



## News Release

Page 1 of 3

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 21, 2009

### **YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION MADE FUN AND INTERACTIVE**

The first-ever community outreach event by the IMPACT Youth Group makes quite the positive impact on over 400 youth, parents and community representatives in attendance.

**MISSISSAUGA, ON:** On Saturday, October 17, 2009 IMPACT, the youth advisory group to the Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network (PYVPN) hosted a free full day community outreach event at Playdium titled, One Act Impacts. The objective was to promote youth violence prevention and to generate proactive dialogue between young people, parents, community service agencies and government representatives.

The event showcased the guest speaker, former Toronto Argonaut and motivational speaker, Mr. Chuck Winters, as well as a keynote address by Gemini nominee filmmaker and youth advocate, Andree Cazabon.

“As parents, educators, community service providers and politicians we need to listen to our youth and do everything in our power to influence the change required to help them gain access to valuable resources and live a life without fear, ” said Gael Miles, Chair for the PYVPN Steering Committee and Peel Regional Councillor.

The agenda also included the launch of the network’s new website [www.voice4peelyouth.ca](http://www.voice4peelyouth.ca). The VOICE website is dedicated to addressing youth violence prevention in Peel. It is an online community hub that uses a youthful approach to connect with young people who may otherwise feel uncomfortable or intimidated interacting with law enforcement or government agency websites.

“The grand feature of all is the YOUR VOICE page – a safe online stage for young people to share thoughts, experiences, opinions and ideas on youth violence prevention,” said Janette Smith, PYVPN Steering Committee member and Commissioner of Health, Peel Region. “Community leaders and government representatives support this website because it provides valuable information and engages youth in much needed dialogue.”

Having grown up in the projects of Detroit, Michigan, Mr. Chuck Winters is no stranger to youth violence. Mr. Winters explained that despite the ugliness that surrounded his younger years, it was the love and support of his family and friends that eventually helped him rise above it all, overcome a selfish attitude and taught him to give back to others. “Imagine someone being hit



by a crowbar in your home. I witnessed my mother being abused like that when I was growing up. I believe that pain is a necessary process in life and that it shapes us into being better people, but sometimes you have to ask – why me? In my case, I believe I was meant to be the vessel to deliver a message to you of hope, love and peace.”

Andree Cazabon featured her film *Letters to a Street Child* that chronicles the impact her addiction had on her family while she was on the streets at age 13 –14, and was the catalyst for the opening of the Pine River Institute, a residential treatment centre near Toronto. “I’m so pleased that you’ve chosen to call your website VOICE-4-PEEL-YOUTH because when young people fall victim to violence they often feel shame and anger and stop having a voice. They build walls around them and no longer recognize themselves, which is often the reason they don’t tell adults what’s happened to them.” At the age of 12, Ms. Cazabon was raped by four teens and eventually the shame she felt and the inability to tell her parents led her to run away and turn to drugs as a method to cope.

The guest speakers were inspirational, information booths informative, free food was delicious and the door prizes included a number of gift certificates from area retailers and two grand prize giveaways for two iPod Touch.

What did the IMPACT youth members think of their first-ever community outreach event since forming as a group in the early part of 2009? Michel and Monique were so pleased they posted their thanks on the VOICE website, “We thought this event was really successful and turned out great. We are really happy to help out in the community any time, and are hoping that we can plan another successful event like this. We were glad to see how many volunteers came out to help in this event. SPEAK YOUR VOICE & LET IT BE HEARD!”

The Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network was formed in January 2006 and is one of the largest organized community anti-violence initiatives in Ontario involving a cross-section of social, ethnic, and religious groups as well as government, police, school boards and youth.

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#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

Rosanna Armata  
Public Affairs Associate, PYVPM  
Tel#: (905) 791-7800, ext. 5916 / (416) 569-1353  
E-mail: [rosanna.armata@peelregion.ca](mailto:rosanna.armata@peelregion.ca)

Cathy Granger, Manager  
Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network  
Tel#: (905) 791-7800, ext. 2000  
E-mail: [cathy.granger@peelregion.ca](mailto:cathy.granger@peelregion.ca)



## Backgrounder

### **IMPACT YOUTH GROUP**

Three community volunteer working groups support the mandate of the PYPVN Steering Committee: Community Development, Family and Education, and Youth Services and Supports. Working with each of these working groups and providing a youth perspective is the IMPACT Youth Advisory, a group of teens from across Peel Region.

### **[www.voice4peelyouth.ca](http://www.voice4peelyouth.ca)**

The VOICE website is primarily dedicated to addressing youth violence related issues and youth violence prevention in Peel.

The new re-brand has been in the process since October 2008 when the Steering Committee recognized that in order for the Network to be a valuable asset to the community, it needed to make a stronger connection with the youth in Peel.

The network's initial website served its purpose of providing valuable information on violence prevention however the youth element was missing. A consulting firm was hired to run focus groups with a number of young people across Peel. Based on the information collected, the more youthful and interactive VOICE website was born.

The objective of the site is to establish a healthy and productive two-way dialogue between young people, parents, friends, community leaders and politicians.