

“LAWYERS FOR LITERACY”

A Law Society Community Event in Partnership with West Broadway Youth Outreach

Date: January 29, 2011
Location: Crossways in Common
Broadway and Furby
Time: Any hour(s) you choose between 10 am and 4 pm

WBYO is a recreational life skills program for children who live in the area bounded by Arlington Street, Portage Avenue, Osborne Street and the Assiniboine River, for children ages 4 – 12, with junior volunteers, mentors and role models ages 13-17 from the area. All activities are free.

This organization operates on a shoe string budget of \$80k for salaries, operating and supply costs. It provides services to approximately 600 area children in the summer and a similar number throughout the school year. The funding they receive comes from the United Way of Winnipeg.

They provide 28 structured programs after-school and evenings year round. They have homework club where kids are encouraged to engage in their studies and are offered incentives to do so. They have a Dreams Program through which kids are encouraged to think beyond the day-to-day and realize that they can have dreams that can be fulfilled.

The Goals of the program are to:

- ✚ Ensure that local children have the opportunity to have their basic social emotional and recreational needs met
- ✚ Instill a sense of accountability in local children
- ✚ Provide positive adult role models
- ✚ Develop local leadership

So, how did I choose to participate with West Broadway Youth Outreach as our community event this year? Because the co-director answered a simple question I asked in a way that made it impossible not to.

I asked her what they needed right now as donations. She said that they took kids swimming every week, but that not all the kids could participate because the kids didn't have their own bathing suits and towels. I expect that like me, you find that pretty hard to imagine.

Another thing that would be hard for us to imagine would be what it would be like not to be able to read, or, as a child not to have had an adult who encouraged reading. We take reading and writing for granted. Unfortunately there are many children and adults who aren't as privileged and who struggle every day to understand information written at even a basic level.

Many kids do not have an adult at home who reads a bedtime story with them every night. Many do not have an adult with sufficient literacy skills to help them with their homework. So on January 29th our volunteers will have the opportunity to read with, or to, children from the West Broadway area.

The "Lawyers for Literacy" Day will allow:

- ✚ Us to share our skills with children by helping them read, or in some cases reading to them
- ✚ Kids to gain an understanding of what can be accomplished by learning to read and write well, through interacting with us
- ✚ Kids to have an opportunity to spend some time with a lawyer and learn how important we think reading is, because we are there to enjoy reading with them

In addition, you can ask your friends and family to participate by sponsoring you. They can provide a tax deductible charitable donation to WBYO based on the number of hours you read, the numbers of books you read, or simply a donation to acknowledge your participation.

West Broadway Youth Outreach welcomes donations of books, children's clothes, juice boxes for after school snacks, games, toys, musical instruments...pretty much anything you can think of that would be of interest to a child. So while attending to read, you can also find a new home for those things that your own kids have outgrown or finished playing with.

We will provide pizza and drinks for the kids and volunteers and prizes as an additional incentive to participants.

This organization does incredible things in inventive ways and perhaps continuing to volunteer some of your time will be another outcome. Right now they are looking for a piano teacher. Some people volunteer an hour a week with activities such as Bookworm Club, Homework Club or sports activities.

So come and read for an hour, or come and drop off a donation!

Irene Hamilton
President
The Law Society of Manitoba