coats kept us dry, but the cooking was insane.
 We travelled the area from east to west,
 And at the end of the day we found something we liked best.
 A bowling alley welcomed us all,
 The smiles and cheers proved we were having a ball.
 Saturday night was a time for a feast,
 Potatoes and chicken we did eat.
 "Green Sticks" and shrimp helped fill the plate,
 Thumbs up for a meal that was awfully great!!
 The rain moved on in time for a fire,
 Marshmallows, hot dogs, and anything else we desired.
 All were cooked over the fire with sticks,
 Only when camping can we cook such a mix.
 The next day we arose with the sun shining bright,
 With memories we talked of such a wonderful night.
 There was no better breakfast than eggs and bacon,
 A meal fit for kings was what we were making.
 After breakfast was music and fun,
 A good time by all was being had by everyone.
 As we packed up our stuff and got ready to go,
 Were we ready to leave? The answer was "NO!"
 The group headed back from their weekend of camp,
 With memories, smiles and still a bit damp.
 The stories we made from one weekend of fun,
 Will continue to stay with everyone!



Meta Camping Trip

By: Carla Torbidone



This summer participants from Toronto, Richmond Hill and Scarborough along with staff went camping. The group's vacation destination was Christian Horizons Conference Centre in Paisley, Ont. The group enjoyed dormitory style accommodations along with meals served daily in the dining hall. The group participated in great outdoor activities such as: swimming, hiking, a wagon ride and late night camp fires. They also enjoyed indoor activities that included crafts, karaoke, movies and a recreational room that had various games such as: air hockey, fooseball, ping pong and much more!!

The group had a fantastic week, as best said by Ade, from the Richmond Hill Day Program, "I had the best time of my life and I'd like to go back for five more weeks!"



First Aid Awareness Course

By: Alanna Bourne

This past March, the Scarborough Day Program hosted a First Aid Awareness Course. Several clients from both locations attended the course.

Clients were not certified in first aid; however, all participants received a certificate stating that they participated in an awareness course. Many topics were

discussed, demonstrated and acted out including: what is first aid and when we need it, how to call 911, ABC's (airway, breathing, and circulation), proper wound care, choking, hypothermia, heat stroke, and how to treat burns. The clients demonstrated an understanding of what to do in an emergency or first aid situation.

On Your Mark, Get Set, ROW !

By: Grace Douglin

The history of dragon boat racing spans well over 2000 years with its roots in China. The popularity of sport has grown over the years and the Meta Centre is proud to be a part of it. It was another successful year for the Meta Centre participating in the 21st Toronto International Dragon Boat Festival at Centre Island. The canoe type boats were decorated with the traditional Chinese dragon heads and tails. Sixteen paddlers along with a drummer (who sets the rhythm for the paddlers) and a steersperson (who gives the commands) all showed energy, strength and enthusiasm as a team. After a month of practices the big race day was on Sunday June 21, 2009. The team known as Meta Magnificence participated in the Youth Spirit Division and rowed into fourth place

after competing against other agencies. Way to go team for your dedication and sportsmanship and embodying the spirit of Magnificence!



Health and Safety Week 2009

By: Sandra Connors

Meta Centre observed Health and Safety Week from May 3 – May 9. While Meta Centre promotes Health and Safety throughout the year, we take this time to bring special attention to not just the health and safety of the workplace but also to employee wellness.

During the week we held several contests including a media contest, a slogan campaign and a Lotto draw. Prizes were awarded to the winners.

The media contest, in which the participants had to develop a video depicting some aspect of health and safety, was won by the Toronto Day Program. These creative employees gave a group effort in the making of a humorous video with a serious message. They addressed such issues as slips and falls, lifts and transfers, proper footwear and personal protective equipment and made it interesting and entertaining to view.

The slogan contest was won by Pam Marrast, a full-time employee at one of our residential homes. Our slogan for the year is, "It's not a corny thing to be a Safety Nut."



In the Lotto Draw employees were to answer a number of questions and submit the answers. For every correct answer the employee was entered into a draw. We had five winners with first prize going to Sushila Bisal.

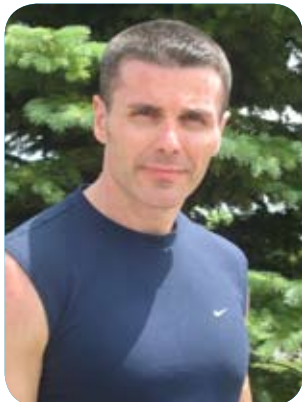
Meta Centre also offered massage therapy to the employees during the week. Employees could indulge in a 15 minute massage and escape from the day to day pressure.

Overall the week was very successful and we look forward to next year.

The Health and Safety Committee would like to thank everyone that participated in the events and would also like to extend a note of thanks to our Senior Management for their support and commitment to Health and Safety in the workplace.

Stay Fit When You Fly

EXERCISES YOU CAN DO MIDAIR



Sitting for hours in a cramped airplane seat can leave you achy, stiff and swollen. Walking around the plane is a great way to avoid these problems and refresh yourself. But when you are stuck in your seat, do these exercises every 30 to 60 minutes.

HEEL RAISES. Sit with feet flat on the floor, about hip width apart. Lift heels so that only toes and balls of the feet are on the floor. Do one lift per second for 20 seconds.

TOE TAPS. Lift toes, only heels are on the floor. Do one tap per second for 20 seconds.

ANKLE CIRCLES. Rotate right foot 10 times clockwise, then 10 times counter clockwise. Repeat with left foot.

OVERHEAD STRETCHES. Reach arms straight up, and stretch. Bend at waist, and slowly lean right, then left. Do three times for each side. Holding for 10 seconds.

BACK TWISTS. Reach right arm across body and grab left armrest. Slowly turn torso as far to the left as is comfortable. Hold for 10 seconds. Do three times then switch sides.

BON VOYAGE – HAVE A GREAT FLIGHT!

So until next time, I'm Marco Alla reminding you that "An Active Lifestyle Is A Healthy Lifestyle."

Marco Alla
Certified Personal Trainer
Owner of Inter-Fit Fitness Centre and PROTRAINER
Personal Training Services

Hats Off To A Worthy Cause!

By: Rosanna Mossa



Hats off to all staff and clients who participated in or donated to Meta Centre's first "Hat Day." There was a marvelous assortment of hats to be admired, including the chapeaux, French Barrett, fisherman, cowgirl, and of course the ever-popular baseball cap. Everyone's personality shined! It is amazing how wearing a hat can add a little fun and laughter to the workday! As a matter of fact, even our visitors inquired about the event.

The Meta Centre Fundraising Committee would like

to thank everyone for their team spirit! The money raised has gone directly to our client's vacation fund, enabling them to enjoy various activities they may not otherwise have been able to do. As one client stated, "I really wanted to go to summer camp, but can't afford to go."

Your participation has made a difference in enhancing the lives of our clients. Stay tuned for some exciting events and theme days over the next few months.

Aging with Care

By: Seema Nadarajah (MSW Placement Student)

Aging is a natural part of life and for many the idea of aging brings forth a new set of challenges and obstacles about how one lives and manages their life. It is therefore important to understand this process early on so that we may continue to provide the best quality of care to the clients we serve.

It has been well documented that persons with developmental disabilities are living longer, living as part of the community and participating more actively in all aspects of society. As such, it is important to recognize that this population, much like the current society, is entering a new era. Service providers therefore need to be able to create an environment that enables clients to age with care, respect and as viable members of the community.

As a student completing my placement at the Meta Centre, I had the pleasure of researching the aging process of persons with developmental disabilities. Research in this area has indicated that there is a lack of support and funding available for the aging developmentally disabled sector. Moreover, understanding health and lifestyle changes, support networks, specifically designed programs, teaching coping skills for the clients, staff and caregivers have all been described as important components that require further attention. The research findings were presented to the Meta Centre social work team and

Toronto day program, who showed much enthusiasm and commitment to promoting advocacy and awareness in this field. The Meta Centre is working towards creating an environment that seeks to support their aging clients.

Meta Centre staff have been active agents in this process and have undertaken considerable steps to ensure that clients age with care. As a placement student at the Meta Centre, I have been involved in forming partnerships with the Toronto Public Library to enhance services to aging clients by creating a reading program designed to promote lifelong learning. Moreover I have looked into programs and services in the community that would be beneficial for our aging clients at Bond, Kuhl and Driftwood seniors' group homes. Furthermore, Karen Lunam, my supervisor has attended the OPADD (Ontario Partnership on Aging with a Developmental Disability) conference entitled Inclusion Comes of Age to gain insight into what we, at Meta Centre can do to ensure the best quality of care to our clients.

Thus, I leave you with the following quote by Madeleine Meilleur, (Minister of Community and Social Services, 2008): "Today we know that with the right supports, the right care, and the right attitudes, people with a developmental disability don't just survive in a community — they thrive."

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The Journal

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We thank all those who contributed to this issue.

If you have something you'd like to see in the newsletter or want to submit an article, picture or drawing, please contact Tullio Orlando @ 736-0199 (ext. 313) or Karen Lunam @ 736-0199 (ext. 334).