

Develop:

To provide opportunities for youth and young moms to reach their full potential.

Assist:

To be a resource, supporting youth and young moms as they make better choices.

Mentor:

To be a consistent, relational presence in the lives of youth and young moms.



"It's like a safe haven for me... it keeps me out of trouble and gives me something to do during the day."

Who is "The Dam"?

The Dam is a Meadowvale based community non-profit that utilizes a unique approach in coming alongside youth-at-risk. Three key programs meet needs faced on a daily basis:

1. **Young Moms** - for pregnant teens, young moms and their children
2. **Outreach** - reaching thousands of teens in their schools & in the community
3. **Drop-in** - which targets youth-at-risk and sees over 11,000 youth visits per year

Drop-in Program Summary

Youth enter the drop-in and are engaged and empowered through

- Strategic drop-ins, theme nights, mentoring, leadership opportunities
- Youth are empowered to develop healthy relationships through

- Discussion forums, life skills

Youth are equipped for future success & increased youth employability by providing them with

- Housing, jobs, education and counselling resources

The Need

The at-risk youth of our community need a place where they can be accepted, supported and challenged to reach their full potential. In a society that is seeing an increase in violence, gangs, and addictions, there is a need for community places like The Dam that focus on prevention and deal with the root issues.

Who does The Dam serve?

Drop-in	vs.	Ontario Teens
39%	Have considered or attempted suicide	10%
50%	Have run away or been kicked out of home	10%
84%	Smoke pot	26%
50%	Use drugs other than pot	12%
68%	Smoke cigarettes	12%

From our March, 2008 survey, which was completed by a random sampling of over 40 youth attending The Dam drop-in compared with the 2007 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, which surveys about 6000 youth across Ontario.

Survey Question

'How have you been affected by The Dam?

"...they helped me become a better person..."

"...it has shaped me to be who I am today and will influence who I become tomorrow...."

"...The Dam has always been there (for me) no matter what..."



Robin, Mary and a friend. When Mary decides not to fight someone, she explains "that's not who she is".



"The Dam keeps me from being lonely"

How many youth does The Dam serve?

	Year Ending Aug 31, 2008
Lunch visits	1,099
After school visits	6,809
Discussion forums	202
Special interest (music, art, movies)	257
Dinner program/evening drop-in	2,598
Youth leadership program	65
Youth being mentored	35

Mentoring Mary

Mary was in grade nine when she first came to drop-in. She was quickly known as being hyperactive and hyper-emotional. When she got riled up, no one could "talk her down".

One day, Mary told Robin (a Dam youth worker) that she used to have a mentor, but that program ended. Meanwhile, her mother had informed her that the man she has known as her "father" her entire life was not really her father (his good friend is).

Additionally, "Dad" doesn't know that he isn't her father, and her mother insists that she continue that lie, while getting to know her real father better on the sly. Mary really needed someone to talk to.

Robin and Mary started meeting every other week to talk, a relationship that has lasted two years.

Mary is now making choices based on the person that Robin first told her that she is – a valuable, worthwhile awesome person!

When she decides not to fight someone, she explains, "that's not who she is".

Mary is still emotional, but her coping mechanisms have improved. Any drop-in staff can now redirect her when she's getting emotional, and all notice how "level" she is becoming.

Mary is talking with Robin about what she will do after high school and has hopes and dreams for her future.

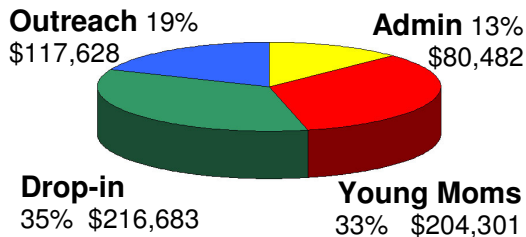
Transformation at The Dam

- **63.3%** of youth surveyed come to The Dam **5** or more times a week
- **93%** of the older youth (17-19) say they have been positively affected by The Dam
- **44%** have tried to quit smoking
- **20%** stated that drug and alcohol use has decreased in last year
- **15%** decrease in homeless youth in the past year
- **45%** less youth this year used a weapon compared with last year



"...The Dam has made me happier [than] before I started coming. I actually have a place I want to be at..."

The Dam Expenses 2007 - 2008



These much-needed youth services are funded by donations from foundations, churches, corporations, government and hundreds of individuals and families.

This is one of three reports on activities at The Dam. If you would like one on young moms or outreach, call us today.



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Challenges we face

It is difficult to balance the fact that we work with at-risk youth and yet we still need to maintain a safe, welcoming environment for all youth at the drop-in. We do not allow any drugs, alcohol or weapons into the space, yet work with youth for whom these things are a regular part of their daily existence.

Our biggest challenge is attempting to embrace everyone in the drop-in community even when they disrespect the rules and each other.

Lessons Learned

We are in the process of trying to adapt a new 'restorative justice' method of dealing with infractions within the community. Our old policy of 'banning' a youth from The Dam seemed like punishment even when we try to meet for coffee and maintain a positive relationship during the duration of the banning.

We desire to have our youth buy-in to the reasons for the rules that exist within the drop-in and are hopeful that eliminating 'punishment' (which most of our youth will be all too familiar with) and working towards 'restoration' will help us to better understand how to work with at-risk youth. The restorative justice model can build a community that is safe, welcoming and bring positive change for our youth.

Future Vision

At The Dam, we are continuing to grow as an organization. Recently our board and leadership have gone through a strategic planning and evaluation process. One of our conclusions was that if we seek to become more effective, we must be willing to measure our efforts and impact. As we move into the 2009 season, all programs will be measured and studied to ensure that The Dam is effective in impacting youth. Three key areas we are examining are:

Youth entering the drop-in are engaged & empowered

- Our plan is to increase mentoring by 20% and provide leadership opportunities in programs for 6 youth in the next year.
- Within the community of The Dam, we will explore a model for dealing with discipline issues through restorative justice.

Youth are equipped to develop healthy relationships

- We plan to develop a certified life skills program for youth. The court recognized program will cover topics of anger management, conflict resolution, job skills, nutrition/hygiene, communication skills, CPR, post-secondary prep, and budgeting/living on your own.

Youth are trained for future success

- The Dam will be fully resourced to assist youth with addictions, housing, jobs and education. This will require greater partnerships with other services. Youth will be trained through their 40 hours of community service needed for high school to have the fortitude to stay with a job for longer than a month.