



SCARBOROUGH
CENTRE FOR
HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES

December 2023 | Winter Issue

WINTER WHISPERS: EMBRACING THE CHILL, SHARING THE WARMTH



YOUR HEALTH, OUR PRIORITY!

Abira Vaithilingam, Coordinator of Marketing and Fund Development

Wondering if it's a cold, the flu, or COVID? Seeking answers? We've got you covered!

SCHC's Cold, Flu, and COVID Assessment Clinic started Friday, November 24th. Operating every Friday from 5 pm – 8 pm and Saturday from 10 am – 2 pm, this clinic at 629 Markham Road, Unit 2, Community Health Centre offers free 30-minute assessments for moderate respiratory symptoms. No OHIP card required, no wait time—just the right care in the right place. Walk-ins are welcome or book your slot online [here](#). *Clickable link.*

Read more on page 3.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

WINTER 2023



CEO JEANIE ARGIROPOULOUS

VISION

Ignite the strength of community!

MISSION

Providing accessible, equitable and transformational health and social service choices, for the well-being of diverse communities.

VALUES

- I2CARE
- Inclusive
- Innovation
- Collaboration
- Accessibility
- Respect
- Equity

As we settle into the shorter, colder days of winter I am warmed by reflecting on all of the wonderful work that our staff and volunteers have contributed to this past year. SCHC is blessed to continue to grow in support of our Scarborough communities. The SCHC team remains committed to our mission of providing accessible, equitable, and transformational health and social service choices, for the well-being of diverse communities.

I also reflect on how we have matured as an organization, embracing our vision to ignite the strength of the community, since we are here to serve Scarborough and its residents who represent a global society with immense experiences, talents, and contributions to this very vibrant and evolving community. SCHC continues to be a strong advocate for the fight for health equity as we partner with our community to remove barriers that negatively affect the social determinants of health. These include physical, mental, spiritual, physical environments, income, employment, childhood experiences, gender, culture, and race.

As we head into the new year, I encourage you all to stay connected with family, friends, and community as the winter can be a lonely and isolating time for many. Seek out varied opportunities to participate in programming, both in person and virtually, or volunteer. To help, you can always check out the various calendars on SCHC's website, www.schcontario.ca with events for all ages that contribute to a healthy lifestyle, and do not forget to include a friend or neighbour to provide that extra motivation and support to stay active and engaged.

I want to end by also saying how thankful I am to be part of such a wonderful organization and community that inspires me to do better every day.

Stay safe while enjoying the holiday season,

Jeanie Agiropoulos



STAY CONNECTED WITH US

@SCHCOntario



@SCHCOnt



COLD, FLU, AND COVID ASSESSMENT CLINIC



Abira Vaithilingam, Coordinator of Marketing and Fund Development

Every

Friday

Saturday

5 pm - 8 pm 10 am - 2 pm

**Unit 2 - 629 Markham Rd,
Scarborough, ON M1H 2A4**

WALK-INS WELCOME OR
BOOK AN APPOINTMENT:



Assessment and treatment (if necessary) of Cold, Flu, and COVID by a practitioner!

Why Now? *Understanding the Season*

In Canada, the cold, flu, and respiratory virus season spans fall to winter. While symptoms can range from mild fatigue to severe complications, certain populations face higher risks. Individuals 65+, those in care facilities, young children, those with chronic conditions, and marginalized communities are particularly vulnerable.

Vaccination: Your Shield Against Illness

Vaccination is the key to protection. For flu and COVID, everyone 6 months and older is eligible. No need to wait between doses. The COVID-19 vaccine safeguards against severe infection and long COVID. It's safe for pregnant or breastfeeding women, seniors, and those with health conditions.

Daily Habits for a Healthier Fall/Winter

Practice good hygiene: wash hands regularly, avoid touching your face, and wear masks in crowded indoor spaces. If unwell, stay home. Rapid Antigen Tests help guide care plans, and 811 is available for advice.

Community Support Matters

Access local assessment centers or walk-in clinics for prompt care, reducing Emergency department waits. An interactive map of clinics is available [here](#). *Clickable link.*

Together, We Can Make a Difference

Let's all play our part in reducing the spread of influenza and COVID-19 this year.

Questions? Email ambassador@schcontario.ca.

Your health is our priority!

LET'S MAKE TIME



Ruchika Wadhwa, Diabetes Dietitian



Every November, the global Diabetes community unites to raise awareness, recognizing the millions living with diabetes, and their struggles and challenges as part of Diabetes Awareness Month. Nov. 14 is observed as World Diabetes Day. But for those living with diabetes and their caregivers, every day is 'Diabetes Day'. Diabetes demands energy and attention around the clock for those living with diabetes and their caregivers. It exacts considerable physical, emotional, and economic challenges to affected individuals and families. If not optimally managed, it can lead to serious complications and be the leading cause of hospital admissions.

Diabetes is spiraling out of control with 1 in 3 Canadians affected by diabetes, which is close to 30% of Canada's population. In 2023, 4 million people in Canada have been diagnosed with diabetes and over 1 million people in Canada live with diabetes and don't even know about this too-often "invisible" condition.

Diabetes rates are expected to rise 26% in the next 10 years. Chances are you or someone in your life is impacted.

Diabetes can be so different for everyone. The complexity, effort, and time required to self-manage diabetes is significant. It is so very important that everyone has timely and ongoing access to diabetes education, care, and resources they need to live a healthy life.

At SCHC, the Diabetes Team of nurses, dietitians, social workers, and endocrinologists have been providing timely, holistic education and resources to our diverse Scarborough community for more than 15 years. If you or your loved ones are interested in obtaining education to prevent or manage diabetes or have seen our team previously and fallen through the cracks - call to book your appointment with the team of diabetes educators at 416-847-4160. We are here to support you in your journey with diabetes.

You don't want to wait before it gets too late.

CELEBRATING TOGETHERNESS: ANNUAL COMMUNITY HOLIDAY DINNER



Charanjit Singh,
Community Wellness & Engagement Manager

In the spirit of unity and festive cheer, our community comes together annually for a free Holiday Community Dinner. Last year, this heartwarming event, made possible through the collaborative efforts of our dedicated Community Wellness & Engagement Team and the Afro-Centre Neighbourhood Group, welcomed 190 individuals to a night filled with joy and connection. The air was alive with the sounds of laughter and camaraderie as families gathered to partake in the festivities. The evening kicked off with soulful caroling that resonated through the venue, setting the perfect tone for the celebration. As the night unfolded, participants showcased their vocal talents during lively karaoke sessions, creating an atmosphere of lively merriment.

The true highlight of the event, however, was the communal feast that brought everyone together around the dinner table. Delicious aromas filled the air as neighbors, friends, and families indulged in a scrumptious holiday meal, prepared with love and care by our dedicated volunteers. From festive classics to cultural delights, the menu catered to diverse tastes, reflecting the rich tapestry of our community.



Dessert was a sweet finale to the evening, with an array of delectable treats that left taste buds dancing with delight. More than just a feast for the senses, the Annual Free Community Holiday Dinner embodied the spirit of giving and goodwill, fostering a sense of belonging that resonated throughout the night.

As we fondly reflect on this memorable event, we are thrilled to announce that we will be hosting the Annual Free Community Holiday Dinner again this year. If you would like to contribute or support this heartwarming tradition, please get in touch with our Community Wellness & Engagement Team. It is through the generosity and spirit of our community that we can continue to create cherished moments of togetherness.

HEALTHYHERHABITS

Kisha Goode, Health Promotion Specialist



HealthyHER HabITS

Women's Health & Wellness Series

A new series on Preventative health!
Join Us for Expert Insights on
Diabetes, Heart Health, Nutrition,
Vaccination, Menopause and Cancer
Screening!

Dec 5th, 2023-Jan 30th, 2024

10:00 am to 11:00 am, Every Tuesday

Virtual via Zoom | 18+

Chances to WIN
free
gift cards!

SCAN
TO
REGISTER



For more details & to register:
Healthpromotion@schcontario.ca



Women play an important role in maintaining and improving their own health as well as the health of their families. Hence, they can positively influence society by engaging in health-promoting behaviors. Compared to men, women are more sensitive and vulnerable to certain adverse health conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, arthritis, asthma, and dementia. Health literacy is a complex issue that can adversely affect women's health knowledge, ability to adhere to care, and overall health outcomes. Programs that aim to improve health literacy and provide health education are vital for the well-being of women of all ages and stages of life.

The Health Promotion Team's Women's Health and Wellbeing program is a comprehensive journey designed to empower women to prioritize their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Through a combination of sessions focusing on functional exercises, nutritional and healthy eating workshops, stress-management techniques, interactive self-care practices, and empowering talks by our experts, participants will embark on a transformative experience aimed at achieving holistic health. By participating in this program, women will not only enhance their health but also become part of a supportive community of like-minded individuals.

When 📅 Every Tuesday

Time 🕒 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Where 📍 Zoom

(Meeting link to be provided upon registration)

Who is eligible: Women ages 18 and above

How to join

Simple registration! Secure your spot by registering [here](#). It only takes a few minutes to embark on this empowering journey.

Zoom access: After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with the Zoom link and all the details you need to seamlessly join each session.

Spread the word!

Encourage the women in your life to join this program. Together, let's foster a community where every woman feels empowered to prioritize her health.

For additional information or inquiries, contact us at healthpromotion@schcontario.ca

SPOOKY DELIGHTS AND THRILLS: OUR UNFORGETTABLE HALLOWEEN HAUNTED HOUSE

Karsikaa Thiruchelvam - Student Placement

Our community hub was transformed into an amazing haunted house that sent shivers down everyone's spine. With spooky decorations, a maze of dark corridors, and a cast of creepy characters, the haunt provided a thrilling and unforgettable experience for all who dared to venture inside. It was a fantastic gathering that brought our community together for a night of spooky fun and unforgettable memories.



ACTIVE LIVING SENIORS FAIR 2023: A DAY TO REMEMBER!



**Anthony Rampersad,
Active Living Centre
Coordinator**



On a crisp October morning, the Scarborough Village Recreation Centre was abuzz with excitement and energy. The SCHC Active Living Centre hosted the much-anticipated SCHC Active Living Seniors Fair on Wednesday, October 18th, 2023, from 10 am to 2 pm, and what a splendid day it was!

Our vibrant seniors community came together to enjoy a variety of activities designed to foster wellness, learning, and fun. The fair offered an array of presentations covering essential health and lifestyle topics, while exhibitors showcased resources and services tailored for senior living. The aroma of delicious, complimentary food wafted through the air, as attendees mingled and shared stories.

Highlights of the day included interactive demonstrations that not only entertained but also educated us on staying active and engaged.

The laughter and cheers during these sessions were a testament to the fair's success in creating an enjoyable atmosphere for all.

The giveaways added an extra layer of excitement, with many leaving with not just gifts but also valuable information and connections. It was a day where community spirit shone bright, and the enthusiasm of the SCHC Active Living Seniors was palpable.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who participated, volunteered, and contributed to making this event a triumph. This fair was a vivid illustration of the SCHC's commitment to enhancing the lives of seniors through active living. Let's continue to build on this momentum and make every day as engaging and fulfilling as the fair was!

HIV RAPID TEST

Vivien Ma, Registered Nurse

Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities (SCHC) is the first non-profit health organization to offer anonymous POCT HIV rapid test in Scarborough and is one of the designated testing sites approved by the Ontario Ministry of Health. Over the last 18 years, the program has screened many individuals who are at risk for HIV infection. After a short disruption during the pandemic, the program resumed services in 2023.



Anonymous testing means that your personal identification is not required in order to take the test and you would not be identified by a third party. You do not have to show a health card as the test is free for everyone in Ontario. Compared to traditional HIV testing done in a medical laboratory, rapid testing is efficient and hassle-free. After a brief pre-test assessment, a drop of blood is collected by a finger prick for testing. The result is available in 60 seconds while you wait.

Individual counseling is available before and after testing to increase awareness of HIV prevention, and information is provided allowing you to connect with the appropriate community and/or healthcare resources.

In March 2023, Health Canada approved the first dual HIV-Syphilis rapid antibody test for use in clinical settings. Under the direction of the Ontario Ministry of Health, there is no plan to incorporate the dual test into all HIV rapid test sites. If you would like to have both HIV and syphilis tested at the same time, please get in touch with your family doctor for testing.

If you are interested in getting the anonymous HIV rapid test done, please call 416-297-7490 to schedule an appointment at our community health center, located at 520 Ellesmere Road, Unit 303.

PUTTING THE “COMMUNITY” IN COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH

Callum Tyrrell, VP of Integration, Innovation and Engagement



1
Community-Driven

2
Participatory

3
Action-Oriented

For many years Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities has been involved in, collaborated on, or led a diverse array of research initiatives in the pursuit of the betterment of the communities it serves. With well-established relationships with academia, partners, and community-based groups, SCHC has continued to explore opportunities to deepen its research impact. As part of our new strategic plan, the Research and Innovation Committee retained the support of the Centre for Community-Based Research (CBR) to train and guide them towards developing a CBR strategy for the whole organization, alongside community partners. This enabled the committee and broader staff to begin to enter a more comprehensive way of involving the community every step of the way,

with its goals highlighted in the orange diagram above. From the development of research topics and questions, to collaboratively choosing the appropriate methodology, we ensured the community being impacted participated in deep and meaningful ways. This included how to interpret the results, to utilize the sharing of knowledge gained from those results to ultimately turn into useful and sustainable actions that improve the well-being of all those involved. As an evolution of SCHC’s research work, we are excited to deepen and broaden our role in the world of Community-Based Research and are excited to work with our communities and partners from a wide array of industries to further establish how we can play a valuable part in igniting the strength of community.

EARLYON BLACK INNOVATION GRANTS

Jennifer Botelho, Coordinator of RECE -EarlyON Child and Family Centre



The EarlyON Innovation Grants were created in response to the recommendations brought forth by Black communities to address anti-Black racism within the early years and child care system and were endorsed by the EarlyON Black Leaders Advisory.

“This year’s innovation grant has truly opened doors to embarking on a journey dedicated to supporting and serving Black Families within our community and agency. We’ve created programs and established partnerships that resonate with the needs of our families; from the ‘Sunny Side Up Saturday’ Brunch program to the literacy program within the Reading Partnership Program. In addition to our programs, we’ve arranged workshops featuring guest speakers, providing a platform for families to voice their needs and seek answers to their questions. Families have also generously shared their stories, allowing us to establish bonds and build connections along the way. We’re fortunate to capture the essence of our community spirit and collaboration. It has been a privilege to have this opportunity to support our community in such a meaningful way”.

- **Muna, EarlyON Registered Educator**

“The innovation grants allowed me to build relationships with many families. It was a wonderful experience to be able to hear many different stories, try different foods, and share a space with joy”.

- **Chanel, EarlyON Registered Educator**

“Muna and Chanel really engaged children through culturally relevant songs, videos, and stories. Seeing black faces among our educators is important for our children who learn a lot by mirroring and encouraging academic endeavors in our community. The EarlyOn excels at providing a diversified workforce and an appreciation for multicultural awareness. It was a really valuable experience hearing how other mothers encouraged learning with their children and has improved my approach to teaching my daughters”.

- **Sade, EarlyON Parent**

“The black Innovation grant has been a transformative force for my family, leaving an indelible mark on our lives. The initiatives that my Grandchildren attend at SCHC as a result of this grant have allowed them to access resources for tutoring and extracurricular activities and building relationships that have helped improve their interpersonal skills.

I am filled with gratitude for the workers who spend tireless hours creating work plans and executing them diligently for the young mind in the room.”

- **Desrene, EarlyON family & East Scarborough Storefront Employee**

RECOGNIZING SEPTEMBER 30



Abira Vaithilingam, Coordinator of Marketing and Fund Development

Reflecting on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with SCHC, we honor the strength, resilience, and stories of Indigenous communities. SCHC staff came together in the spirit of understanding and healing for a better future. *For the full gallery, visit our social media pages!*



CONTINUED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Peggy Jamil, VAROS Health Ambassador

With the new flu and cold season returning, I joined the SCHC Vaccine Ambassador team again with a commitment to impact my community positively, reflecting a deep sense of responsibility and compassion.

My journey from Syria to Canada and my experience as a vaccine ambassador with SCHC in the first wave of COVID-19 was an essential link between marginalized communities and the organizations and institutions that aim to serve them, contributing to better health, social equity, and overall community well-being.

Building friendships with other ambassadors from diverse cultural backgrounds, participating in training sessions, and connecting with various communities, other organizations and people has undoubtedly enriched my experiences and knowledge.

Now, I transitioned from introducing a novel concept to reinforcing the importance of ongoing vaccination efforts.



The relationships and trust built during the first wave serves as the base foundation for continued community engagement and support in the fight against the pandemic.

Last week, when I was engaging with fellow ambassadors and telling them my memories and challenges, everyone said the public seemed more familiar with the concept of vaccination and the role of SCHC vaccine ambassadors. Then, one lady looking at my badge and SCHC Purple T-shirt, came forward and said, "SCHC saved my life." At that moment, I felt that I was representing a team of ambassadors who played a crucial part in saving lives in the community, and this was a powerful testament to the importance of the ambassador's efforts and will be an advantageous motivation to continue our advocacy work to contribute to the health and well-being of our community

WINTER ESSENTIALS DRIVE 2023

Leslie Pilapil, Harm Reduction Outreach Worker



A huge Thank You to all our SCHC colleagues who donated to this year's Winter Essentials Drive. This year we collected winter wear items and distributed them via the SCHC Mobile Health Unit. Your generosity was happily received by the community. Whether community members said thank you or not, the energy of gratitude was strongly present since the need for these winter items is paramount. We also received apparel that could be used for job interviews, special events, and children's wear/toys. The majority of the community members that we serve live with challenges, and receiving free, clean, stylish winter wear brought their spirits up. We gave them the gift of warmth and joy, and reminded them that the world can be kind. I wish I could bottle the feeling, the happiness expressed when community members received their lovely donations, and share it with all staff, volunteers and the community. The Winter Essentials Drive was a complete success. Our SCHC teams make a meaningful difference! It's been absolutely heart-warming to take part in this community experience.

FIRST LATINO WELLNESS FAIR

Mercedes Riestra,
Spanish Community Outreach Worker

To meet the needs of the growing Latino community in Scarborough, SCHC hosted the first Latino Wellness Fair, at Thompson Memorial Park, in collaboration with the Consulate of Mexico, Toronto Housing and Kababayan Multicultural Centre. Volunteers, staff and participants had a blast! Latino families had the opportunity to speak their mother tongue, learn about the programs and services that SCHC offers to the community, take home books in Spanish, clothing, and of course, try yummy food. The High Priority Community Strategy team came together to support the different stations, colouring and crafts for little ones, board games for youth, soccer for parents with their kids and raffles. This event was possible by many hours of planning, making connections, and promoting it. I cannot be more grateful for the results. My dream came true, my hard work, commitment and efforts to bring the Latino community to SCHC paid off. Thanks to everyone's support in this successful event.



HUB'S ANNUAL SUMMER FESTIVAL



Rashme Nandakumar, Youth Worker



A warm thank you to everyone who joined us for our annual Summer Hub Festival, returning for the first time after the pandemic.

At the Hub Mid Scarborough, we aim to connect with community members, facilitate valuable connections and make lasting memories to look back on! We're happy to say we were able to accomplish just that through the Summer Hub Festival this year on August 26th, 2023.

The Hub Mid Scarborough would like to extend our gratitude to sponsors, volunteers, and vendors who participated and showed support for our community event, raising a total of \$4,050 directly towards community programming!

- Our Platinum Sponsor Soupercilious contributed \$1,000
- Gold Sponsor TFH Canada contributed \$500
- Silver Sponsor McDougall & Brown Funeral Home Scarborough Chapel contributed \$250

We had exciting games, delicious food, music and goods vendors as well as an array of SCHC community partners and sponsors who showed their unwavering support at the event. We had an exciting raffle for attendees to participate in where proceeds went directly to community programming out of the Hub Mid Scarborough. We had Toronto Police Services attend the event and interact with the attendees, and our Hub partners Fred Victor, YMCA, CIEO, YouthLink, Vasantham, BBBST and HCC had tables to share information on their services and resources available to the community.

Everyone's participation and contribution increased our capacity to facilitate a community event that aligns with SCHC's mission, to provide supports for the holistic health needs of our community in Scarborough. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year at the Summer 2024 Hub festival!

IGNITE JOY: BE PART OF THE GIFT TO REMEMBER 2023 HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN

Abira Vaithilingam,
Coordinator of Marketing and Fund Development

Join us in spreading warmth and cheer this holiday season by launching your own team drive! The Gift to Remember 2023 campaign is in full swing, and we invite you to make a difference. Embrace the spirit of giving, as we accept donations until December 22.

We appreciate your generosity in various forms:

1. Cash Donations: Your monetary contributions help us reach even more hearts. Donate at schcontario.ca/donate
2. In-Kind Donations: Non-perishable food, books, clothes, and toys—all are welcome gifts that bring joy. Contact banks@schcontario.ca for more information.
3. We also love gift cards: Walmart, Scarborough Town Centre or from any grocery stores

A special note of gratitude to our sponsor and steadfast supporters at **Peerage Capital**. Their ongoing commitment empowers us to make this annual campaign possible.

Other ways to get involved:

1. Start Your Team Drive: Gather your friends, family, or colleagues to amplify the impact.
2. Spread the Word: Share the joy by encouraging others to join or contribute. Contribute in person or online via social media posts.



Whether big or small, every contribution plays a role in making this season brighter for those in need. Let's unite in the joy of giving and create a Gift to Remember!

For more details or to initiate your team drive, visit our website [here](#) or contact us at 416-847-4141

Together, let's make this holiday season truly unforgettable for many!

SCARBOROUGH CENTRE FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

A GIFT TO REMEMBER

PRESENTED BY PEERAGE CAPITAL

WE ARE ACCEPTING DONATIONS IN CASH AND IN-KIND, NON-PERISHABLE FOOD, BOOKS, CLOTHES, AND TOYS.

Nov 1 to Dec 22, 2023
EVERY DONATION COUNTS!