

An Inspiring Typical Teenager

Brooke describes herself as a typical teenager who wants to help others. When she raised \$600 for The Dam at our bowl-a-thon in April, I wanted to learn more about the story of this 15 (almost 16!) year old teenager.

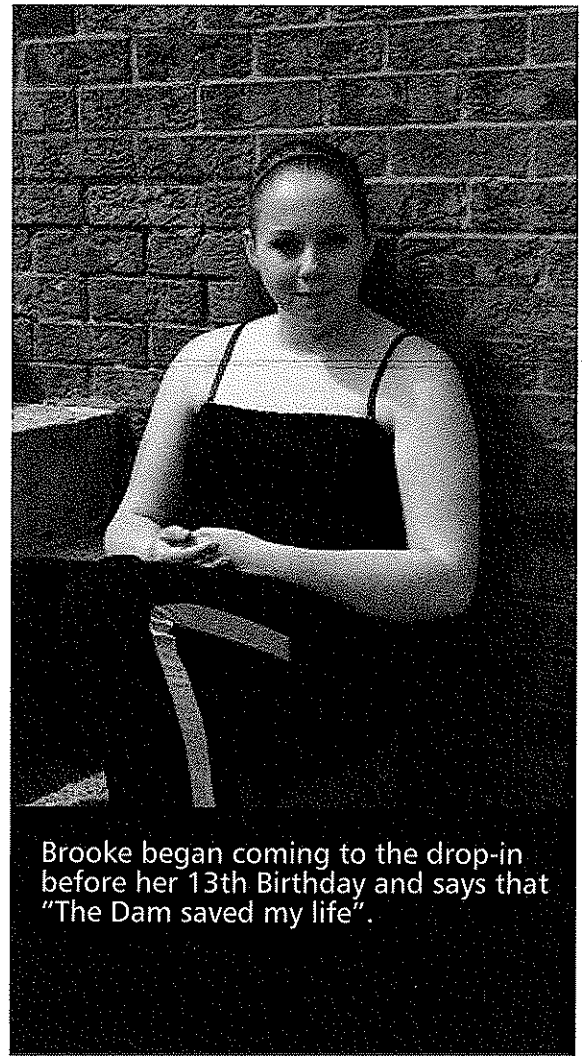
Brooke began coming to the drop-in before her 13th Birthday and says that "The Dam saved my life". The friends she had at age 12 were a bad influence. While her parents were working, she was getting involved in drugs, drinking and guys. When she found The Dam, she changed her friends. She was able to play pool instead of getting into trouble on the streets. Eventually she got to know the staff, started getting mentored by Robin, and now calls the community at the drop-in her family.

Cleaning up the environment is Brooke's next project. It may begin with a clean up day, yet the issues of littering and the impact on the environment aren't far from Brooke's agenda.

Brooke's other dreams centre around graduating high school and going to college, overcoming a hearing impediment and learning disabilities. She wants to be able

to buy a house, fix it up, and sell it for profit.

I was struck by Brooke's determination and realization that when she focuses her mind to something, she is able to accomplish many things. Brooke is making many changes in her life, and is driven by the desire to help others. We often don't think that is a typical teenager attitude, but maybe it is.



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I have been asked the last few months about how the economic situation is affecting the youth and families of The Dam. We know that the financial difficulties that families are under due to job loss, creates stress in the home life.

Increase in stress at home leads to an increase in negative behaviours outside the home. Our society will see an increase in violence this year because of the economic climates affecting the emotional health of families.

There are different kinds of poverty that families face. You could define poverty with the statement of not having enough "_____" to meet basic needs. The blank is usually filled in with the word money, or adequate housing.

There is also an emotional and social poverty that exists – not having enough relationships, love & support to meet basic needs. This is often the poverty that youth face.

Babies and toddlers need adults in their life as they learn to walk and talk. 12-15 year olds need adults in their life as they learn their identity and purpose for their walk and talk of life. The absence of adults involved in the lives of teenagers leaves many teens hopeless and in need of a foundation.

The economic crisis will pass and the recession will be a memory. Yet the emotional poverty that exists in many of our children will not pass so quickly.

I love that The Dam is a community that can meet the increased needs by providing positive relationships, love and support through the help of our donors.

Jean Hill

Wins the Sam McCallion Award, Mississauga's Volunteer of the Year.

Jean started volunteering with teenagers when she was 70 years old – an age when most people are much more comfortable not going to a drop-in filled with boisterous teens, discussing the latest piercings and/or tatoos, and listening to the popular music of that day. Jean has persevered through generations of teens as they dealt with issues through their high school years. Jean knows the value of family in everyone's lives and has naturally become everyone's grandma. She is loving and accepting and is able to remind youth of "old-time" values in a way that they accept and respect.

When a member of The Dam's community died at the age of 18, all of the youth were profoundly affected. Outside the building, she walked up to two girls who were outside together and without saying anything, enveloped them both in a hug. They both broke down and cried on her shoulders, so glad to have a safe place to let out their tears. Jean said afterwards that she had never met those girls before.

By the time Jean went back home at the end of that long afternoon, she could actually wring out the shoulder pads on her jacket, they were so drenched with the tears of youth who found solace in her arms.

At drop-in at The Dam on a day-to-day basis, she is able to give a hug at the same time she is grabbing a youth by the scruff of the neck! We all have images of the youth trying to teach her video games and then she hustles them in a game of pool or cards. She can sit and listen to the youth around the food counter and convey delight in each one, whether she remembers a name or not.

**Congratulations Jean on this
deserving award!**



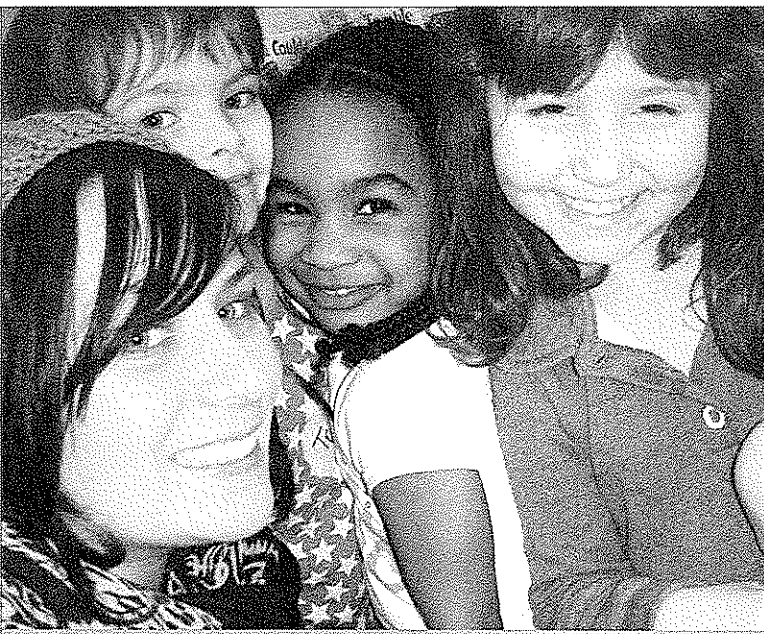
intersections



Carol

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call me anytime
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A Tribute to Young Moms

It is amazing how much a young mom can go through in the first year of parenthood. Some of the typical things are breaking up with baby daddy, moving out of a parent's home, going to court for custody, finishing school, looking for a job, navigating government supports – and of course, all the first year stressors of being a parent and learning about babies.

The following is a tribute from Jill and Monika given to the young moms on Mother's Day.

Every week we see you ladies work so hard at being mothers. We see strength, perseverance, energy, selfless devotion, patience, and love in all of you. These are the traits it takes to get through your days as mothers, and you got them!
You are good mothers.

To even get a small glimpse into your days as mothers and what you do, is truly inspiring.

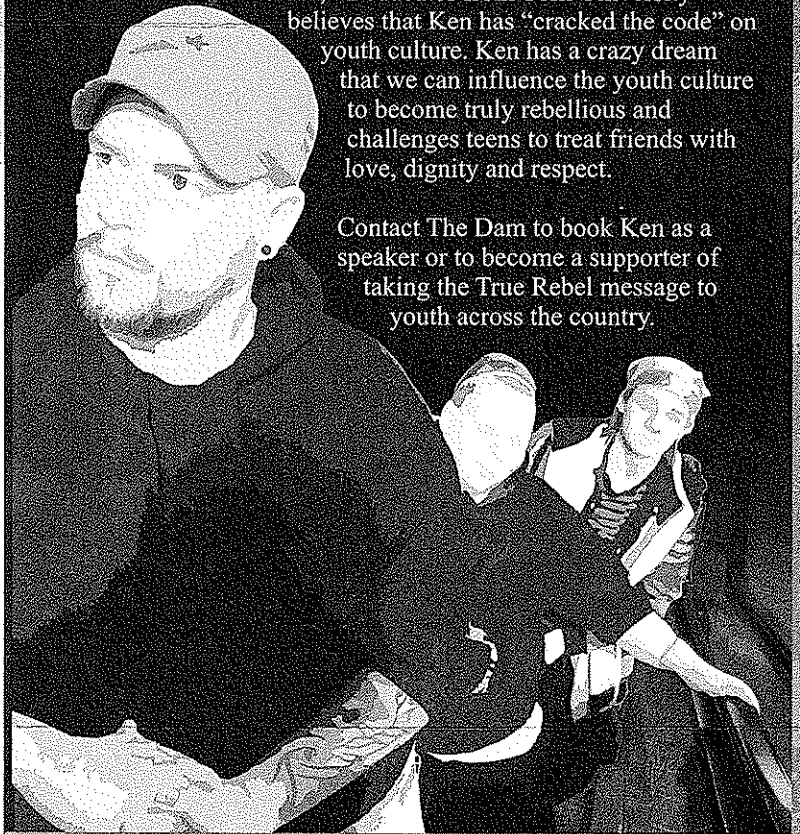
It has been so wonderful getting to know you as women, mothers and friends. We look forward to group every week, to seeing you, to seeing your children, to learn what's going on in your lives. We are honored and privileged that you would allow us into your lives like this. That you would share with us, laugh with us, cry with us. That you would inspire us and show us two single gals with no children, what it takes to be a mother.

Bullying

"The biggest problem we have with bullying in our high schools today is not some random big dude in the lunchroom pounding kids for their milk money, but the biggest problem we have with bullying today happens from friend to friend, to friend, to friend."
Ken Dryhout, The Dam

Ken has a theory that links the way that friends treat each other to being a form of psychological violence. The United Nations' definition of psychological violence includes isolation, rejection, and ridicule – things that happen every day in the halls of our high schools between friends. Friends have learned to call each other idiots and loser. The pressure to conform to a particular image leaves youth afraid of their friends. Friendship is broken.

Ken speaks to school assemblies, educators and parents across the region, shedding light on the current youth culture. At a recent forum, an educator from York University believes that Ken has "cracked the code" on youth culture. Ken has a crazy dream that we can influence the youth culture to become truly rebellious and challenges teens to treat friends with love, dignity and respect.



Contact The Dam to book Ken as a speaker or to become a supporter of taking the True Rebel message to youth across the country.

Thanks for our new image

We have a new look thanks to many supporters in our community.

- Blazing Design – donated our new logo
- Speedpro Graphics – donated our new display – Thanks for the great work Brian!
- Alex Nicholls – produced our video
- Diego Polanco – graphic designer who makes everything look good.

Annual General Meeting

June 22, 2009

The meeting starts at 7pm at the drop-in.
All are welcome to attend.

Support The Dam!

The Dam relies on the community for its funding. With an operating budget of \$600,000 annually, the success of The Dam for the past 14 years has been the generous support of the Meadowvale community. Please consider giving a donation or becoming a monthly supporter. Monthly donations create the foundation to ensure that youth and young moms can be assured of an ongoing, healthy community, even when the economic climate is tough. For more information or to make a donation, visit www.thedam.org or call 905-826-6558.

Out of all the groups that I've spoken to, your group was definitely one of the most memorable. The women are fantastic at being a support for one another, and you can really sense that they all care very deeply for each other, which created the space where women could comfortably and safely disclose.

Toni Francis, Public Education Facilitator

Becoming Community Changers

Providing a welcoming, clean, and safe environment for our youth and volunteers is important at The Dam. We have learned over the years that the physical environment communicates messages. For example, we recently moved our computers in the drop-in from a small separate room to the main room. The atmosphere around the computer use since then has changed dramatically, becoming less secretive and more respectful to everyone.

What about the places in the community that we aren't in charge of? We hear all about local business efforts to keep youth from loitering (a real issue) such as broadcasting annoying high pitched mosquito-like noises that only those under 25 can hear, and having rules of how many youth can enter a store. The youth hear the message from these practices that they aren't wanted or welcome.

The exciting part is how the youth are responding. We would expect them to turn their outrage into anger and disrespect. Instead, they are looking for ways to communicate with the adults of their community about other ways of dealing with and understanding groups of youth gathering together. They are setting up meetings with those in charge.

Maybe it is up to us adults to wonder why we are afraid of youth. Why do we encourage business establishments to hurry youth out of the way? Are we willing to allow practices that are discriminating? Maybe we should set up meetings with youth to discover how we can live together peaceably? Wouldn't it be great if our community environments were welcoming, clean and safe for everyone?

Community Changers at the Basketball Courts

After a winter of meeting indoors once a week to play basketball, the youth of Meadowvale are excited about the warm weather where it is possible to play basketball every day outside! Skill and passion are developing in a growing number of youth through The Dam's basketball program. The positive camaraderie around the basketball courts is life changing.

The youth visited the fabulous new outdoor basketball courts that the city has built in other communities. They saw the impact of great facilities giving youth motivation on the courts and in life. They looked at their own aging court of cracked concrete, irregular net heights with bent rims and decided they should do something about it. The first step has been to put together a list of items that could be changed. The list has gone to the city to see what the city can do.

The reality is that it will take the whole community coming together and collaborating on this vision of rebuilding the courts. The Dam wants to empower these youth who are taking responsibility for the improvement of their community. We know that the emotional and physical investment by these young people will change the culture of the current teens and the younger children who are looking for role models.

the Dam

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