

# HALIFAX

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**Item No.**  
**Community Planning and Economic Development**  
**November 19, 2015**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Standing Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed by  
B d Anguish Director Parks & Recreation

**DATE:** November 9, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Youth Engagement Report – Winter to Summer 2015

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## INFORMATION REPORT

### ORIGIN

Motion of Regional Council – May 14, 2013:

MOVED by Councillor Outhit, seconded by Councillor Craig that Regional Council:

1. Dissolve the Youth Advisory Committee established in 2006 but no longer officially functioning, in order to adopt a more effective way of engaging with Youth across HRM.
  2. Direct staff of Community Recreation Services to continue to engage youth, both in their communities and online, to better understand the current trends and issues of youth across HRM; and further direct staff to provide semi-annual reports to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee regarding trends and issues, best practices, and actions taken.
- MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

*Halifax Regional Charter*, Section 79 (k) recreational programs; (m) ...the expansion of employment opportunities and the economic development of the Municipality; and (d) police services.

### BACKGROUND

In May 2013, Regional Council directed the Community & Recreation Services (now Parks and Recreation) business unit to continue to engage youth, both in their communities and online, to better understand the current trends and issues of youth across Halifax.

Staff was further directed to provide semi-annual reports to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED) regarding trends, issues, best practices, and actions taken with respect to youth programming.

**DISCUSSION**

The attached semi-annual Youth Engagement Report outlines current youth activity for the period of Winter 2014 to Summer 2015 in relation to Recreation Programming, Halifax Public Libraries, Facility Lease Agreement buildings, Multi-district Facilities, RCMP, and Halifax Regional Police youth programs.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Staff engaged youth to complete this report. Staff gained feedback from youth on the trends and issues presented in the attached report by visiting existing youth programs and events across the municipality.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Youth Engagement Report – Winter to Summer 2015

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# Youth Engagement Report

Winter to Summer 2015

**Prepared by:**

Lee Moore, Community Developer  
Parks & Recreation

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## Purpose

In May 2013, Regional Council directed the Community & Recreation Services (now Parks and Recreation) business unit to continue to engage youth, both in their communities and online, to better understand the current trends and issues of youth across Halifax. Staff was further directed to provide semi-annual reports to CPED regarding trends, issues, best practices, and actions taken with respect to youth programming. This semi-annual Youth Engagement Report is an outcome of this request and this report outlines current youth activity for the period of Winter to Summer 2015 in relation to Recreation Programming, Halifax Public Libraries, Facility Lease Agreements, Multi-district Facilities and RCMP / Halifax Regional Police youth programs.

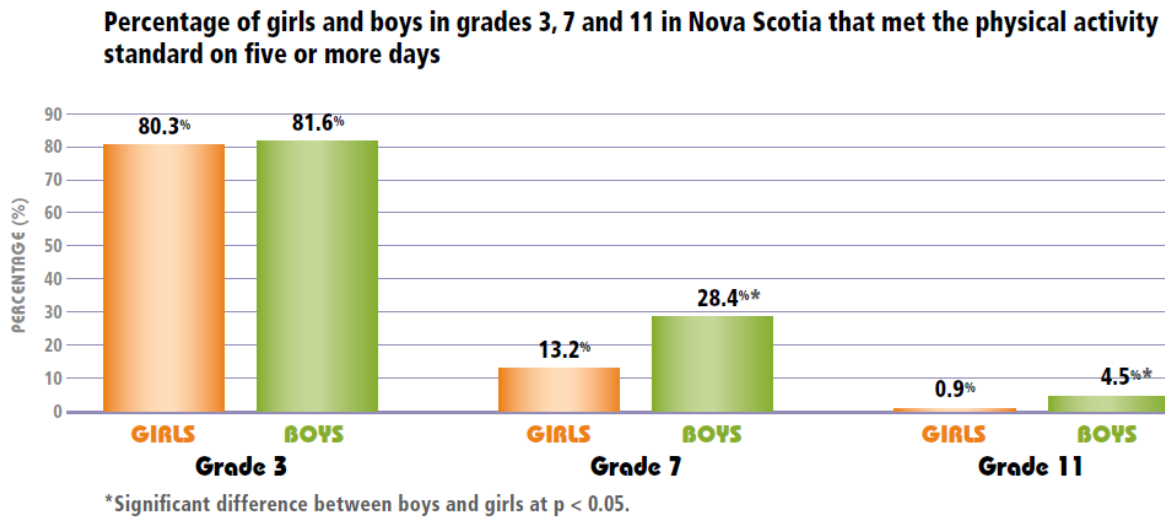
The information presented in this report will aid in understanding youth needs within Halifax, how Parks and Recreation programming addresses these needs, as well as next steps toward optimal youth programming in our region.



# Youth Research

## ParticipAction's Report Card on Physical Inactivity for Youth in Canada

Statistics nationally and regionally showcase extremely low physical activity rates among youth. Provincially from 2001-2012 Physical Activity levels among Children and Youth (PACY) research highlighted the drastic drop in levels of physical activity between grade 3, grade 7, and grade 11 students.



Source: <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/pasr/documents/Keeping-Pace-Physical-Activity-and-Healthy-Eating-Among-Children-and-Youth-Key-Findings-from-the-2009-2010-Study.pdf>

Nationally the trends and poor activity levels of youth are no different. The 2015 nationally released Report Card for Physical Activity captures statistics of youth and gives recommendations that can guide direction in the Halifax region.

### 2015 National Report Card - Canadian Youth (12-17 years)

- Only 5% of youth meet the physical activity guidelines (which is 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity everyday)
- Canadian youth spend 67% of their waking hours in sedentary behaviours
- Daily walking time has decreased in youth 15-17 years of age from 1992 to 2010 from 17 to 11 minutes, respectively. This decline was greater among girls

- Sport participation has decreased among Canadian youth aged 15-18 years from 77% (1992) to 59% (2005)
- When youth are outside, they move more. For every one hour increase in outdoor time, youth's moderate-to vigorous-intensity physical activity increased by 10 minutes
- As humans age, activity levels decrease. Further, girls are typically less active than boys. Our activity habits develop at a young age and can influence health later in life; therefore it is important to develop healthy habits at a young age

**ParticipACTION also noted the following key areas of behaviours that positively or negatively contribute to overall physical activity:**

#### Outdoor Play

Canadian kids ages 9-17 who play outside after school get 20 minutes more of heart-pumping activity per day, and are three times more likely to meet the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

#### Organized Sport and Physical Activity Participation

Canadian children who participate in organized physical activities or sports take on average almost 1,700 more steps per day than children who do not participate in these types of activities (2011-14 canPlay, cFIRI). This alone does not solve physical activity levels of our youth, a national average of 75% of kids aged 5-19 participate in organized physical activities or sport, yet only 9% of 5-17 years olds meet the daily recommendations of physical activity. The cost of enrollment is still stated as the largest barrier to sport participation. (90% of Canadians agree that the costs of organized sports are too expensive.)

#### Active Play, unstructured/unorganized activities

National research from 2012 focused on active play states, "Supporting and encouraging opportunities for safe, free, unstructured play, especially outdoors, may be one of the most promising, accessible and cost-effective solutions to increasing child and youth physical activity in Canada."

This study found that as the time 9-17 year olds spent outdoors after school increased, daily physical activity increased, and daily sedentary time (Time sitting or watching television) decreased. Those who spent most or all of their afterschool time outdoors received approximately 20 more minutes of moderate physical activity per day and were about 3 times more likely to achieve the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. (2015 ParticipAction Report Card)

### Sedentary Behaviours

Sedentary behaviour is characterized by a person who spends much of their time seated and little physical exercise. The world's first integrated 24-Hour Movement Behaviour Guidelines for Children and Youth (Ages 5 – 17) is currently being developed. These guidelines will include all intensities of physical activity (light, moderate, vigorous), sedentary behaviour and sleep.

### Culturally Inclusive Programs

New data from CANPLAY reveal a number of disparities – in relation to immigration and ethnicity, 15% of Canadian-born youth versus 11% of their peers who were born outside of Canada report at least 60 minutes of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity.

## **Recommendations**

Based on recommendations from the ParticipAction Report Card and the Nova Scotia Keeping Pace (PACY) research, the following recommendations would help to focus efforts to support more active youth in the Halifax Regional Municipality:

### Active Transportation

- Increase support for Active Transportation as a recreational and transportation opportunity for youth. This includes infrastructure, education and awareness, as well as opportunities to experience and develop skills
- Continue to support programs and opportunities for youth such as Halifax Try a Ride, Bike Week, Making Tracks safe cycling, skateboarding, scootering workshops, and bike loans throughout the region (ex. Emera Oval)

### Organized Sport and Physical Activity Participation

- Increase and enhance outdoor active opportunities:
  - Investigate present youth offerings and assess if there is room for creating outdoor activities within the scope of the program or event
  - Increase the number of opportunities for outdoor programs and events
  - Enhance the promotion of present outdoor active pursuits targeted to youth
- Continue to support outdoor community based programs such as Parks and Recreation's After the Bell program and Adventure Earth Centre. Look at the afterschool time period as an opportune area for more outdoor opportunities for youth.
- Consider and expand access to outdoor facilities that youth can partake on their own. Examples include equipment loan opportunities throughout the region that allows youth to be active in their communities: canoes, skateboards, tennis rackets, basketballs, bikes.



### Active Play, unstructured/unorganized activities

- Continue to support unstructured recreational opportunities for youth such as Open Gym times, and other drop in programs
- Promote and increase equipment loan programs recreation outreach opportunities
- Increase outdoor opportunities for youth
- Increase parents and caregivers awareness and understanding of the benefits versus the risks of outdoor play

### Sedentary Behaviours

- Provide and encourage more active lifestyles throughout the daily lives of youth, at school, afterschool, at home and at work

### Culturally Inclusive Programs

- Enhance culturally and gender friendly spaces and programs

## **References**

### ParticipACTION Report

[www.participaction.com/getstarted/statistics/?utm\\_source=ZohoCampaigns&utm\\_campaign=Network+EN+08%2F2015\\_2015-07-29\\_1&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.participaction.com/getstarted/statistics/?utm_source=ZohoCampaigns&utm_campaign=Network+EN+08%2F2015_2015-07-29_1&utm_medium=email)

### National Research Study

<http://dvqdas9jty7g6.cloudfront.net/reportcards2012/AHKC%202012%20-%20Report%20Card%20Long%20Form%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

### CANPLAY Information

<http://www.cflri.ca/canplay>

## Physical Activity, Recreation, Leisure, and Sport: Essential Pieces of the Mental Health and Well-being Puzzle

In the report “Physical Activity, Recreation, Leisure, and Sport: Essential Pieces of the Mental Health and Well-being Puzzle” prepared for Recreation Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, the report links positive outcomes to youth’s mental health when they participate in physical activity and recreation programs.

The report has gathered many sources of research on the subject of youth mental health into one document. The information below outlines the “quick facts” from this report.

### Quick Facts:

- Youth involvement in structured “active” free time activities is associated with better overall mental health, lower levels of depressed mood, and higher levels of positive affect
- Leisure or recreation participation can also be a resource for adolescents to cope with stress in their lives
- Most forms of physical activity offer protective effects for mental health and addictions among youth
- Participation in physical activity has been associated with decreased anxiety and depression, improved self-esteem, decreased psychological stress and reduced drug use
- Youth with mental health and/or behavioural problems may experience additional barriers to recreation participation not experienced by their peers

Research in the report links the positive effect of involving youth in Summer Day camp programs. Involving youth in these types of programs enhances positive self-identity and social skills.

The report outlines several features that help to promote positive youth development in a recreation setting. These examples can easily be adopted by the municipality to ensure youth are provided with every opportunity to develop a healthy mind.

Essential features of developmental that promotes positive youth development and mental health:

- Safe and health promoting facilities
- Clear and consistent rules and expectations
- Warm, supportive relationships
- Opportunities for meaningful inclusion and belonging
- Opportunity for skill building
- Foster positive youth development by combining challenging opportunities with supportive relationships

## **Recommendations**

The Halifax Regional Municipality offers many programs that support this report. Proper youth engagement is at the core of this report. Without youth input into what programs are offered, the youth will not feel motivated to participate. Youth should “want” to be at a program. It is those programs that offer youth the most benefits and help to develop the resilience needed to properly adapt to stress and adversity.

Key recommendations:

- Focus on the development of programs in recreation settings that are intentionally designed to foster youth’s developmental assets.
- Youth develop positively when they are involved in activities that are intrinsically motivating and requires efforts and participation over a period of time. When developing programs for youth, youth should be engaged in the development process.
- Recreation and physical activity programs should be actively promoted to encourage more youth participation which offers a pro-active way to support positive youth mental health.

To read the full report, please visit the link below.

[www.recreationns.ns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/MentalHealthLit.pdf](http://www.recreationns.ns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/MentalHealthLit.pdf)

# Youth Programming Statistics

## Youth Programming

The following showcases several youth programs run by the Halifax Regional Municipality. All of the youth program information is collected and split into themes. These themes were identified during the development of the Youth Engagement Strategy in 2005. As staff engages youth, breaking the municipality’s programming into theme areas helps to gain more detailed feedback on each theme, allowing staff to learn more about what youth want in each area.

Each theme area includes a number of program types. For example, Art Programming is not just about arts and crafts. It includes theatre, music, art mural projects. When staff report on a program, they select one of the theme areas they feel best fits the program being offered to the youth.

It should be noted that not all youth programs work in every community. What works in one area may not work in another. In all cases, staff engage youth in their communities and attempt to offer programs / events that are specific to the needs of the youth in the local area.

The majority of youth programs were offered on Thursday and Friday nights between the hours of 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Weekend programs ran mostly on Saturdays between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

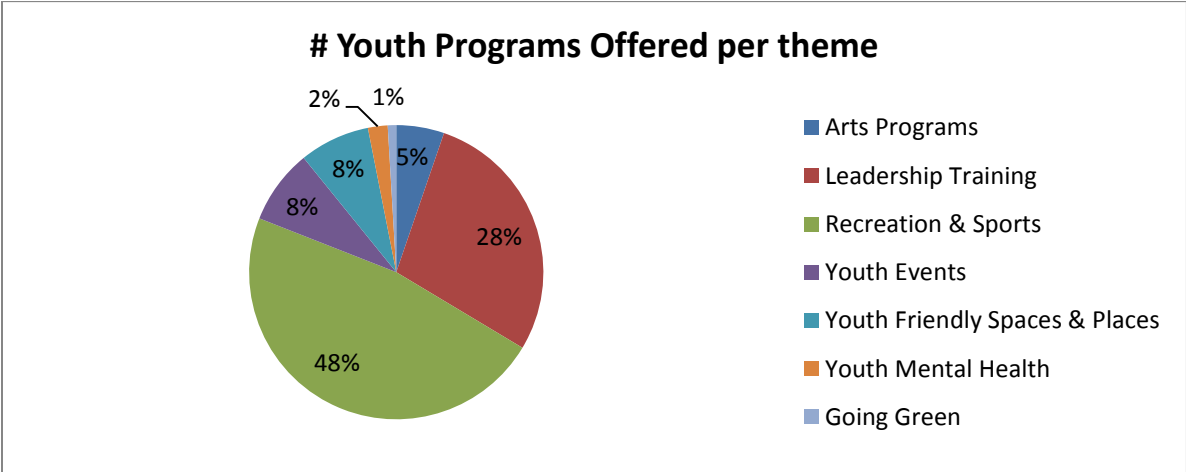


Fig. 1 (above): Youth Programs breakdown from Winter to Summer 2015. This data includes data from Parks & Recreation, Halifax Regional Police, RCMP and the Halifax Public Libraries.

The data in Figure 1 shows that the bulk of programs offered by the municipality fit into the “Recreation & Sport” category followed by Leadership Training programs. It should be noted that the Recreation & Sport programs can be counted as Youth Mental Health programs based on the research presented earlier in this report.

### Jump Start / Rec Kids Funding Program Summary

This program is a partnership between Canadian Tire Charities and Halifax Parks and Recreation which aims to provide assistance to financially disadvantaged children and youth aged 18 and younger so they can participate in recreational, sport, arts, cultural and physical activity programs. Jumpstart/RecKids currently provides up to \$200 per child per family per Halifax fiscal year towards registrations fees. This funding is accessed via application and based on the limits of the Jumpstart/RecKids Program.

<b>Jump Start Program Stats (Youth 12-18)</b>	
<b>2015/16</b>	<b>174</b> *April 1 to present
<b>2014/15</b>	<b>341</b>
<b>2013/14</b>	<b>259</b>

\*2015/16 Jump Start Stats represent applications that have been received from April 1 to September 30, 2015. A year-end total will be provided in April’s Youth Engagement Report.

## Arts Programming

### Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation offered the following “Art Programming” opportunities: Pottery, Photography, Cooking Classes, Dance classes, mixed media, sketch and draw classes, drama classes and general craft classes.

The highest registered art program called “Art Hive” were drop in art events at St. Andrew’s Community Centre and the Findlay Community Centre. 80 youth attended each of these drop in programs.

The second highest art program was a place making event that took place in June at the Findlay Centre in Dartmouth. 55 youth were present.

The third highest art program was Circus Arts in North Preston. 25 youth attended this drop in program.

### Halifax Public Libraries

The Halifax Public Libraries offered several art programs at each library facility. These programs are drop in programs. The highest attended Art Program was offered at the Woodlawn Public Library in Dartmouth. 182 youth attended this drop in program.

## Going Green: Environmentally Friendly Region

### Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation offered six “Going Green” opportunities from the Winter to Summer 2015. These included community clean ups and volunteering at Community Gardens as part of the Youth Leadership Program. 60 youth participated in these opportunities.

## Leadership Training & Youth Employment

### Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation offered the following “Leadership Training & Youth Employment” opportunities: Youth Groups / Action Teams, Babysitter Training Courses, Youth Leadership Programs, Youth Live Program, and employment opportunities at all Community Recreation Centres.

The highest attended Youth Group / Action Team program took place in Ship Harbour and at Tallahassee Community Centre. Both sites had 48 youth attend their meetings.

The highest training opportunity was a High Five training offered in Lakeside. This training had 27 youth in attendance.

### Halifax Regional Police & RCMP

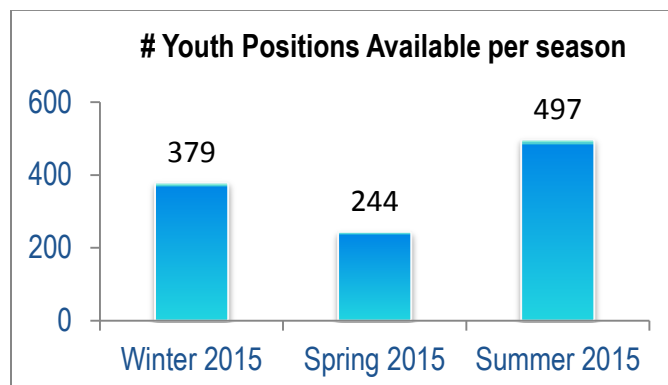
The HRP Youth program takes place Thursdays and had 14 youth registered.

The RCMP youth program called Stetsons and Spurs is for youth ages 12 – 17. It takes place in Cole Harbour, Preston area and Lower Sackville. 40 youth attended this program.

### Youth Employment Opportunities

Youth Employment Opportunities are offered at all Recreation Centres throughout the year, with the highest number of youth hired during the summer months.

Youth Leadership Program is mainly offered during the summer. More details on this program can be found below.



Parks & Recreation hired a total of 1120 youth positions from Winter to Summer 2015.

## Recreation & Sports Programs

### Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation offered the following “Recreation & Sport” opportunities: Badminton, Basketball, Fitness Classes, Open Gym drop in programs, youth open swims, snowshoe hikes and Rock climbing.

The highest was Aquatic open swim times. The open swim at the Bedford Outdoor Pool had youth access the open swims 1005 times during the Summer of 2015.

The second highest recreation drop in program is called Night Hoops. Youth accessed this drop in program 880 times during the Spring of 2015. This program was offered at the George Dixon Community Centre in Halifax.

The third highest was a drop in Badminton program offered at Astral Drive Jr. High in Cole Harbour. Youth accessed this drop in program 410 times during the Winter and Spring of 2015.

The municipality also hosted Sport Unite on Monday, August 10<sup>th</sup>. The event was organized by the United Nations Association of Canada and supported by the Halifax Regional Municipality’s African Nova Scotian Integration Affairs Office and Parks & Recreation. This special event was held at the Sackville Sports Stadium and helped to connect over 200 children and youth together to participate in a simulated Pan/Parapan American Games. Halifax was one of seven cities in the country selected by UNA-Canada for the event.

## Youth Friendly Spaces and Places

### Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation offered the following “Youth Friendly Spaces and Places” opportunities: Healthy Teen programs, youth nights and drop in programs.

The highest attended program was the Youth Night at the Tallahassee Community Centre in Eastern Passage. Youth accessed this program 1310 times.

The second highest program was the Healthy Teens program at the Dartmouth North Community Centre. Youth accessed this program 1161 times during the Winter and Spring 2015.

The third highest attended program was at the Gordon R. Snow Community Centre. Youth accessed this Youth Night 327 times during the Winter and Spring of 2015.



## Youth Events

### Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation offered the following “Youth Event” opportunities: Youth Dances, Festival & Events, Coffee Houses, Movie Nights & other socials.

The highest attended youth event was the end of summer Youth Leadership Program Dance. It had 80 youth attend the dance.

The second highest was the “Anti-Valentine’s Day Event” held at the Dartmouth North Community Centre. This had 45 youth attend this event.

The third highest youth event was the Maple Syrup Tours held at Birch Cove in Dartmouth. It had 35 youth attend / volunteer at this event.

### Halifax Public Libraries

The Halifax Public Libraries held an Open Mic / Youth Performances event. Youth accessed these events 333 times during the Winter of 2015.

**Festivals & Events** are offered in many communities in the municipality. Some have a “youth theme” such as Natal Day’s Esso Youth Showcase (19 youth performers / 5000 youth attended). Other events offer youth an opportunity to volunteer at the event (25 youth volunteered at the Clam Harbour Sandcastle Competition). There were 11 youth who volunteered at the Northern Lights Lantern Festival in Halifax.

HRM’s major Youth Event is Hopscotch. This three-day event is a festival of dance, art and music and is held on the waterfronts in Dartmouth and Halifax, with concerts featuring internationally recognized performers. This event is for youth ages 16-25. Hopscotch has over 50 youth help plan and organize this event and more than 100 local youth perform during the event. In 2015, over 5000 youth attended the three day festival and concerts.

The municipality also hosted WE Day Atlantic on November 27, 2014. WE Day is a celebration of youth making a difference in their local and global communities. WE Schools is the year long program that nurtures compassion in young people and gives them the tools to create transformational social change. Together they offer young people the tools and the inspiration to take social action, empower others and transform lives—including their own. 8000 students and educators from more than 315 schools attended this event. The theme “Me to We” inspires children and youth to volunteer and help others in their local community and around the world.

## Youth Mental Health

Parks & Recreation offered 14 Youth Mental Health specific programs during Winter to Summer 2015. These included self-esteem workshops for girls, tutoring nights, healthy minds and meditation sessions.

The Recreation Centres offering these program are; George Dixon Centre, Upper Hammonds Plains Community Centre, Hubbards Community Centre and Acadia School in Lower Sackville.

The highest Youth Mental Health program was at the George Dixon Community Centre. The program, Youth Tutoring Night, had 56 youth registered during the Spring of 2015.

The second highest program was Vision Boards (Goal Setting for Healthy Lifestyles) which was offered at the Hubbards Community Centre. It had 13 youth registered.

The third highest program was the Love Yourself Girls Day held in Hubbards. It had 10 youth registered.

The physical activity, recreation, and sport programs that the municipality offers are also a proactive way to help to address mental health issues youth may be facing. The benefits as outlined in the research presented earlier in this report support the fact that the municipality's offering of youth programs will promote a healthy body and mind in youth.

## Youth Leadership Program Overview

The Youth Leadership program offered by Parks & Recreation is for youth ages 13+ (or those whom have completed grade 7) who want to learn leadership skills, take part in social activities, work with children, and give back to their community. This program is not a full-time commitment, times vary in each community.

The Youth Leadership Program offers three different levels of training and commitment:

Level 1: This is for younger youth with no previous leadership experience.

Level 2: Youth have some previous leadership experience.

Level 3: This level is for youth ages 14+ only who have previous leadership experience and are ready for more responsibility.

Typically level 1 and 2 youth participate in group training and lead group activities on a limited scale, while level 3 youth volunteer on an individual basis and lead activities on their own or with a partner.

- Summer 2015 Youth Leadership Program Attendance: 521
- Average number of volunteer hours completed by each youth: 28 hours
- Total number of volunteer hours completed by all 521 youth: 15,028 hours

### Training Modules

All youth in the program receive a variety of training and leadership skills. The youth receive the following modules throughout the summer: Inclusion & Diversity, Interview Skills, Program Planning, Public Speaking, Leadership, Safety, Team Work & Participation and Community Action.

### Y.E.S. Camp

Y.E.S. Camp (Youth Engagement Strategy Camp) takes place during the first week in August. Each Youth Leadership Program selects 2-4 youth from their program to participate in this unique opportunity. Y.E.S. Camp takes these youth and their leaders to Camp Mockingee, an overnight residential camp for youth located just outside of Windsor, NS. This 3 day opportunity provides a mix of team building, leadership, educational and experiential learning opportunities in an outdoor setting. The youth are then asked to go back to their programs and share what they have learned with the rest of their program. Training at this camp also focuses on community action beyond the summer (school year). Y.E.S. Camp also provides an opportunity for youth to meet their peers from other communities.

## **Community Action**

“Community Action” is the central core of the Youth Leadership Program. Each youth has an opportunity to brainstorm, plan and implement a community action project. Last summer, 56 community action events took place. The youth following is a sample list of the community action projects completed during the summer of 2015:

- Hosting a BBQ for Senior’s (Helped to connect Seniors with Youth)
- Community clean ups
- Car washes
- Volunteering at different community organizations such as FeedNS and Ronald MacDonald House.

## **Youth Socials**

Along with the Community Action plans, the youth have an opportunity to participate in several socials during the summer. All except the dances are decided upon and planned by the youth in the program.

Sample list of Youth Socials that took place last summer:

- Laser tag
- Emera Oval Skating
- Movie nights
- Beach days
- Bowling
- Healthy living cooking classes

Two youth dances were offered this summer; both provided an opportunity for youth to meet their peers from other communities.

## Youth At-Risk

Parks & Recreation operates several major youth programs dedicated to at-risk youth. These programs are the Youth Live Program, Youth Advocate Program, Souls Strong and Girls United. More information on these programs can be found at [www.halifax.ca/youth](http://www.halifax.ca/youth)

### What Is At-Risk Youth?

The definition of an at-risk youth is broad, in some respects; all youth are at-risk in one way or another. The technical definition of at-risk is a youth who is less likely to transition successfully into adulthood. Success can include academic success and job readiness, as well as the ability to be financially independent. It also can refer to the ability to become a positive member of society by avoiding a life of crime.

### Youth Live Program

Youth Live participants are offered up to 21 weeks of life and job skill development. This program is for individuals, aged 16 to 24, who have barriers to employment. Participants in the program participate in learning modules and gain work experience by assisting with the business operations described below. Participants learn customer service and other transferrable job skills that they can take to future jobs. Participants will strengthen life skills and explore options for the future while earning income in our business operations.

From May 2015 to September 2015:

# Youth in program from May to end of September: 24

# of youth who graduated during this time: 14

# Training modules completed: 50

Operation: Commercial Enviro Depot

This operation has the youth sorting recyclable product that is diverted from the Otter Lake Landfill. Staff & the youth processed 795 bags or 534,437 units from May to the end of September.

Operation: Enviro Depot (947 Mitchell Street)

This operation has the youth running an Enviro Depot in the south end of Halifax. The youth provide customer service to residents wishing to return their bottles to be recycled. From May to the end of September the youth processed 1,787,416 units of bottles.

### Operation: Green Cart Delivery and Repair

This operation has the staff and youth repairing or replacing old damaged green carts to residents in the municipality. The Youth Live Program recently took over all service requests on behalf of Solid Waste eliminating the need for an outside contractor.

Staff and youth completed the following service requests:

Grand Total for 2014: 1327

Grand Total for 2015: 4570

For 2015, during the week of August 3<sup>rd</sup>, there were a total of 331 service requests which was the highest weekly total for the summer. Staff believes there was an increase in demand for service requests due to the changes to clear garbage bags.

### Youth Advocate Program

The goal of the Youth Advocate Program is help prevent youth from engaging in gang-related activities, as well as anti-social and criminal behaviors. It is for youth aged 9 – 15 who meet at least 2 of the following risk factors: Alcohol or drug issues, frequently in trouble with the law, involved in criminal activity, High commitment to friends involved in criminal activity, Friends/family members are gang members, Conflict between home and school life, Gangs in and around school/neighborhood, Lack of adult role models, parental criminality/violent attitudes or siblings with anti-social behaviors.

The Youth Advocate Program has approximately 30 youth in the program at any given time.

### Souls Strong Program

Operating in the African Nova Scotian Community of North Preston, the Souls Strong program engages young men between the ages of 15 to 20 years who show two or more risk factors (mentioned above). With the participation of community residents, community leaders and service providers, Souls Strong supports young men as they move away from involvement in criminal and or gang related activity.

The Souls Strong Program has approximately 20 youth in the program at any given time.

### Girls United Program

The Girls United Program is for girls ages 12 to 14 years old. The girls accepted into this program need to meet two or more of the risk factors (described above). Staff in this program work to support young girls to achieve their goals for change. The youth receive learning modules in a supportive, welcoming environment. The objective of this program is to increase self-reliance, resilience and pro-social and life skills.

The Girls United Program has approximately 20 girls enrolled at any given time.

## Success Story

Shaila joined the Youth Advocate Program when she was 14. The Youth Advocate Program staff helped and mentored her to keep her out of a life of crime and gang violence. She graduated the Youth Advocate Program and moved into the Youth Live Program where she gained job experience and additional life skills. Upon completion of her 21 weeks, she applied for and was successful in obtaining summer employment with Parks & Recreation. For the summer of 2015 she worked at Youth Live as a Team Lead Assistant. Shaila, now 17, was successful in obtaining employment at the Emera Oval for the winter. She has matured into a hardworking, trustworthy youth who has a lot of confidence and support as she moves forward in her life.

## Internal Collaboration Meeting on Youth Engagement

On December 12, 2014 Parks & Recreation, Halifax Regional Libraries and Halifax Regional Police staff came together to discuss how these departments can start to work more collaboratively in relation to youth engagement programs. Unfortunately staff from the RCMP and Halifax Fire was unable to attend.

When asked how we can start to work more collaboratively, the following ideas were brainstormed:

- More networking/sharing programs/times is needed so Staff aren't competing for youth in the same neighbourhood.
- Keeping facilities/teen spaces open later.
- Space Sharing (facilities): Some programs outgrow the space available.
- School Access can be difficult at times. Partnering with those staff who have access would help when attempting to promote programs.
- Leading Readers/ Homework helpers from Library could assist youth in other programs.
- Seasonal program updates should be sent to all departments to help reach more youth.
- Corporate communications should be brought in to assist with this cross promotion.
- Social Media: Staff needs to keep up to date with new tools. Those tools should be shared with other departments.

The next meeting of this group will happen in the Fall of 2015. Action items will be identified and reported in the next report.



## Youth Plan

Parks & Recreation has pulled together a youth team to help guide the creation of a Youth Plan for the municipality. This plan is not focusing on how to engage youth, rather, what actions the municipality can take to better support the youth in our communities. One of the first steps that will be taken is to form a Youth Team consisting of primarily high school aged youth to help guide this project.

The Youth Team is split into three areas (Bedford/Sackville/Fall River & area, Dartmouth/Cole Harbour/ Eastern Shore & area, Halifax/Spryfield/Lakeside & area) and is made up of high school aged youth from across the municipality. The youth team will have the responsibility of working with staff to host several information gathering workshops in their schools to gather current issues and trends youth are facing. In addition, a survey will be launched in the late fall to help refine this data and for staff to gain additional information about the challenges youth are facing. This data will then be reviewed by the Youth Team. The outcome will be a set of action items targeted to impact a specific geographical area and/or youth cohort.

It should be noted that staff will be hosting special information gathering events for youth in the Sheet Harbour and the Musquodoboit Valley area due to the transportation issues of having those youth participate in the youth team meetings.

Updates on the progress of this Youth Plan will be shared in the next Youth Engagement Report due April/May 2016.

## Action Items from July's Youth Report

Action Items from July 2015 Youth Engagement Report

**Item 1: The Youth Engagement Committee will meet to discuss how the municipality and external youth serving organizations can work collaboratively in order to provide programs and services to youth.**

Update on Item 1: Information has been collected from several external youth serving organizations and internal staff. The next meeting will take place on October 2 which will include discussion around this topic.

**Item 2: Internal departments will continue to meet to review and discuss the youth programs offered. This will create increased coordination and collaboration between business units.**

Update on Item 2: Parks & Recreation staff has attended several meetings with Halifax Regional Library's youth program staff. This has opened communication between the two departments which now offer several joint programs at various centres around the municipality.

Parks & Recreation staff attended a meeting with the Halifax Regional Police's School Liaison Officers. Information was shared with the officers as to how Recreation Programming operates and how they are able to refer youth to our programs.

**Item 3: A Youth Manager position will be established within the Parks & Recreation Business Unit to focus on delivering services that will provide better outcomes for youth.**

Update on Item 3: The Manager of Youth position has been approved and the recruitment for this position has started.

**Item 4: Further youth engagement and ongoing monitoring of youth trends, statistics, and best practices will be necessary to develop a Youth Plan, which will help guide the Halifax Regional Municipality in future years.**

Update on Item 4: Actions for the Youth Plan are described above in this report.

**Item 5: Ongoing engagement of youth on the priority areas and identification of at-risk youth/communities will be necessary to ensure current youth programming is adequate and appropriate to meet the needs of youth.**

Update on Item 5: During the summer of 2015, staff engaged youth at all the Parks & Recreation programs offered during that period. This engagement focused on the initial data needed to start the Youth Plan, more of which will be reported in the April 2016's youth report.

## Conclusion & Next Steps

1. Continue to provide Youth Engagement Reports to CPED twice a year (October/November and April/May).
2. Ongoing engagement of youth on the priority areas and identification of at-risk youth/communities will be necessary to ensure current youth programming is adequate and appropriate to meet the needs of youth.
3. The Youth Engagement Committee will meet to discuss how HRM and external youth serving organizations can work collaboratively in order to provide programs and services to youth. The ParticipACTION report will also be shared with this group. Ideas on how to implement the report's action items will be discussed.
4. A Youth Manager position has been established within the Parks & Recreation Business Unit to focus on delivering services that will provide better outcomes for youth. The recruitment of this position is underway.
5. Staff will continue work to create the Youth Plan as outlined earlier in this report.