



Ontario's Community Health Centres



## Indoor Air Quality and Asthma at Withrow Public School

### Inside this issue:

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Indoor Air Quality and Asthma                  | 1      |
| You Alone Can Do It, But You Can't Do It Alone | 3      |
| Primary Care Asthma Program                    | 3      |
| From the Board: Membership & Outreach          | 4      |
| New Staff                                      | 4      |
| What's On SRCHC                                | Insert |

Ontario's Asthma Plan of Action has thirteen initiatives. The largest of these initiatives is the Primary Care Asthma Program that is concerned with improving asthma care delivery and outcomes by health care professionals.

As part of the Primary Care Asthma Program, the Asthma Coordinator at South Riverdale Community Health Centre is collaborating with South Riverdale's Environmental Health Promoter and the Indoor Air Quality Work Group to form a team to address concerns related

to indoor air quality in local schools. The aim is to improve the health of both students and staff, with a special focus on reducing the incidence of asthma.

The first phase of the project involved connecting with schools in the community and the team was happy to have Withrow Public School agree to participate.

The investigation initially involved inspection of the roof, the grounds and each classroom for sources of air quality problems. In addition, teachers were surveyed to

determine the range of concerns and issues related to health and clean air.

Dust and mould are common triggers for many people. Reactions can include itchy eyes, runny nose and cough. Air affected by dust and mould can reach the lungs and cause cells to



## Indoor Air Quality and Asthma at Withrow Public School

Continued from page 1

react and airways to tighten. This can ultimately damage the tissues lining the lungs, especially in growing bodies. Mould occurs where moisture seeps into damaged or inadequately sealed building structures. For people with asthma, mould and dust will worsen asthma and can lead to absence from school, classroom disruption, poor sleep and decreased concentration and possibly the need to go to the emergency department.

The team will continue to investigate and make recommendations for improving indoor air quality at Withrow Public School. Simultaneously, the clinicians in the team, a Respiratory Therapist and a Nurse Practitioner, will offer and provide education and clinical direction to parents, students, teachers and staff on health related to asthma, indoor air quality and the environment.

Asthma education in schools is based on the provincially funded Asthma Plan of Action – “Creating Asthma Friendly Schools” ❖

**For more information contact:**

**Kathleen Frame (Asthma Coordinator)  
ext 203 or**

**Jessica Kwik (Environmental Health  
Promoter) ext 253**

***You alone can do it!!  
“...but you can’t do it alone”***



- within **20 minutes** of your last cigarette your blood pressure drops and your heart rate drops to normal.
- after **8 hours**, the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops
- after **24 hours**, your chances of heart attack decreases
- after **2 days**, the nerve endings may grow and your sense of taste and smell enhanced
- after **3 days**, your airways relax and for some breathing may become easier

**As time passes without smoking, your breathing should get better and better.**

Come to our information and discussion night happening on Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup> from 5–6pm about the upcoming **Plan to Quit Program** starting in February 2009. Refreshments and free childcare are available. ❖

**For more information and to register for childcare please call (416) 461-1925:**

**Jorie Morrow ext 204 or  
Kathleen Frame ext 203**

# Primary Care Asthma Program at : SRCHC

From January 2003 to March 2006. South Riverdale CHC served as one of eight sites (Provincially) that participated in the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MoHLTC) funded Primary Care Asthma Project.

***“Would a program of care including the use of specific tools such as an Asthma Action Plan in primary care settings lead to improved asthma care delivery and outcomes?”***

**The results showed that for patients with asthma:**

- Emergency visits for asthma decreased by 50%
- Asthma attacks decreased by 30%
- Night-time symptoms decreased (which included coughing, shortness of breath or wheezing)
- There were significant

improvements in access for lung testing for diagnosis and assessment

- Significant decreases in school and lost days of work
- High levels of patient and provider satisfaction

The impact was positive for economics, patient care and healthcare. Following the significant results of Primary Care Asthma Pilot Project reported in 2006, SRCHC has continued to participate in the MoHLTC supported and rolled out Primary Care Asthma Program. The program continues to grow and develop in quality control, guideline standards and use within an electronic client record environment.

At the health centre, individualized care is provided with a breathing test, self-management education and respiratory assessments.

All clients who are seen in the clinic who have any respiratory concerns should come to the asthma clinic for assessment and discussion. People with asthma or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease - COPD should have the breathing test (called Spirometry) done every 6 months. If asthma is really well controlled, the lung test should be done yearly with the annual check up.

Feel free to discuss this with your provider and book an appointment to see Kathleen in the asthma clinic. ❖



The SRCHC newsletter is produced 3 times a year. If you have suggestions for topics or would like to volunteer to assist in the production of an issue, please contact the volunteer coordinator at the Health Centre. Editors: Sara Tryon & Debby Yuke  
Contributors: Kathleen Frame, Jessica Kwik, Maria Miller, Maria Lee, Elaine Alexander - Principal Withrow Public School/Quest Alternative Sr. School and the SRCHC Board of Directors



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# From the Board

## Membership & Outreach Committee

*Community Connections – building diverse healthy neighbourhoods.* At the 2008 SRCHC Annual General Meeting this statement was adopted as one of the Centre's strategic directions.

At its October retreat, the Board incorporated this direction and the others into their work plan for the year. We took the first step regarding community connections at our regular November Board meeting by

establishing a Membership & Outreach Committee. We also received great news that the Centre had applied for, and received a grant to hire a staff person to support community engagement.

Jennifer Foulds and Yvonne Stewart have agreed to be the Board members on this committee. We have been given a list of people who have expressed interest in serving on a committee. We would also like to hear from anyone who wants to serve on a committee that seeks to involve SRCHC

members, the local neighbourhood, and community members with the task of improving the health of our community.

We hope to meet soon to clarify our purpose and direction. With the help of the new staff person, we will undertake some community events in the new year. ❖

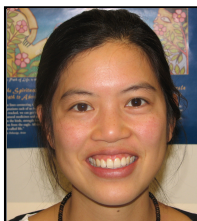
**If you are interested in helping on the Membership & Outreach Committee or any other committee at the Health Centre, please call: Ruth at (416) 461-1925 ext. 223**

# New Staff



**Jessie Ritchie, RN(EC), BSc(N)**  
Jessie comes to South

Riverdale fresh from the Nurse Practitioner Program at Queen's University. She has a nursing background in obstetrics and infant, child and youth community health. Jessie is working 2.5 days/week providing primary care to clients of South Riverdale. She has a special interest in Women's Health and in working with Youth at Risk. She is really excited to be living in Toronto and to be working with great colleagues and clients.



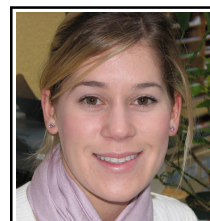
**Jessica Kwik** is the part-time environmental health promoter

covering a maternity leave. She will focus on air quality particularly inside schools and homes; and, she will look at hidden exposures to toxins especially for vulnerable populations. She is available for presentations on environmental health topics. Jessica is working with other staff on food security and the SRCHC Green Action Team. Jessica brings her environmental health promotion experiences from Waterloo Region. She also works at the Working Women Community Centre promoting physical activity and access to recreation.



**Iain McBride** is a Ryerson Social Work graduate,

community activist, and proud transgender man with 8 years experience working in downtown Toronto. Until recently Iain worked in partnership with SRCHC and WoodGreen as a housing worker for people who face barriers to many services due to homelessness, mental health, and/or illicit drug use. In his new role as a Case Manager for the Urban Health team he will be able to provide a greater range of long-term supports to these clients.



**Christine Finn** was born and raised in Toronto. She is the second

oldest of 4 girls. Recently Christine earned an undergraduate degree in Communication Studies, with a minor in Geography at Wilfred Laurier University. The past four summers she worked at Community Living Toronto, where she enjoyed working with special needs adults. Recently she was very pleased to be hired on as the program assistant for DECNET, and is excited to be a new member of the SRCHC staff.