

Celebrating the Success of Critical Hours Programming

April 28th, 2011 – The final analysis is in on the three year project TeenZone, which was mandated to study and demonstrate the impact of high quality after school programs for youth in the communities North of McKnight Boulevard, and all indications are the project was resoundingly successful.

And, to celebrate the success of the project as well as the adoption by the City of Calgary into Calgary After-School, Mayor Naheed Nenshi, along with the other partners (Boys and Girls Club, Burns Fund, United Way of Calgary and Area, UpStart) will be hosting a get together at the Boys and Girls Club on April 28 from 2 pm to 3:30 pm where the final evaluation results will be released.

Phil Carlton, Director of UpStart, the United Way initiative focused on Calgary's children and youth, said high-quality after-school programs have long been identified by researchers as important for the positive development of children and youth.

“We started on this journey to look at how to support youth in the critical hours outside of school when kids are less likely to be supervised by working parents,” Carlton said. The three-hour period of 3 to 6 p.m. is critical for children and youth, because of their potential for making poor decisions that can result in accident, injury or crime. On the other hand, extensive research shows that children who participate in quality recreational opportunities during the critical hours are more like to have higher self-esteem, interact better with friends, do well in school and avoid risky behaviours.

Over the three years of the pilot, TeenZone funded 17 new or enhanced programs and at least 915 youth participated in programs between 2007 and 2010, which formed the basis for the City of Calgary adopting the programs to provide after school programming city-wide through Calgary After School.

City of Calgary Manager, Children & Youth Services Cheryl Joynt said the collaborative process was integral to the projects success. “The collaborative funding and governance model developed and adhered to by the funding partners, and the behind-the-scenes leadership exercised by the partners laid the foundation for a city-wide after-school network, and that is truly a reason to be celebrating.”

As this was a demonstration project, with the goal of learning more about the impact of after-school programs on youth, Guyn Cooper Research Associates Ltd. was contracted to conduct a rigorous, comprehensive evaluation. The research findings will be released in both a summary document as well as a full report at the celebration event.

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