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Information Item No. 2
Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee
Special Meeting
June 17, 2021

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

-Original Signed-

SUBMITTED BY:

Denise Schofield, Executive Director, Parks & Recreation

-Original Signed-

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 19, 2021

SUBJECT: Youth Engagement Report 2020

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Motion of Regional Council – April 30, 2019:

MOVED by Councillor Austin, seconded by Councillor Smith:

THAT Halifax Regional Council authorize the Chief Administrative Officer or their designate to:

1. Continue to engage youth, both in their communities and online, to better understand the current trends and issues of youth across HRM; and
2. Provide an annual report to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee regarding trends, issues, best practices and actions taken.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Charter

Section 79A

- (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for the municipal purposes if
 - a. The expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality.

BACKGROUND

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

In April 2019, staff were directed to provide an annual report 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 Youth Engagement Report (Attachment A) outlines youth programming, trends, issues, and best practices for the calendar year 2020. Included in this report is a summary of the work done to complete the first Youth Services Plan (2016-2020).

Current data on youth activity was collected from HRM operated community centres, partner facilities, Halifax Regional Police, Halifax Public Libraries, Municipal Clerks Office, Halifax Transit, and external youth service providers.

Youth programs were adversely affected by COVID-19 in 2020, with many youth programs and events being suspended or cancelled. As restrictions were lifted, many programs were able to restart while continuing to follow public health guidelines, however, with restrictions back in place programs and events have once again been suspended. HRM continues to monitor and respond to the rapidly evolving impacts of COVID-19. The Youth Programming division will continue to be flexible to continue to meet the needs of the youth during this difficult time.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Staff engaged youth to complete this report to obtain feedback from the youth on the trends and issues presented in the attached report. This was achieved by visiting existing youth programs across the municipality, both virtually and in person when public health restrictions allowed.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Youth Engagement Report

A copy can be obtained online at Halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Update for January 2020-December 2020



PREPARED BY:

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Lee Moore, Manager, Youth Programs | Parks & Recreation




HALIFAX

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Purpose



In May 2013, Regional Council directed Community & Recreation Services (now Parks & Recreation) to engage youth, both in their communities as well as online to better understand the current trends and issues that youth face throughout the Municipality.

In April 2019, staff were directed to provide an annual information report to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED) regarding trends, issues, best practices, and actions taken with respect to youth programming.

The Youth Services section provides an open, diverse environment that is accessible to youth by supporting mental and physical wellbeing while promoting unity, friendship, and most importantly happiness.

The information presented in this report provides an overview of the services and programs offered to youth from January 2020 to December 2020.

Executive Summary



In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple youth services and programs were suspended in March due to public health restrictions. The Municipality shifted to virtual programs, services, and engagement methods in addition to a focus on outdoor programming. External youth service providers were given the opportunity to highlight their programs and services in this report.

The first Youth Services Plan was completed in 2020. A key deliverable of the plan was the creation of the *Friendly Faces Friendly Spaces* training series. This training provided staff with tips and tools to ensure municipal facilities are youth-friendly. Engagement has started for the second Youth Services Plan. Multiple virtual workshops were held to gain feedback from youth across the Municipality.

COVID-19 Impact on Youth Programs & Services



The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the way youth are engaged and how youth are involved in programs and services. COVID-19 has impacts on jobs, education, rights, and mental well-being.

The International Labour Organization (a specialized agency of the United Nations) completed research on how COVID-19 has impacted youth. The findings can be found in their August 11, 2020 report. The following highlights the trends affecting youth during the pandemic:

Education & Employment:

- 70% of youth reported that their education has been adversely affected by the closing of schools.
- 65% of youth reported having learned less since the beginning of the pandemic because of the transition from classroom to online learning.
- 38% of youth are uncertain of their future career prospects.
- One in six youth have had to stop work since the onset of the pandemic.
- 9% of youth are concerned they will suffer or fail from the pandemic's effects on their education.

Mental Health:

Young people's mental health has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the change to virtual learning, and an uncertain future.

- 37% of youth reported that the pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health, as well as reported feeling sad, irritable, and trouble sleeping.
- 71% of adults are concerned about their youth's lack of socializing with friends and 54% of adults are concerned about their youth's social isolation.

To adapt to the impact of COVID-19, programs and services across the Municipality were suspended or modified due to COVID-19 public health guidelines. The adjustments to programming are included throughout this report.

Youth Services Plan



Halifaxyouth.ca

In 2005, staff worked with HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development to create the Municipality's Youth Engagement Strategy. This strategy focused on best practices for youth engagement. Since that time the Municipality has worked to ensure programs have met the needs of youth.

In 2015, Parks & Recreation initiated a large-scale youth engagement process. The 'Youth Services Plan' (YSP) was the final product of that year-long, youth-led, engagement process. Youth-led meant that adults, staff, and organizations could not influence the data collection and the review process. This allowed the youth to make decisions from the data obtained through surveys, one-on-one conversations, and engagement workshops. During this process, 1,400 participants were engaged.

Data was organized into five strategic vision statements. Each vision statement has its own set of goals and objectives. To view the complete YSP, visit halifax.ca/ysp.

The YSP provided strategic direction to Parks & Recreation from 2016-2020.

Highlights of the Youth Services Plan

The information below are the highlights of the work that was done to implement the visions, goals and objectives from the Youth Services Plan from 2016-2020.



STRATEGIC VISION 1: Our Services positively impact the mental health and physical wellbeing of youth

Goal 1.1: To remove barriers of access around mental and physical wellbeing of youth

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- Staff at Findlay Community Centre in partnership with the IWK organized a mental health information session for youth.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- Working alongside the partners of The Den Youth Centre, staff were able to provide frontline services to youth in the Bedford / Sackville area.
 - Staff offered training on how to cope with anxiety as well as free drop-in counselling services.
 - The Den Youth Centre supported the work of the Freedom Kitchen which provided food and clothing to those in need.
 - A free meditation program was offered for youth at CPA High School during Mental Health Week.
-

Area: Peninsula Halifax

Highlight:

- Emera Oval staff have been trained in Recreation for Mental Health.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- Staff partnered with the Playing & Learning group in Spryfield to provide space for after school inclusion/autism programs and to share staff resources.
 - Mental Health First Aid was offered to youth staff as part of its summer training, which helped to increase their awareness of how to help other youth with mental health challenges.
-

Area: Youth Section: Adventure Earth Programs, Power House Youth Centre, Youth Advocate Program, Youth Live Program and Youth Community Developer

Highlight:

- Adventure Earth staff lead mental health discussions with Helping the Earth by Acting Together (H.E.A.T.) Youth Action Team.
- All Youth Live and Youth Advocate Program staff were trained in Mental Health First Aid.

STRATEGIC VISION 2: All youth can access our services

Goal 2.1: To provide low to no cost services

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- Multiple Centres in the Eastern Shore / Dartmouth areas now provide free drop-in programs for youth.
 - Sheet Harbour and Musquodoboit Harbour offered ski trips to Martock throughout the winter season, at a very low cost to the participants.
 - North Preston Community Centre now offers time in the music studio at no cost.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- The Den Youth Centre provided youth with free access to food and hygiene products and free drop-in counselling services.
-

Area: Peninsula Halifax

Highlight:

- The Emera Oval offers free services and equipment rentals to youth.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- Beechville, Lakeside, Timberlea, Tantallon & Hubbards restructured the youth badminton program to be a free drop-in program and extended hours of volleyball drop-in to allow for greater participation.
-

Area: Youth Section

Highlight:

- Adventure Earth Programs offered over 4095 hours of no cost drop-in hours for youth.
- The Youth Live Program offered, bi-annually, 21 weeks of job skill and life skill development for youth. The participants are paid a stipend for their time in this program.

STRATEGIC VISION 2: All youth can access our services

Goal 2.2: To create youth services that are inclusive for all youth

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- Drop-in youth programs are now offered at low cost or at no cost, in order to reduce financial barriers in attending.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- Sackville Sports Stadium worked with Millwood High School to create *Leveling the Playing Field* program to provide access, awareness, and exposure to the Stadium.
-

Area: Peninsula Halifax

Highlight:

- New snow coaches and winter hippocamp wheels were added at the Emera Oval to assist youth with accessibility barriers.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- Staff at the St. Andrews Community Centre built connections with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia to identify and overcome barriers newcomer youth are faced with.
 - St. Andrews Community Centre staff worked with the Fairview Family Resource Centre to assist with the integration of newcomer youth with hearing impairments.
-

Area: Regional Aquatics

Highlight:

- Sackville Sports Stadium Pool staff hired a Youth Inclusion Coordinator to support aquatic programming year-round.
 - Needham Pool staff developed a 10-week, women's only, learn to swim program that is now being offered.
 - Captain William Spry Pool staff expanded their inclusion spots to offer 38 spots, five nights a week, during winter, spring and fall programming.
 - Captain William Spry Pool staff created and offered a new training initiative called the Angelfish Program, for youth interested in working with children with disabilities.
-

Area: Youth Section

Highlight:

- The Adventure Earth Programs focused on best practices for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.
- HRM Staff, with guidance from Legal Services, reviewed and implemented a best practice plan for safe sleeping spaces for overnight camps.
- Both Adventure Earth locations at Fairbanks Centre and Fleming Park facilities now have gender-neutral washrooms.
- The washrooms at both Youth Live facilities are now gender-neutral.

STRATEGIC VISION 2: All youth can access our services

Goal 2.3: To provide and implement various drop-in programs

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- Staff now provide free drop-in programs for youth such as basketball, soccer, badminton, and open gyms.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- The Den Youth Centre offered free drop-in programs for art, counselling, and an unstructured drop-in program for youth to simply just come in and hang out.
-

Area: Peninsula Halifax

Highlight:

- Emera Oval offered drop-in skate programs and there has been an increase in youth participation during these drop-in skates.
 - Needham Recreation Centre offers a drop-in volleyball night and an open gym program.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- St. Andrews Community Centre staff offered free open gym programs at St. Catherine's Elementary School.
-

Area: Youth Section

Highlight:

- The Power House Youth Centre opened in the spring of 2019. The Power House provides a safe space to hang out and offered a variety of drop-in programs. Two of the drop-in programs were knitting workshops and Dungeons & Dragon game nights.

STRATEGIC VISION 2: All youth can access our services

Goal 2.4: To ensure there is adequate accessibility of programs through location and transportation

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- The Musquodoboit Valley summer youth leadership program was updated to deliver training during the first week of the program allowing youth more time in volunteering opportunities closer to home while avoiding transportation issues.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- Gordon R. Snow Community Centre now offers a Friday after-school open gym program and an evening youth night program. Offering these programs back to back helped to eliminate the need for transportation both ways.
 - The Den Youth Centre in Sackville provides youth with services that are normally located in the city core including access to Laing House and IWK Mental Health. This removed transportation barriers for youth in the Sackville area.
-

Area: Peninsula Halifax

Highlight:

- George Dixon Community Centre provided bus tickets to remove transportation barriers for youth to attend events/activities such as Halifax Hurricane Games and Kartbahn Indoor Racing.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- Staff expanded youth programming into rural areas (for example Hubbards) so youth would have greater choice of local activities to attend.
-

Area: Youth Section

Highlight:

- The Power House Youth Centre offers programming at a centralized location that is fully accessible by bus, walking, and on-street parking.
- Youth are given bus tickets as needed in order to access drop-in programs/workshops offered by the centre.

STRATEGIC VISION 2: All youth can access our services

Goal 2.5: To expand equipment loan programs

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- During the summer months, Dartmouth North Community Centre offered loans of skateboard equipment. Staff also offered free indoor skateboard lessons during fall and winter months, to provide education on safety and to promote the equipment loan program.
 - Tallahassee Community Centre staff increased awareness of the snowshoe equipment loan program for youth and families.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- Staff at Gordon R. Snow Community Centre secured funding to purchase a complete disc golf set for the facility. The game can be played inside or outside and is designed for all ages and abilities.
-

Area: Peninsula Halifax

Highlight:

- Emera Oval provides on-site equipment loans for those interested in skating, rollerblading and cycling.
 - George Dixon Community Centre has expanded the variety of sporting equipment they have on site for youth drop-ins.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- Staff at the Lakeside Community Centre acquired funding for a new play box and created new outdoor signage to help with the promotion of equipment loans.
-

Area: Youth Section

Highlight:

- The Power House Youth Centre offers youth the opportunity to use onsite sewing machines, a 3D printer and a button maker.

STRATEGIC VISION 3: The Municipality offers friendly and welcoming environments for youth

Goal 3.1: To design physical spaces that are open and welcoming for youth

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- Dartmouth North Community Centre staff engaged youth to receive feedback on the renovations being completed on the outdoor basketball court. This assisted with making it a welcoming space for youth.
 - Tallahassee Community Centre staff engaged youth to provide feedback in the design of a youth-dedicated space. The space opened in 2020.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- A working group of youth chose the design, colours, and layout of The Den Youth Centre in Lower Sackville.
 - Through monthly meetings, youth are continuously consulted on any changes or additions to The Den Youth Centre such as furniture, video games, snacks, etc.
-

Area: Peninsula Halifax

Highlight:

- George Dixon Community Centre offered a dedicated tutoring space for youth on Mondays.
 - George Dixon Community Centre created a youth-led mural. Youth steered the design process, held engagement meetings, planned questionnaires, and completed the mural.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- The Lakeside Community Centre created a dedicated youth space in the facility.
 - The St. Andrews Community Centre now has a new lounge area to facilitate social gatherings for youth.
-

Area: Youth Section

Highlight:

- Youth completed a painting which is now hanging at the Adventure Earth Fleming Park location. This has helped youth take more ownership over the facility.
- Youth Live Program staff engaged youth in the redesign of the lunch rooms at both Youth Live facilities. This included the addition of cell phone charge stations, chalk boards, and fresh paint throughout.
- During its drop-in nights, staff of the Power House Youth Centre engaged youth to gain input on how to decorate the facility. Ideas included; a cell phone charge station, chalkboard, local youth artwork, plants, a bluetooth speaker system, and twinkle lights.

STRATEGIC VISION 3: The Municipality offers friendly and welcoming environments for youth

Goal 3.2: To employ youth-friendly staff that are trained in youth engagement

Highlights:

- Parks & Recreation employed many youths who have completed the HRM offered Youth Leadership Program. This creates a pathway to employment for younger youth wanting to work within recreation.
- The staff of the Youth Section participated in semi-annual in-services where they received training on how to support youth during programming and provide an opportunity to share stories and create strategies on how to better support youth at risk.

STRATEGIC VISION 3: The Municipality offers friendly and welcoming environments for youth

Goal 3.3: To change the culture on how staff view youth

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- Staff of the Dartmouth North Community Centre developed community partnerships to help provide healthy snacks and meals to youth, four days a week, during lunch hours. Negative behaviour has almost entirely disappeared since starting this in 2018. Food has helped develop relationships by providing positive interaction opportunities between staff and youth.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- All front desk staff, building monitors, fitness centre staff and program assistants have completed *Friendly Faces Friendly Spaces* training. One full-time staff has been trained as a facilitator.
-

Area: Peninsula Halifax

Highlight:

- All front desk staff, building monitors, fitness centre staff and program assistants have completed *Friendly Faces Friendly Spaces* training. Two full-time staff have been trained as facilitators.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- All front desk staff, building monitors, fitness centre staff and program assistants have completed *Friendly Faces Friendly Spaces* training. Two full time staff have been trained as facilitators.
 - Staff took measures to highlight the positive contributions that youth made within the community and created more genuine opportunities for staff and youth to interact.
 - Staff held a youth appreciation night at St. Andrews Community Centre.
-

Area: Regional Aquatics

Highlight:

- Training was provided to front-line staff on *Non-Violent Crisis Intervention, Mental Health First Aid For Youth, and Gender Inclusivity*.
-

Area: Youth Section

Highlight:

- The Youth Community Developer created and delivered a *Friendly Faces Friendly Spaces* training series. The training series provided strategies and skills on how to ensure municipal facilities are youth-friendly. To date 105 staff have completed the training and 7 staff have been trained as facilitators.

STRATEGIC VISION 4: Services are diverse and geared towards youth interests

Goal 4.1: To gear multi-sport “try it” programs towards older youth providing an opportunity to participate

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- Musquodoboit Valley Recreation Office purchased a selection of non-traditional equipment to be available during youth open-gym times.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- Gordon R. Snow Community Centre staff engaged youth in the sport of Disc Golf.
 - The Sackville Sports Stadium partnered with Millwood High School and Nova Scotia Health to create the *Leveling the Playing Field* program which helps youth access free fitness and nutrition lessons.
-

Area: Peninsula Halifax

Highlight:

- Staff at the Emera Oval collaborated with HRM’s Inclusion Specialist to offer a five-session *Learn to Sledge* program during the winter of 2018.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- Staff offered more unstructured sport programs in Beechville, Lakeside, Timberlea, and Tantallon.
-

Area: Regional Aquatics

Highlight:

- Captain William Spry Pool improved the year-round *Wave Runners* program which provided opportunities for more information for those who are interested in becoming lifeguards or program instructors.

STRATEGIC VISION 4: Services are diverse and geared towards youth interests

Goal 4.2: To diversify the selection of “non-standard” art programs

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- Staff introduced multi-medium arts Creative Start and Creative 4 Life foundational programs at the Dartmouth North Community Centre.
 - A music recording studio is available for youth at the North Preston Community Centre.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- Lebrun Recreation Centre now offers visual arts, and sketch & draw programs.
 - The Den Youth Centre has partnered with MacPhee Centre to offer free drop-in art programming to youth every Wednesday night.
 - Gordon R. Snow Community Centre staff hosted a youth art show that featured art submissions by local youth.
-

Area: Peninsula Halifax

Highlight:

- Needham Recreation Centre has diversified its art programs by offering a breakdance drop-in session for youth.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- Youth completed an artwork wall project for the temporary recreation space while St. Andrew's Community Centre was being built.
-

Area: Youth Section

Highlight:

- The Power House Youth Centre offers creative drop-in space for youth interested in learning how to 3D print, sew and silk screen.

STRATEGIC VISION 4: Services are diverse and geared towards youth interests

Goal 4.3: To make program times specific for needs of different age groups

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- Tallahassee, Findlay, North Preston, Sheet Harbour and Cole Harbour Community Centres now offer Friday night 'youth night' programs.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- Lebrun Recreation Centre has offered open gym time during the times for youth.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- The Youth Leadership Program changed its activities and socials to be more youth-friendly (For example, early morning activities were moved to later in the day).
-

Area: Youth Section

Highlight:

- The Adventure Earth's youth action team, H.E.A.T., held an event on a different day each month to ensure all participants on the action team had a chance to attend.
 - The Power House Youth Centre offered drop-in program times immediately afterschool and into the evening to accommodate youth's availability.
 - The Youth Live Program offers adjusted program times for those who are struggling to meet the commitment of full-time hours.
-

Goal 4.4: To offer age-specific programs

Area: Eastern Shore / Dartmouth

Highlight:

- Dartmouth North Community Centre staff made changes to programs based on youth feedback. Staff removed age limits for the break-dancing program and overlapped the age ranges for *Creative 4 Life* programming, which allows parents to enroll children into more flexible age categories, depending on participants readiness.
-

Area: Bedford / Hammonds Plains / Sackville / Fall River

Highlight:

- The Youth Leadership Program is now offered at Lebrun Recreation Centre. It gives older youth the opportunity to engage in age-specific programming.
-

Area: Mainland North & Mainland South

Highlight:

- Staff at Lakeside Community Centre now offer programs for youth that are broken up into specific age groups. This has continued since the YSP was implemented.
- Staff also extended the age range of Zumba classes to encourage more youth to attend.

STRATEGIC VISION 4: Services are diverse and geared towards youth interests

Goal 4.5: To review policies and best practices for service delivery of youth programs

Highlights:

- Staff continue to engage youth in the creation of new policies and programs.
- Best practices are researched prior to new programs starting and are shared among staff.
- The YSP Committee met quarterly to share highlights and learnings related to youth service delivery.



STRATEGIC VISION 5: All youth are aware of the services offered by the Municipality

Goal 5.1: To target youth with marketing and promotion that is on trend and will catch their attention

Highlights:

- Working closely with HRM Corporate Communications to develop a youth friendly approach to marketing youth activities. Staff were able to enhance social media presence and create youth friendly poster designs. This approach led to increased participation and interest in HRM services offered.
-

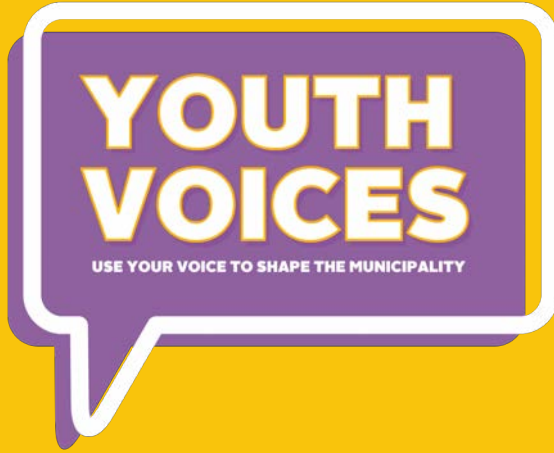
Goal 5.2: To promote and clarify the importance of leadership programs

Highlights:

- Participant numbers have increased over the five years since the Youth Leadership Program was implemented and continues to prove to be a success. Increased interest in the program has resulted in the expansion of locations it is offered.
- Youth Live redesigned the learning modules to incorporate more leadership development.



Youth Services Plan 2



Work has begun on updating the original Youth Services Plan to determine effective ways of providing opportunities and services for youth in HRM. Youth will be consulted to inform phase two of the plan. It will provide a broader approach and include additional Business Units throughout the Municipality.

The Youth Services Plan 2 (YSP2) will be implemented over a three to five-year term. Staff started the engagement processes by undertaking a series of youth engagement workshops called 'Youth Voices: Use Your Voice to Shape the Municipality', which provided youth an opportunity to offer suggestions and feedback on the YSP2. Between August and December 2020, over 15 workshops were delivered, which varied from in-person workshops delivered in recreation facilities to virtual workshops delivered through junior high and high schools.

A team of youth has been established to ensure the creation of the YSP2 is youth-led. There will be 12 team members from a variety of communities participating in monthly meetings and acting as an advisory group.

The following priorities were identified:

- Youth-dedicated spaces
- Drop-in, unstructured programs
- Mental health support for youth
- Youth-friendly outdoor spaces (skateparks, youth-oriented play equipment, climbing walls, community gardens / green space)
- Youth friendly transit / transportation options

Staff will use these priority areas to create a survey to obtain more detailed information, including new vision statements, goals, and objectives.

The YSP2 is expected to be presented to Community Planning & Economic Development and Regional Council by the end of Q4 of 2021-22.

Youth Advocate Program

Halifax.ca/yap

The Youth Advocate Program (YAP) looks to work with family of the youth to provide coordinated family-centered support. The program's goal is to reduce the key risk factors— isolation, stress, negative rushes— that make young people vulnerable to engaging in criminal behavior. By connecting youth to existing community programs and support, YAP increases self-reliance, resiliency, life skills, and social skills by engaging youth in constructive behaviors with family, school and community. The program is aimed at children and youth aged 10–15 years old.

Youth Advocate Workers (YAWs) work directly with the youth and their family, building on the youth's strengths and connecting them with support services within their community. Together they build the skills and confidence required to withstand pressures to become involved in criminal activity. Staff also work closely with primary caregivers and anyone who has the youth's best interests at heart. This work is always done privately and confidentially, with the consent of the family.

When a youth “graduates” from the program it means that they have built enough resiliency to overcome significant obstacles, they are going to school, many have secured employment and have built healthy life skills and relationships with their peers and families.

This program offers support to youth in:

- Cole Harbour
- Dartmouth North
- East Dartmouth
- Fairview / Clayton Park / Bayers Road/ Westwood
- Gaston Road / Woodside
- North End Halifax
- North and East Preston
- Lower and Middle Sackville
- Spryfield

The COVID-19 pandemic created many barriers to the delivery of services to youth enrolled in YAP. The YAP team adapted to the new restrictions and limitations by moving as many services as possible to a virtual format including daily check-ins, family meetings, counselling supports, and case conferences. They continued to support the youth in the program by making creative use of technology and in many cases were permitted to visit with the youth in school settings.



In 2020, 58 youth from across HRM were enrolled in the program.

2020 Youth Advocate Program Statistics

YAP workers collaborate with school representatives to improve school performance, including attendance, behaviour, homework, and participation in extracurricular activities.

- 72% of participants stayed or returned to school.
- 52% received academic support.
- The YAP promotes youth resiliency through an evidence-based wraparound approach that builds constructive relationships and support networks among youth and their families. The program helps to build protective factors to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation. In 2020:
 - 4% of participants received support for sexual abuse and/or exploitation.
 - 26% of participants received support to help with avoid or deal with unhealthy relationships.
 - 24% of parents/guardians in the program attended parenting support programs.



Youth Live Program

Halifax.ca/youthlive

The Youth Live Program is a supportive work environment that offers up to 24 weeks of work-place mentoring. Youth Live has a focus on life, leadership, and job skill development for youth, between the ages of 16 to 24 years old, who are not in school and who are facing employment barriers.

Youth Live has two main streams including business operations and mentoring. Business operations is comprised of on-the-job training at the Youth Live Enviro Depot as well as paper recycling services, green cart delivery and repair within the trucking area of the operation. Youth Live operates two full programs each year, in May and October.

COVID-19 had several impacts on the program; from March to June the program was put on hold at the height of the pandemic. As restrictions eased, participants were brought back with enhanced safety measures.

Youth Live celebrated its 25th anniversary in May 2020. Over the past 25 years, Youth Live has successfully operated within the current mandate, which is to prepare youth to meet the employment readiness and expectations of potential employers.



28 youth participated in the program
17 youth graduated

How can youth apply?

- New spaces open May and October
- E-mail: ylrecruit@halifax.ca
- Call / Text: 902.579.5446
- Through Facebook @hfyouthlive



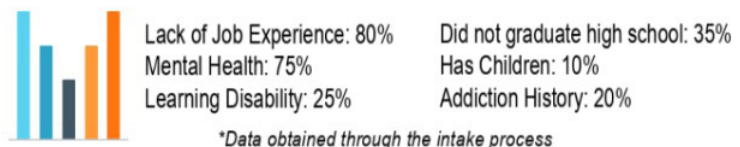
Resiliency

72% of participants left the program with increased resilience, self-esteem and future aspirations.

Where are the youth from?



Barriers to Employment



The Youth Live program focuses on the following 9 employability skills:

1. Accountability
2. Adaptability
3. Attitude
4. Confidence
5. Motivation
6. Presentation
7. Stress Management
8. Teamwork
9. Time Management

Program participants participate in self-assessments throughout the program to monitor their own perception of these skills. Staff also conduct assessments to monitor participants' behaviours related to their employability skills. The results show that there was an increase in all nine employability skills for participants and that participants ended the program with a more accurate perception of their skills.

Success Stories

Two youth, who participated in and graduated from the Youth Live program in 2020, were instrumental in assisting the Youth Live Enviro Depot to reopen after a mandatory shutdown, due to COVID-19. After leaving the program, one youth obtained employment with Otter Lake Landfill Facility and the other youth obtained employment with the Mobile Food Market. Both stepped out of their comfort zone to assist the program by participating in video testimonials. They shared their experiences on camera and were an inspiration to staff and their fellow peers.



Outdoor Recreation

Halifax.ca/outdoorrec

The COVID-19 pandemic created a unique situation for enhanced outdoor programming once restrictions were eased. Due to public health guidelines, outdoor programs and activities were encouraged.



Adventure Earth Programs

[Halifax.ca/aep](https://halifax.ca/aep)

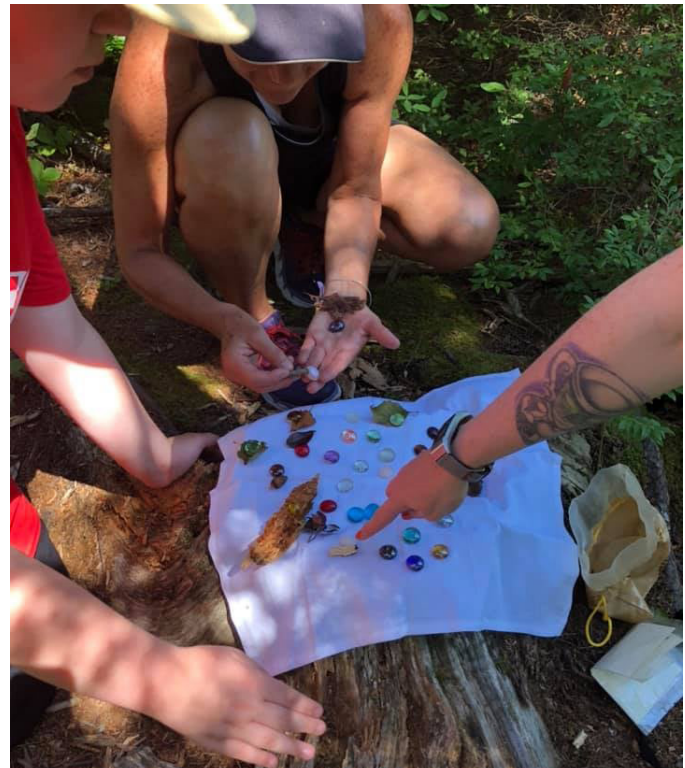
The Adventure Earth Programs provide opportunities for people of all ages to connect with the natural world, to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle outdoors, to develop personal and leadership skills, to give back to the community, and to connect with other like-minded people. With locations in Sir Sandford Fleming Park and Shubie Park, Adventure Earth has been offering outdoor recreation and earth education programs for over 35 years.

Due to COVID-19, the annual Adventure Earth spring and summer programming was suspended due to public health guidelines. This included; overnight camps at Camp Mockingee, youth programming and school-based programs.

The suspension of normal programming gave staff an opportunity to develop a new kind of outdoor programming that followed the “earth education/skill building” theme.

Staff planned twelve, modified, free, outdoor activities during the summer of 2020, which included;

- Creative Fun in the Park
- Family Earth Adventure Trail Walks
- Family Campfire Fun
- Family Earth Walk Kit Loan Program
- Family Reading Fun in the Park
- Hug-A-Tree Survival Program
- Guided Family Nature Trail Walks
- Nature-Based Loose Parts Play
- Wet ‘n’ Wild Wednesdays
- Try It: Compass Fun
- Try It: Adult Yoga in the Park
- Try It: Family Fishing



A total of 739 people registered and attended in family groups to ensure COVID public health requirements were met.



Did you know?

Every Adventure Earth leader has an “**earth name**” that is unique to them. Once an earth name is decided, that name is held as theirs. It is a special part of becoming a leader when someone gets to choose a name that is meaningful to them and that somehow relates to the natural world.

REC Van Program

[Halifax.ca/recvan](https://halifax.ca/recvan)

Summer 2020 had two REC Van's travelling within the Municipality providing outdoor recreation activities such as washer toss, axe throwing, tic tac toe, cup pong, bottle flipping, Lego blocks, memory cards, lawn bowling game, and spin horseshoe. The locations included; parks, tennis courts and other locations.



The summer 2020 REC Van program had 848 participants (548 children, 8 youth, 292 adults).

Backyard Playbox Program

Families were able to borrow Backyard Playboxes filled with sports and game equipment for a two-week period over the summer. The Backyard Playbox program was created to provide families with a wide variety of recreation equipment and ideas of how to play together safely during the pandemic. Information on Backyard Playbox is as follows:

- 10 boxes were available to distribute throughout the rural area of Musquodoboit Valley.
- Each box was signed out for two weeks at a time.
- The boxes were signed out to 14 different families in total over the eight-week period.



Power House Youth Centre

Halifax.ca/powerhouse



The Power House Youth Centre serves as a place for youth to gather, learn, and connect with others. It is also a meeting space for the Municipality's Youth Advisory Committee and the Friends of the Public Garden.

Programming started in June 2019, where staff engaged youth at local schools to gain feedback on what type of programming would be offered at the Power House Youth Centre. Recommended programs included; arts and crafts, performance and karaoke, leadership skill development, mental health first aid, and employment readiness (resume, job search and interview preparation). Youth also identified that they wanted an unstructured drop-in space to hang out with friends.

The programming at the Power House Youth Centre supports the YSP 'Goal 4.2: to diversify the selection of "non- standard" art programs'. During January and February 2020, the drop-in night averaged eight youth. The most successful programs offered in 2020 were Dungeons & Dragons night and Learn to Play Guitar sessions.

Due to COVID-19, The Power House programming was suspended in March 2020 due to public health guidelines.

Multiservice Youth Centre The Den

Halifax.ca/TheDen



On March 6, 2018, Regional Council approved a one-year pilot project at Acadia School in Lower Sackville with the purpose of establishing a collaborative multi-agency, Multi-Service Youth Centre (MSYC), which was named “The Den”. The Den is a safe, inclusive space for youth ages 13-18 from the Bedford/Sackville communities. Stakeholder organizations combined their resources and expertise during the pilot year to deliver programs and services to Sackville’s youth. The stakeholder organizations who participated in this pilot included; the IWK Community Health Team, the Boys and Girls Club, Laing House, the YMCA, Cobequid Youth Health Centre, POSSE (Peer Outreach, Support, Services, and Education), MacPhee Centre, and HRM Parks & Recreation. Throughout the pilot, formal and informal support systems were created among the service providers to support youth who were having difficulties coping or who needed additional assistance.

The goals of the MSYC’s pilot project were:

1. To identify and assess the benefits, opportunities and challenges of establishing a MSYC in Lower Sackville.
2. To provide information and guidance on establishing MSYCs in other areas of the Municipality.

The pilot program ran from December 8, 2018 through December 2019 with the intention of presenting the evaluation report in 2020; however, the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the completion of the evaluation. A report was provided to CPED to evaluate the year long, youth-led pilot project in May 2021.

Due to COVID-19, The Den programming was suspended in March 2020 due to public health guidelines.

Municipal Youth Programs, Events and Engagements

PARKS & RECREATION

[Halifax.ca/parks-recreation](https://halifax.ca/parks-recreation)

Due to COVID-19, many youth programs were cancelled, this included the Youth Leadership Program.



Youth Leadership Program

[Halifax.ca/youthleadership](https://halifax.ca/youthleadership)

The Youth Leadership Program normally operates during the summer to provide youth with leadership and volunteer experiences. Due to COVID-19 public health restrictions, this program was suspended during the summer of 2020. To adjust to public health guidelines, HRM Recreation offered virtual options for youth to participate in workshops, games and activities.

Virtual Youth Workshops

[Halifaxyouth.ca](https://halifaxyouth.ca)

To accommodate COVID-19 public health guidelines, youth engagement efforts were moved from in-person to virtual, with workshops being delivered in collaboration with other Business Units and external Youth Service Providers.

The most attended workshops were:

- Youth Grant Writing for Social Change
- Introduction to Municipal Government for Youth
- Resume Building for Youth



How Youth Initiate Change in Their Community Workbook

As a follow up to the Youth Grant Writing for Social Change workshop, a resource manual called *How Youth Can Initiate Change in their Communities* was created. The manual outlines the necessary steps for a youth-driven community project and acts as a project planning document. Since the creation of the manual, youth have connected with staff to receive guidance on their community projects. This manual can be found in the resources section of the Halifax Youth website (halifaxyouth.ca).

REC@Home

Halifax.ca/recathome

As a result of recreation centre closures due to COVID-19, Parks & Recreation created digital content for recreation programs that can be done at home while following public health measures.

Digital content was organized into the following categories to cover a variety of recreation interests:

- Arts & Craft
- Get Active
- Dance & Fitness
- Camp Games
- Earth Adventures Trail Activities
- Exploring Nature
- Get Connected in your community
- Youth Virtual Programs

From May 2020 (when the page was created) to December 2020, there were 4,388 page views.



Partner Facilities

Youth programming is offered in Municipal partner run facilities; however, not all partner facilities were able to run youth programming in 2020 due to COVID-19 public health guidelines.



Partner Facilities | Zatzman Sportsplex

Zatzmansportsplex.com



Program Name: **Teen Takeover**



Youth employed: **10**



Youth participants: **200/week**

The facility's pool and gym are open Friday nights from 7-10 p.m. for youth to swim, hang out with friends, and play in the gymnasium without other members around. Over 200 youth attend per week and appreciate that this time is dedicated to youth only.

“ I enjoy Teen Takeover because it's a place to make new friends. I find it is a good way to enjoy activities that I normally would not enjoy. I keep coming back every week! ”

- Program Participant

Due to COVID-19, programming was suspended in March 2020 due to public health guidelines.

Partner Facilities | Centennial Pool

Centennialpool.ca



Program Name: **Community Partnership with St. George's YouthNet**

Prior to the COVID-19 closures in March 2020, Centennial Pool partnered with St. George's YouthNet, a local group providing opportunities and support to youth in the community, to facilitate access to recreation for local youth by donating pool space. Centennial helped to ensure everyone could participate and enjoy the benefits of swimming in January and February 2020.



Halifax Public Libraries

Halifaxpubliclibraries.ca

The Library is committed to serving young adults and delivers services and programs for youth at all 14 branches and at community sites. Extensive partnerships with community experts and service providers helped the Library support youth development and to reach diverse teens.





Program Name: Lunch Bag Program - Youth Volunteers Helping Address Hunger



Youth participants: 5

As part of the Library's COVID-19 response, teen volunteers made free healthy lunches for youth and adults in the Library who were dealing with food insecurity. Volunteers received training and worked alongside staff to see the positive impact of the program. Community members were appreciative and enjoyed their food.





Program Name: Engagement in the Time of COVID-19



Youth participants: 5-16

Central Library has worked hard to make the library a safe and engaging space for youth. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, the library has done many things to continue to provide this sense of connection and engagement for youth, such as:

- **Physically Distant Teen Nights (free drop-in programs):** When health guidelines permitted, Central Library held weekly drop-in for ages 12-18. Teens took to the spacious Paul O'Regan Hall for activities that did not require close contact and could be performed with masks; including tie-dying, pumpkin painting, and dance competitions.
- **Virtual Programming (free online programs & supply kits):** Staff created cooking and craft kits for no-contact drop off or curbside pickup. Staff provided instructions and collaborative experiences over zoom.
- **Virtual Volunteer Opportunities:** Central Library regularly works with 40-80 teen volunteers at a time. With COVID-19, the library pivoted to provide online volunteer opportunities. The youth volunteers led a podcast group, "It Came from the Second Floor". The teens collaborated online to produce two podcast episodes where they were able to speak their minds about living through COVID-19, and work through anxieties. Youth discussed a variety of topics such as; Dungeons and Dragons, thoughts about the future, and fast food locations they missed the most.

“ I like the programs because it’s a rad time and I get to spend time with my friends and get to hang with the cool teen floor librarians! ”

- Youth Participant

Halifax Public Libraries | Cole Harbour Library



Program Name: Lunches- Food for Teens and More



Youth participants: 20-25

After hearing from local teens about food insecurity, Cole Harbour Library set up a weekly lunch program between January and March 2020. Once a week, staff set up a lunch station where youth could either make their own lunch and eat it at the library or pack it up to go. The program proved popular, with teens dropping into the library, hanging out, and enjoying the food.

Halifax Public Libraries | Captain William Spry Library



Program Name: Society Changers

Society Changers -- Youth Led Community Projects

The Library's new regional teen volunteer program, *Society Shapers*, started on a small scale with two youth in fall 2020. *Society Shapers* is a new model for youth leadership at the library, giving participants a greater level of creative direction and agency than other volunteer roles.

In *Society Shapers*, youth-led community projects came to life with support from the library. Staff from different branches helped the teens manage their projects and apply for funding through the federal micro-grant program, *Rising Youth*. Participants committed one to five hours per week to work on their projects; both youth were successful in their applications and received \$1,500 each.

Halifax Public Libraries | Dartmouth North Library



Program Name: Teen Volunteers - Warming Hearts Winter Clothing Giveaway

The teen volunteers at Dartmouth North came together to address a community need regarding the lack of access to affordable winter clothing for vulnerable residents. With staff support, the teens independently applied for a grant and were successful. They purchased \$750 worth of hats and mittens and handed them out to a very appreciative community.

“It feels really great to give back to our community. We're so glad the Library was there to help walk us through all the steps.”



Program Name: **CHOPPED Youth Cook Off**

CHOPPED was the Library's version of the *Teen Chef* or *MasterChef Junior* cooking shows and had teens participating from several branches. Teens were given a recipe and ingredients, they cooked together and then presented their finished dishes for judging. Halifax North hosted the semi-finals with the winners moving on to the final championship at the Dartmouth North Library. Celebrity judges included; Claire Gallant (Bite-Sized Kitchen), Andy Hay (MasterChef Canada Runner-up) and Leah Coodin (Chef at EDNA Restaurant).



Program Name: **Virtual Leading Readers - Teens Mentoring Young**



Readers # Youth participants: **20**

Within a few weeks of the beginning of the pandemic, Keshen Goodman Library redeveloped their successful *Leading Readers Program* to a virtual setting. On a weekly basis, staff paired teen volunteers with elementary-aged students to work on their reading skills remotely over Zoom. This allowed the teens to stay connected to their community while many other volunteer opportunities were not available to them. The youth provided support to young readers with their reading progress, ensuring they didn't fall behind.

“My favourite part about my volunteer experience was getting to know my reader and watching her grow in confidence as well as skill. At the beginning of the term, she seemed a little nervous and unsure about the sessions, but as time went on, she became more confident and seemed to look forward to them. I like knowing the fact that I am able to make a positive difference in my reader's life.”

- Youth Participant



Program Name: **Teen Takeover**



Youth participants: **23**

Teen Takeover was an after-hours, in-person, weekly program that ran in fall 2020. This program gave youth the opportunity to “takeover” the library space in ways they are not able to during regular library hours. Because the Library was closed to the public, the teens had a chance to come together to use the space while maintaining their physical distance from one another.

As a group, activities were organized similar to those that took place before COVID-19; however, the planning and execution of the program took a bit more time and thought than before. For example, one evening tacos were made; to accomplish this, staff organized the ingredients into brown lunch bags prior to the arrival of the participants. Each teen then got their own brown bag, gathered around tables in the center of the library (distanced from one another), built their own tacos and enjoyed their meal together. Staff inspired teens to be innovative by working with them to figure out how we could do each activity while staying safe.



Program Name: **Teen Programming- Virtual Hangouts & Home-Delivery Supplies**



Youth participants: **20**

At the beginning of the pandemic staff noticed teens were experiencing high levels of anxiety, fear, depression, and feeling disconnected. To meet the needs of youth, the branch started offering no-contact deliveries of program supplies to be used during virtual hangouts. The youth were very excited and gave great ideas for supplies and projects to work on together. It began small with ingredients for brownies and food packs from *Square Roots* to make food for their families, then branched out and decided to celebrate with COVID-19 Halloween, COVID-19 Xmas and COVID-19 Big Birthday Bash. Each event youth and staff dressed up, decorated and did activities together.

“I didn’t even know how much I needed this. I missed Teen Night so much. I miss being in school. I’m tired of hanging out with my parents. COVID has messed up all of my Queer Camp plans. At least we still have Teen Night. Thank you for keeping this going!”
- Youth Participant

“ I love that we get to bake together. I actually think that baking with the Teen Nights this year has pushed me to apply to NSCC for pastry arts. ”
- Youth Participant

Halifax Regional Police



Halifax Regional Police Youth Program

[Halifax.ca/HRPYouthProgram](https://halifax.ca/HRPYouthProgram)

Youth learned about social responsibility with an emphasis on leadership through the Halifax Regional Police (HRP) Youth Program. By taking part in crime prevention initiatives including presentations by guest speakers, field trips, traffic and crowd control, Police Display Day, child identification record clinics, mascot appearances, bike patrols, parades, concerts, and tree-lighting ceremonies students gain knowledge of police services. Participants benefit from learning opportunities and experiences, including public speaking, teamwork and work ethic.

Participants met on Thursday evenings at the HRP Training Facility at 2 Chapman Street in Dartmouth throughout the school year. Also, throughout the year, members of the program took part in community events and activities in the Halifax region. 14 to 18 year old youths, who were interested in taking part in the program, can apply online.

Halifax Regional Police Co-op Program

 **# Youth participants: 15**

 **Total hours: 660**

This program is designed to teach high school students about policing. Curriculum topics included; forensics, investigating, as well as physical and mental health. These topics were taught through a series of presentations shared by members of HRP Units & Divisions and included items such as ride-alongs, court sessions, community service and volunteering. Co-op students learned leadership skills, kept a reflective journal, and took part in HRP's Physical Abilities Requirement Evaluation (PARE). Students left the program with a robust knowledge of policing.

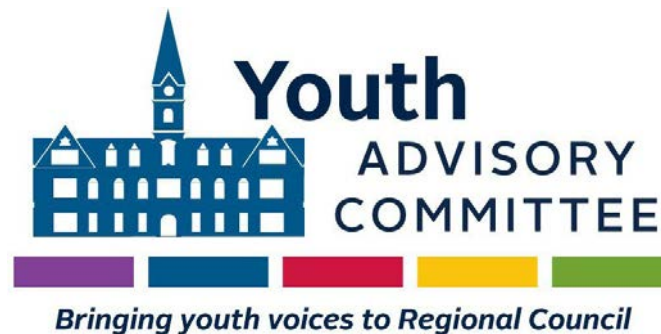
The program took place at different locations as required and with classroom sessions located at HRP Training Facility at 2 Chapman Street in Dartmouth. Participation was through high schools throughout the Halifax region. Participants were required to adhere to strict confidentiality rules to be accepted. Parents and guardians of participating students were required to sign waiver forms and understood that there was some risk involved with ride-alongs.

Municipal Clerks Office



Halifax.ca/yac

On January 16, 2018 Regional Council authorized staff to conduct a pilot project to establish a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). The pilot project supported a two-phased approach. Phase one involved working with a leadership team of staff and community partners to develop foundational material, and to develop an engagement strategy to recruit committee members who represent the diversity of the municipality's youth population. Phase two involved setting up the committee, working with the members through several meetings and carrying out an evaluation of the project. YAC was appointed by Regional Council on February 12, 2019 and held its first meeting on March 21, 2019.



The YAC identified the following themes as priorities for 2020:

1. Municipal social media engagement to youth
2. Mental health accessibility for youth
3. Systemic racism affecting youth in indigenous and black communities
4. Access to programs and services in rural and low-income communities
5. Transit
6. Climate change and environment
7. Civic engagement for youth

Due to COVID-19 public health guidelines, all in-person committee meetings were cancelled in March 2020. The committee switched to virtual meetings in June 2020.



Municipal Clerks Office | Get Out And Vote 2020!

YAC created a "Get Out and Vote" video to raise awareness and increase youth voting rates in the 2020 Municipal election. The video was shared on social media by internal and external accounts to spread awareness about the importance of youth voting. This initiative is an outcome of the committee's priority #7 – Civic Engagement for Youth. The video was considered a success due to the increased number of youths contacting the YAC to get more information on how to vote.

“ During my time on the Youth Advisory Committee, I have not only met and learned a lot from other youth, it has pushed me to learn more about my own community, other communities around HRM and the inner workings of municipal institutions,

”
- YAC Member

“ The Youth Advisory Committee is a safe place for youth to discuss and brainstorm ideas to improve their communities

”
- YAC Member

“ My favourite part about the YAC was the collaboration and openness for all experiences and ideas. I really enjoyed the event we had at the library last year - and I hope we can do something similar and COVID friendly in the upcoming year. I really appreciated the opportunity for all of us to share ideas in such a safe space

”
- YAC Member

Public Safety Office

[Halifax.ca/publicsafety](https://halifax.ca/publicsafety)

In January 2020, the Public Safety Office hosted a Women's Safety Audit (WSA) workshop where participants learned about the history of WSAs principles of design as they relate to safety in public spaces, and how to use and train others to use a WSA checklist. The weekend-long training session was delivered to women and non-binary people between the ages of 18 and 60. Most participants learned about the session either through Dalhousie's School of Planning or the Community Mobilization Teams in North End Halifax, Mulgrave Park, and North Preston. Following the training, the Public Safety Office has partnered with women (including two youth) trained in the WSA tool to conduct two safety audits/assessments.



Halifax Transit

[Halifax.ca/transit](https://halifax.ca/transit)

In September 2019, Halifax Transit launched a pilot project to allow children, 12 years of age and under to ride all Halifax Transit services for free. The goals of the pilot were to:

- Foster a culture of appreciation for Transit
- Improve the mobility and sustainable transportation options we provide for residents
- Encourage more use of transit by families

Allowing children to easily access Halifax Transit encourages the use of public transit, a habit which could lead to continued use into the teen years. This pilot is a proactive approach to increase youth ridership. Public engagement was conducted with residents and Halifax Transit Operators. Based on this feedback and the successful results of the pilot project, Regional Council voted unanimously on January 13, 2021 to make this a permanent change to the fare structure. The change came into effect on Saturday, January 16, 2021.



Youth Employment Statistics

The following section provides an overview of the number of youth employed with the Municipality during 2020:

| Business Unit | # Staff |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| CAO | 1 |
| Corporate & Customer Services | 1 |
| Finance, Asst Mgmt & ICT | 4 |
| Fire & Emergency Services | 89 |
| Forum Bingo | 14 |
| Halifax Forum | 12 |
| Halifax Transit | 10 |
| Legal & Legislative Services | 14 |
| Parks & Recreation | 803 |
| Partner Facilities | 80 |
| Planning & Development | 6 |
| Regional Police | 18 |
| Transportation & Public Works | 3 |
| Total | 1055 |

External Service Provider Updates

Youth-service providers across the Municipality played a vital role in the overall well-being of youth. This section highlights the work of several youth-serving organizations in 2020:

Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Halifax (BGC) bgcgh.ca/

In the fall of 2020, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Halifax served 130 youth at four of its club locations; Dartmouth North Club, East Dartmouth Club, Spryfield Club and the Sackville Heights Community Centre Club. Each club serves as a safe, supportive hub for youth to go and enjoy free evening youth programs.

BGC serves free and welcoming youth programs in many neighbourhoods. These are vital links for youth as there may be no other comparable services within walking distance. Since the pandemic, it is more critical than ever that the clubs be there for youth who may feel isolated, stressed, or anxious. BGC youth programs included; leadership, life skills, food security, safe driving (“Road Code”), homework, digital literacy, games, and community volunteer initiatives.

In late November and early December 2020, as public health restrictions were tightened, BGC did not host in-club youth programs but shifted activities to virtual programs. Below is some feedback received from the youth who were involved in BGC programs:

“The Club is a place of comfort for me. Staff are always by my side if I need it. They are considerate of the youth group. They know how to help us without overstepping boundaries. I come here for emotional support. I don’t have a huge friend group. I can come here. I don’t have to tone myself down. I can be myself here. I don’t go anywhere else. I go to the Club.”

- Youth Participant

“I’ve learned to love myself a lot more and to respect myself more. The staff have taught me to never box in my personality. I’m mixed race. The Club respects I’m not just one background; it respects all of my backgrounds.”

- Youth Participant, East Dartmouth Club site

The Boys and Girls club has helped me a lot mentally. Before I joined, I wasn’t doing good mentally and assignments started to pile up, my room got messier and I just wasn’t happy. My mom offered to sign me up for this club and I was hesitant at first but when I joined, I started to actually get things done. I became happier and made so many new friends. I believe it is very important to youth and myself because it is a place where no matter how different you are or how much you have in common you can always make friends and have fun. It is a place where you can be whoever or whatever you want without being judged.

- Youth participant, Sackville site

“I think the Club did the right thing by opening up this fall. After several months of self-isolating, I think that everyone just needed a little bit of normal in their lives, and the Club was here to bring it to us. The Boys and Girls Club is helping youth through these tough times by giving them a safe and fun place to interact with other youth outside of school.”

- Youth participant, Spryfield site

HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development

heartwood.ns.ca/

HeART: Mental Wellness Art Programming is an art program for youth held by youth. In the program, youth use art as a medium to build coping skills to support their mental health and further leisure participation. Youth come together to create art, share food, play games, and practice mindfulness.

The program followed a youth-led and strength-based approach to aid in youth developing leadership skills. Youth picked and planned the art activities that were explored each week. HeART also takes a decolonial approach to their work to help change the youth experience with art and recreation. Programming is offered in three ways: weekly in-person programming; camp-style programming; and weekly virtual programming.

LOVE Nova Scotia

lovenovascotia.ca/

LOVE supported youth to thrive through programs and healthy relationships that built emotional intelligence and helped to overcome challenges they face. The participants emerged from LOVE's programs with greater resilience, heightened skills, and the confidence to be leaders.

In 2020, LOVE Nova Scotia began work on a new project called *Conversation for Change*. This project is a series of monthly talks on pressing social issues that demand attention. This youth-led initiative saw youth leaders from LOVE interview political, community, and business leaders from across Nova Scotia. LOVE Nova Scotia youth lead the ongoing conversation to achieve vulnerable, real, and human insights about how the bonds of communities can be strengthened to achieve shared prosperity. LOVE youth have dealt with issues such as housing, poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, privilege, confidence, relationships, self-identity, and conflict resolution. The talks will be live-streamed and produced as a podcast series to enlighten and educate the wider community on the issues our youth face. The first guest is Lisa Roberts MLA.

Phoenix Youth Programs

phoenixyouth.ca/

Phoenix's Academic Coaching program began in January 2018 with the goal of providing extra support for youth in and out of the classroom. The Academic Coach provided one-on-one and group support tutoring that is available both at Citadel High School as well as at the Phoenix Youth and Community Centre. The program provided focused academic coaching in a supported learning environment.

Prior to COVID-19, Phoenix's Academic Coach was available in-person three days per week at Citadel High School, during school hours and at Phoenix Youth Community Centre during the evenings. With programs being scaled back due to COVID-19, Phoenix modified the Academic Support Program so that tutoring and learning opportunities continued in a way that prioritized the health and safety of the youth, staff, and community. The Academic Coach increased accessibility to students four days per week by appointment and is also accessible through Google Classroom offered 30 hours of online tutoring, where students can share their schoolwork and post questions.

SuperNOVA

supernova.dal.ca/

SuperNOVA is a not-for-profit initiative of Dalhousie University that promotes science, engineering, technology, and mathematics (STEM) to youth in Atlantic Canada.

Based out of Halifax, SuperNOVA offered engaging and innovative workshops, summer camps, clubs, and community events throughout Atlantic Canada that provided youth with rewarding experiences in STEM and nurture a life-long love of exploration, creativity, and academic achievement. As well as providing the youth engagement programs, SuperNOVA provided a wide variety of training to teachers and educators to improve STEM education across a variety of sectors.

In 2020, SuperNova launched a new initiative called Girls Count. This initiative focused on fostering confidence in mathematics for girls in grades six to eight. The program had female-identifying mentors in different math-related fields and worked with the girls once a week from September to June 2020 (Supported by the Canadian Women's Foundation).

In 2020, virtual school workshops were delivered for the Codemakers and Sea to School Programs for grades P-12. The organization used different technology, learned coding, saw underwater, and tested the conductivity of salt water with schools all over Nova Scotia and PEI.

Additionally, SuperNOVA hired high school and university students as instructors and program support for 2020 online programming. Young staff have been vital to the pivot to online learning and worked hard to create curriculum that was engaging and accessible, while reaching young people virtually.



WILD Outside

cwf-fcf.org/en/explore/wild-outside/

WILD Outside is a national conservation-based youth leadership program designed for youth ages 15-18. It is free to participate and fully inclusive. By participating in this unique and flexible program young Canadians experienced opportunities for personal growth while developing and encouraging their own “conservation ethic.” Learned alongside their peers from our Canadian Wildlife Federation facilitators, youth who joined in the WILD Outside program enjoy opportunities for outdoor adventure and immersive nature experiences. They connected with other local participants in the planning and delivery of community-based conservation service projects in their own community, designed to have a positive impact on their local environment.

In 2020, the WILD Outside program in Halifax reached 27 local youth that together completed 724.5 hours of service. Activities included;

- Shoreline clean-up
- Building and installing bat boxes
- Trail maintenance – Biking
- Tree identification walk
- Paddle boarding - Pressing plants
- Citizen science
- Learning from experts

Current Best Practices, Trends and Research

This section highlights best practices, emerging trends, and youth-related research. For the purpose of this report, staff focused on the best youth engagement practices during COVID-19.

Engaging Youth in a Virtual World

With COVID-19 causing widespread closures, youth are relying on the Internet in every aspect of life. Youth-serving organizations have been required to learn new ways to navigate youth engagement through virtual youth programming.

| Engaging with Youth Virtually | |
|---|---|
| Best Practice: Seek Youth Input, Preference and Leadership | Youth Engagement Method |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize youth preference and ease of access in communication platforms • Utilize youth expertise in training other participants to navigate the online platform being used • Provide an opportunity for youth to develop a virtual engagement strategy for other youth | Video Calls (Zoom, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, Skype) |
| | Text messaging |
| | Live events on social media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook) |
| | Social Media event pages (Facebook events) |
| | Combine virtual and non-virtual engagement methods (sending activity packets or instructions that can be used during a virtual session) |

Youth Research: Tips from Youth Collaboratory *youthcollaboratory.org*

This website provides basic tips and safety considerations when engaging youth in a virtual environment.

Remember the Basics:

- Ask youth how they would prefer to communicate (format and frequency).
- Support youth in accessing the on-line platform you use.
- Connect and share consistently.
- Practice confidentiality.
- Time of day and day of the week matters.
- Create group norms.
- Pay attention to what youth are frequently commenting about. Follow-up on that topic and provide a platform for discussion. (Chat boxes, etc.)
- Offer variety to on-line activities.
- Offer a space for youth to type their responses if they do not feel comfortable putting their cameras on.

Virtual Safety Considerations for Adults Engaging with Youth:

- Is the youth aware of privacy options? (Camera, audio, etc.)
- What is the goal and purpose of the meeting? (planning and predictability build trust)
- Be mindful of possible triggers in a virtual format.
- Begin with a check-in question that builds self-acceptance and self-compassion.
- Set clear boundaries. (e.g. acceptable times for calls, preferences on leaving messages, boundaries regarding commenting on social media posts)
- When is it best to have a third party involved?
- Be transparent around recording & information-sharing.
- Be mindful of what you are wearing and what items can be viewed by participants.
- Identify when to use full name vs. preferred name. (what do youth need/prefer in different situations)
- Explain what pronouns are and ask youth to change their screen name to include preferred pronoun.
- Be aware of language barriers and social norms around virtual communication.

Information obtained from: Youth Collaboratory (youthcollaboratory.org)

Conclusion & Next Steps

This report highlighted several youth programs and events that have taken place within the Municipality. The feedback received from the youth at virtual and in-person engagement events was positive. This shows the impact that the Municipality is having on the youth in communities throughout HRM.

COVID-19 impacted all aspects of youth programming in 2020. Programs were suspended or cancelled as staff worked to adapt and put COVID-19 safety measures in place in order to properly safeguard the youth. The new normal for youth programs includes all public safety measures, including mask wearing, hand sanitizing and contact tracing.

Next Steps:

- 1 Continue to provide an annual information report to CPED regarding trends, issues, best practices, and actions taken with respect to youth programming.
- 2 Continue to work on YSP2, engaging multiple business units, external youth service providers and youth during its creation.
- 3 Recognize and celebrate National Youth Week (May 1-7 annually) by offering in-person and virtual programs, activities and resources for youth.
- 4 Continue to monitor the public health restrictions due to COVID-19 and adjust youth programming as needed.





Did you know?

September 30 is Orange Shirt Day? Wear orange to support continuing the conversation about residential schools and the impact they had and still have on our Indigenous communities



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