

Under the **Ray**dar



• The RaY Family



BLACK

By Kelly Holmes, Executive Director

While hanging out at RaY over the past seven years, I have developed an eye for many things... as you can well imagine.

At RaY, we receive many clothing donations, and we're not always able to keep everything that comes our way—we simply do not have the room. So we ask that the youth sort through the new donations and keep what they like and re-donate the rest. As these youth sort through mountains of clothing, it's interesting how often they choose the black clothes while sorting out the coloured clothes to pass along. It struck me one day how many young people wear black—a colour often equated with death and depression, power and anger. They wear their black clothes like armour.

It makes me think of Johnny Cash.

Johnny was born into poverty—his mother emotionally vacuous and his father an abusive task master. Johnny withdrew and went inside himself. He found solace and emotional safety with his older brother—his protector, his voice, his trusted friend. He was also the central character in Johnny's major childhood trauma. Johnny's brother met his demise with a saw—a gruesome event that Johnny witnessed. He was too small to intervene and stood by helplessly and watched—only to later be blamed for his death. Johnny was never the same.

Later in life, Johnny sought out anaesthetic to kill his pain in the form of alcohol and narcotics, as many people do. It seems to me, the way in which an addiction plays out has several determinants, and in my experience, no family is immune.

For instance, there is the role "appearances" can play in a family. Maybe you were taught to avoid unpleasantness around company—the familial expectation was to keep the skeletons locked tightly in the closet even though the elephant was in the living room. Or mom's vodka was hidden under the sink, and every time she came out of the kitchen she was just a little bit happier. Or there is the other extreme, where your family taught you to drink, smoke, fight, or deal drugs at an early age—where it was common as a child to extinguish the cigarettes from mom and dad's drunken passed-out friends after they had urinated themselves on your broken couch.

An elephant is an elephant no matter how expensive the furniture is in the living room...

When the booze and pills lose their potency, you reach a fork in the road. You can decide to take the road that travels towards change, or you can keep walking down the path of destruction, where it's just a matter of time before a stronger drug and a harder life presents itself. Johnny took the second road.

In one form or another, we see youth travelling down that same road of despair due to issues in the home, trauma, stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, mental health issues, or poverty. Addictions lead to bigger addictions, producing poor alliances, unhealthy choices and in some cases jail time and/or death. The traumas may differ and the order of events may vary, but it is the very same road and it has been well-travelled through my 28 years in the field.

Johnny was fortunate, he had talent that was discovered, he had June and a higher power. He played his cards but not without losing a few hands along the way.

Street kids should be so lucky.

At our recent AGM, I asked one of RaY's multi-faceted, incredibly talented team-members to serenade us with a Johnny Cash tune. **"I wear black for the poor and beaten down, living in the hopeless part of town. I wear it for the sick and lonely old, for the reckless ones whose bad trip has left them cold."**

It was my hope that our supporters who attended the AGM would hear the lyrics and connect the dots. Our staff-members are committed to altering the direction of these young people—steering them towards paths of change. We have situated ourselves all along the road. We are the sign at the fork in the road empowering them to choose a better way. We are sitting on the bench on the median of a busy intersection waiting for these youth, and we don't care how long their journey has been or how many potholes they've experienced along the way. And as Johnny said, **"Well there's things that will never be right I know, and things need changing everywhere you go. But 'til we start to make a move to make a few things right, you'll never see us wear a suit of white."**



< It's The Ultimate!

Wednesday is RaY's Co-ed Ultimate Frisbee Night at nearby Broadway Neighbourhood Centre

providing

Advocacy/Erica Chatelain

Erica is RaY's lead advocate. Whether the system is CFS, EIA, Health or Justice, Erica is there to support you. On a one-to-one basis, she supports youth in navigating the system, promoting self-determination and independence. She has a long history working with youth, starting on the streets of Hollywood, LA, eventually finding her way back to Winnipeg. On her down time Erica is an actress in a number of city productions.

Addictions Support/Lynn Thomson

Lynn brings with her 30 years of street-entrenched addictions experience and ten years of sobriety. She's a constant source of energy, light and love. Committed to supporting youth through the murky waters of recovery, Lynn gives practical advice on how to reduce the harm of substance use and supports addicted youth through treatment. Lynn is RaY's resident peg-leg, karaoke-dancing queen.

Street Outreach/Cam McGregor, Eric Schweig and Larysa Jorgenson

Outreach is actively "on the street" looking for youth who may be in trouble, connecting them with the resources they need.

With a certificate in child and youth care, Cam is a street outreach worker specializing in mental health, connecting youth with essential services. Cam is a happy family man who enjoys following his favourite bands across the country.

On top of being a successful screen actor in films such as *Last of the Mohicans*, *The Missing* and *Squanto*, Eric is a recent recipient of an honorary doctorate. Eric is committed to homeless youth and throughout his career has always performed street outreach, never losing sight of where he has come from. Eric is disgruntled with technology.

Larysa has her youth care certificate and is embarking upon her social work degree. Beyond her extensive experience working with youth, she has an interest in extreme sports, snow-boarding and jumping out of planes – don't be fooled by her shy demeanor.

Odd Jobs/Nancy Chippendale

Currently working on her Master of Divinity, Nancy has a serious commitment to RaY's youth. As Odd Jobs Coordinator, she works with partner organizations in the West Broadway and Osborne area to provide youth with paid work experience, training and job references, with the goal of part-time or full-time employment. An Ultimate Frisbee enthusiast, Nancy grew up in inner-city Winnipeg and understands the importance of community.



From Top:
Erica
Lynn
Cam, Eric & Larysa
Nancy

youth

MEET THE TEAM

with what



Prevention/Sarah McKinnon and Andrew Ward

Sarah works with the school system to deliver street-savvy workshops. Originally from Nova Scotia, Sarah has her Masters degree in sociology and wrote her thesis on discrimination against panhandlers in the media. Sarah is a Jane-of-all-trades... a chick with tools.

Andrew is actively involved with RaY's prevention workshops, in addition to organizing RaY's awareness-raising events and acting as RaY's community liaison. Andrew is a bagpiper and musician as well as a dynamic public speaker, with a long history of working with youth.



Housing/Kerri Scott

Kerri educates youth about their rights and responsibilities toward successful tenancy. As RaY's main housing advocate, he provides housing listings for the West Broadway community and beyond. A new father, Kerri has his BA in Conflict Resolution and is the front-man for the band Racecar. Kerri's wisecracks seem to come from Uranus.

Executive Director/Kelly Holmes

Kelly was born and raised in Winnipeg's inner-city. With a commitment to marginalized individuals, she has 29 years experience working throughout the city and Manitoba's north. Well-known for her no-nonsense, common sense approach, her strength lies in her antagonistic style of social justice activism. Kelly has carried the message from the street to the public and the powers-that-be both nationally and internationally. She has been senior management at RaY for the past seven years. Kelly is the wolf mother to thousands of strays.



Program Director/Jason Neufeld

The newly appointed Program Director, Jason is an award-winning playwright who has performed at Fringe Festivals across Canada. With a degree in Social Work, he is committed to social justice issues in Winnipeg and was instrumental in the Raise the Rates campaign, which called for welfare reform, before finding his way to RaY. Jason is the proud parent of two cats.

From Top:
Sarah & Andrew
Kerri
Kelly & Jason

to better



they need

Emergency Youth Services/Steve Mazur, Cathy Hinds and Asha Harrington

EYS provides youth with immediate services to help reduce the pressures of poverty and homelessness. Youth have access to computers, snacks, food bank, clothing bank, toiletries, support, referrals and someone who will listen to them.

With his certificate in applied counseling, Steve has worked in social services for five years, advocating for youth. As a proud member of the gay community, he is a strong advocate for GLBT youth. Steve is affectionately known as "the enforcer" at RaY.

Cathy recently received her degree in Human Ecology and Family Social Sciences. She first came to RaY as a member of the Urban Green Team initiative and was so impressive that she has become a full-time member of the RaY team. Cathy runs the popular "Cooking with Cathy" program on Monday nights. She has an irrational fear of bed bugs.

As our summer employee at RaY, Asha helps in the development and implementation of programs. She is a certified teacher and works in Winnipeg as a full-time educator. Along with Cathy, Asha helps facilitate the cooking program at RaY. Our hope is that Asha will one day be our teacher for our future literacy programming. She's little, but punchy. "Never underestimate the small one."



Administration/Bean Counting/Pamela Belair

The devil is in the details, and Pam is all about the details. An expert Trivial Pursuit player with a history in finance and accounting, Pam is the keeper of all records. She assists the management team with the development of budgets, providing financial data to our board and management teams. She is known for giving RaY staff cake for breakfast.



Technical Support/Sean Close

Anytime RaY runs into computer trouble, Sean is one phone-call away from saving the day. A website designer and lead point man in the Senior Men's Basketball League, he also maintains RaY's database and does purchasing and maintenance of RaY's AV equipment and computers.



RaY staff photographed by Brian Gould

From Top:
Steve
Cathy
Asha
Pam & Sean

themselves

Interview with Adam Lambert

By Marshall Norris

Marshall: Adam, how did you hear about RaY?

Adam: I heard about RaY when they were called Operation Go Home. I think I was 14 at the time. I started coming so I could access their youth food bank... and I received support from people at RaY that I didn't really get from home. As I got older I slowly began getting involved with all of the programs and workshops.

Marshall: What about your involvement with RaY's Prevention Program?

Adam: I was fairly young when I got into it. We go out to schools or different parts of the community and explain to youth at risk — or any youth, in fact — about life on the street. RaY has a few different workshops. There's "Life on the Street," "Teens in the Drug Trade" and "Bullying." There's also something called "Reality Check." It's a one-on-one idea. If a parent in the community has a problem with their child — for instance, if he is starting to run away to smoke pot or something — the parent would contact RaY and then a RaY staff, the parent and I would go out and talk to the child. Then they would let me take the child out for a walk and kind of explain what the reality of the life that he may possibly be entering into. So far we've had a huge success rate with that program.

Marshall: When you are taking kids on the tours these days... do you realize that now with your new job at Gooch's you are a part of the community, Adam? How did you acquire your job at Gooch's... a bicycle place that fixes bikes and sells them and is also a hobby shop?

Adam: I got my start at Gooch's through RaY's Odd Jobs program. Kelly Holmes of RaY was talking to Mr. Gooch and there was talk about how they wanted to get maybe a couple of kids employed. Kelly knew that I used to work on my bike pretty often out front at RaY, so she talked to Mr. Gooch about it and then I began working at Gooch's three hours a week for a month. I did such a good job they decided to hire me.

Marshall: Congratulations on that one. How do you feel about how RaY put you in a position of work?

Adam: Well, it made me feel pretty good. You know, I've never actually had a real job before. I've worked at the carnival and I had a job at McDonalds for a couple of weeks, but that doesn't really count. But, I'm actually really, really satisfied with this opportunity that RaY and Gooch's have given me. And, I don't really know where I'd be right now if it wasn't for this opportunity.

• This article was originally published in **The Broadcaster**, West Broadway's community newspaper.



On their terms

RaY Youth

For over 14 years, **RaY (formerly known as Operation Go Home)** has planted itself in the community and has grown right alongside with the youth... providing youth what they need, on their terms, to better their lives.



RaY's Youth Board member representative and blogger Jason Romanyshyn with son Zen.



Brandon Skuce at RaY's newly launched Laundry Club at neighbouring Sherbrook Suds.



Celebrating addictions recovery.



Jesse Kent organizes RaY's youth-friendly, on-site clothing bank.



RaY Youth Speaker Terri Lynn Sawyer talks about the need for street-level health care providers.



Karly Davis on the day she was hired at Safeway through RaY's Odd Jobs Program.



Anna Wall plants potatoes in RaY's garden plot in Spirit Park in early June.



Mike, a traveller, reads a script during one of RaY's evening workshops.



Addressing legal issues through advocacy and support.



RaY's Monday night "Cooking with Cathy" food program at Broadway Neighbourhood Centre.



Go-Kart racing at Speed World through RaY's Rec program.



Looking for youth-friendly landlords in West Broadway.

Ray Resource Assistance for Youth, Inc.

gutter Aid

"Bringing the realities of street life out of the gutter"

October 14-17, 2008

For more info, visit www.rayinc.ca or contact Andrew at award@rayinc.ca



14 Years of Proud Service to the Community

Casey Wall, representing RaY youth, with Wolseley MLA Robert Altemeyer at the Manitoba Legislature in recognition of the private member statement honouring RaY's 14 years of service in the community.



Premier Gary Doer with RaY Program Director Jason Neufeld



The West Broadway Biz nominated RaY for the Business Improvement Zone Award

Mayor Sam Katz with Executive Director Kelly Holmes

RaY is always in need of seasonal youth-friendly clothing. Donations of vinyl chairs would also be greatly appreciated.

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Telephone: () _____

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Thank you to our funders.



Resource Assistance for Youth, Inc.

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