

BEAT THE STREETS

IMPACTING YOUTH

NEWSLETTER
WINTER/SPRING 2023



A young man with dark curly hair, wearing a dark t-shirt, is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is in a gymnasium with a polished wooden floor. In the background, other students are visible, some in motion, suggesting a physical education or sports setting. The overall lighting is warm and orange-toned.

**“LEVEL UP IS
ENGAGING,
AUTHENTIC
AND HELPS
STUDENTS
BUILD REAL
WORLD SKILLS
THEY CAN
CARRY INTO
THEIR FUTURE.”**

Nicholas Vavougiros, Teacher, Harbord Collegiate Institute

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BTS REACHES MORE YOUTH THAN EVER BEFORE!

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



NEAL EWERS

I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and high spirits as we enter the summer months. I'm thrilled to update you on our progress at Beat the Streets and express my gratitude for your

continued support.

Firstly, a heartfelt thank you to our dedicated coaches, volunteers, staff, and board members for their exceptional efforts in ensuring the success of our programs. Special recognition goes to recent coop students Shaheer and Yusuf from Stephen Lewis Secondary School, as well as our Level Up, You Grow Girl, and Wrestle 4 Fun staff in the Toronto District School Board. We greatly appreciate the assistance of teachers, principals, Superintendent Courtney Lewis, and Helen Fisher for their invaluable connections. Your ongoing support strengthens our relationships within the board.

Since January, we have been very busy! We've reached 3,458 W4Fun students across 7 schools, conducted 8 Level Up programs with 260 students, and delivered 9 programs through You Grow Girl, engaging 220 students. Thanks to 6 new volunteers, we've created valuable content for our programs and marketing materials.

As the winter & spring months draw to a close, we're excited to resume after-school wrestling programs post-COVID. We're also starting an after-school wrestling pilot program for at-risk Black youth and launching our summer jobs program 'Work It,' providing employment opportunities and job skills development for high school and university students.

None of our progress would be possible without the generous support of our sponsors and donors. Your contributions, whether financial or through volunteering, have profoundly impacted the lives of our youth. We sincerely appreciate your unwavering commitment to our mission.

Stay connected with us through our website, social media platforms, and upcoming events. Your involvement and active participation are instrumental in our program's success.

Thank you for your dedication, generosity, and belief in the power of wrestling. With your continued support, we will continue to empower youth, one takedown at a time.



**THANK YOU BTS PARTNERS. TOGETHER,
WE ARE EMPOWERING ACTIVE & RESILIENT
YOUTH WHO REALIZE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL!**

Canada

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario



MLSE FOUNDATION

 TROPICANA
COMMUNITY SERVICES | SBCCI

The Quinn Family
FUTURE FOUNDATION

THE GOODER FOUNDATION

 **RP** INVESTMENT ADVISORS
Global Expertise. Absolute Performance.



ivari

 Canada Post
Community Foundation

 **HAMMERSMITH**
DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION

3,458 KIDS HAVE FUN LEARNING TO WRESTLE

THANKS TO SUPPORT FROM THE **ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION**, FROM JANUARY TO MAY, BTS DELIVERED WRESTLE 4 FUN TO SEVEN SCHOOLS IN THE TDSB.

Wrestle 4 Fun is a unique fitness program delivered by wrestlers. Our one-week programme encourages more children (ages 6-12) to become active by improving their physical literacy and confidence, both building blocks of an active lifestyle — in a fun and inclusive environment.



JACKSON GLASGOW

The Wrestle4Fun winter season was filled with challenges and achievements, but it was a very positive and inspiring experience for myself, my teammates, and the students overall. This season, I had a larger role in the

program as I was appointed as the leader of Wrestle4Fun. This meant that I had more responsibilities, such as organizing activities, scheduling new schools, and building a good rapport with school staff, among others. It was a bit difficult at first, but the previous leader of the program, Arely Torales, provided great support in helping me find my footing.

The aspect of this program that brings me the most joy is observing the students break out of their comfort zone and try something new. Since COVID, many teachers have mentioned that the pandemic has hindered students from trying new things and feeling uncomfortable, especially when it comes to physical literacy. Watching the students attempt a certain technique, fail, ask for help,

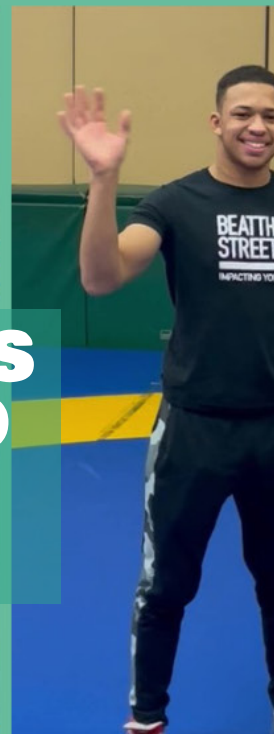
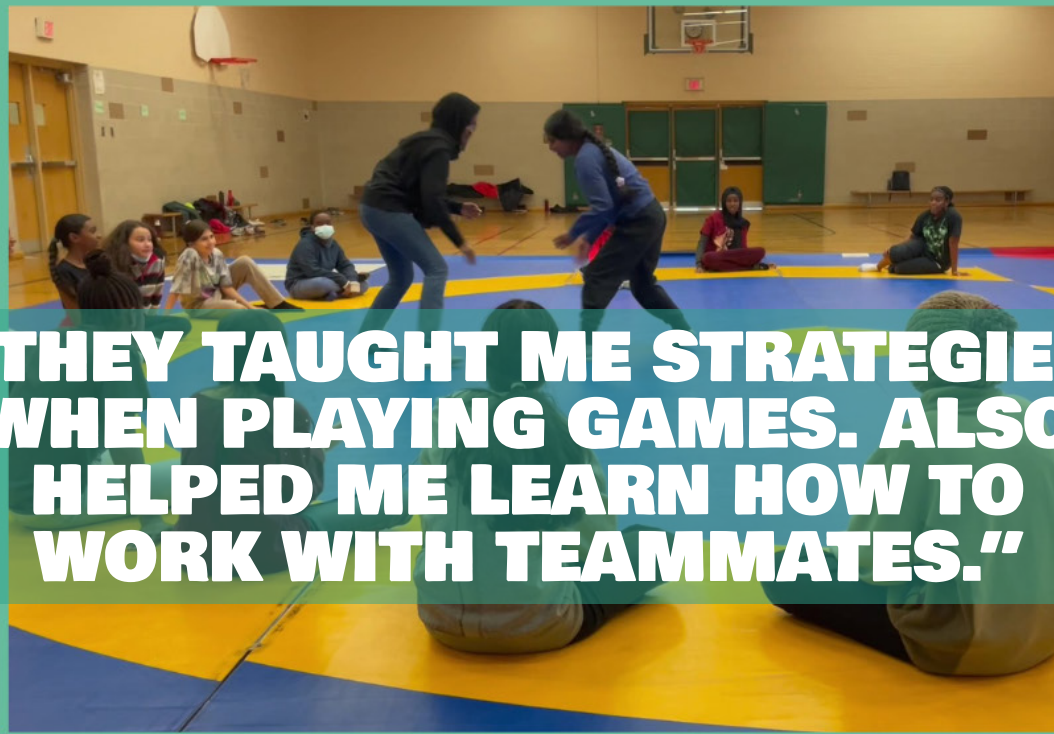
and then successfully complete the technique on their own is priceless. It represents the greatest success a coach can experience, and I am pleased to say that I have witnessed this happen dozens of times while working as a Wrestle4Fun coach.

BTS is excited to have worked with the following schools to encourage physical literacy & confidence:

- Willow Park Junior Public School
- Cumber Valley Middle School
- Donview Health & Wellness Academy
- Flemington Public School
- Dixongrove Junior Middle School
- Topcliff Public School
- Parkdale Junior and Senior Public School

“THE PROGRAM WAS EXCELLENT FOR THE STUDENTS. IT PROVIDED THE STUDENTS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT WRESTLING. THEY GOT TO LEARN SOME BASIC WRESTLING SKILLS AND GAMES. THEY ALSO LEARNED A LOT FROM THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES.”

JAMES SHAPIRO, TDSB



"THEY TAUGHT ME STRATEGIES WHEN PLAYING GAMES. ALSO HELPED ME LEARN HOW TO WORK WITH TEAMMATES."

260 STUDENTS LEARN TO BOX & THINK CRITICALLY

THANKS TO SUPPORT FROM **JUMPSTART CHARITIES & IVARI HEALTHY STEPS PROGRAMS**, BTS DELIVERED 8 LEVEL UP PROGRAMS AT WEST HUMBER C.I., EMERY C.I., HARBORD C.I & RICHVIEW C.I.

Level Up is a fun & dynamic resiliency-building program led by professional coaches and athletes. We use combat-based fitness activities to level up physical skills and experiential learning activities to level up the social-emotional skills of students ages 13-18 across the GTA.

Since January, BTS delivered 8 programs to 260 low-income youth in the TDSB. Feedback from coaches and teachers are overwhelmingly positive. They love the sports skills combined with the social-emotional learning.

We surveyed more than 160 participants and we're thrilled to share their inspiring feedback with you. The responses we received truly highlight the positive impact our program is making.

One participant shared, **"I enjoyed the boxing portion because I learned a lot about coordination of punches rather than single ones on their own."** It's wonderful to see how our program teaches boxing skills and emphasizes the importance of coordination and technique.

Another participant mentioned, **"The best part about this program for me was the experience, learning to defend myself and thinking about how to solve activities."** This testimonial reflects the empowerment our

participants' experience as they learn self-defence techniques and engage in problem-solving activities.

Participants appreciated the personal growth aspect of our program. One participant expressed, **"The discussions were very thoughtful, with very remarkable and effective advice. I have used that advice and discussions in my life."** This testimonial demonstrates valuable insights gained from our program, enabling participants to make better life choices.

We're honoured to receive positive feedback from our Level Up participants. Their testimonials highlight the transformative nature of our program and the power of combining combat sports with resiliency-building to positively impact youth.

"THIS PROGRAM PROVIDES INDIVIDUALS WITH A FUN AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, THE SKILLS YOU LEARN ARE REALLY ENGAGING, AND YOU HAVE TO PUSH YOUR LIMITS."

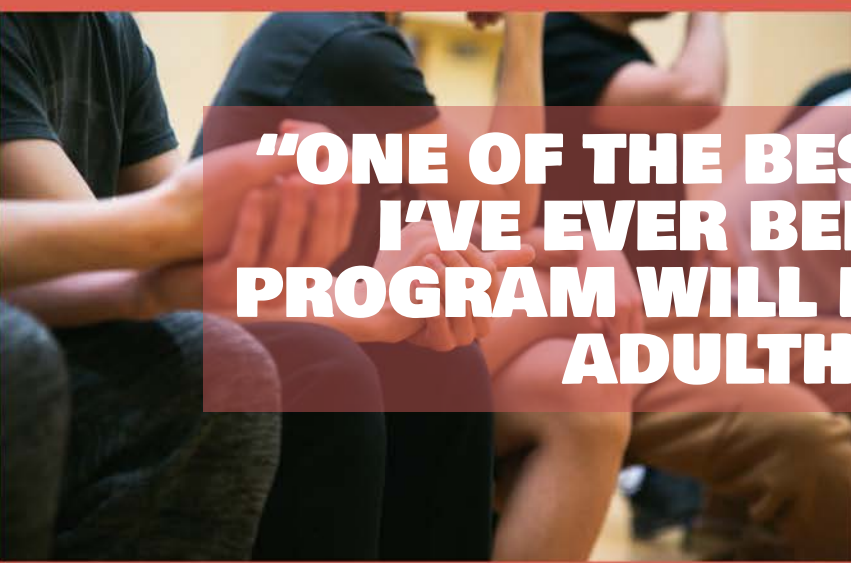
LEVEL UP PARTICIPANT, 2023



You lose. You are finished when you quit.



"ONE OF THE BEST PROGRAMS I'VE EVER BEEN IN. THIS PROGRAM WILL HELP ME IN MY ADULTHOOD."







BTS EMPOWERS 220 GIRLS

THANKS TO SUPPORT FROM **JUMPSTART CHARITIES, CANADA POST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION & THE GOODER FOUNDATION**, SINCE JANUARY, BTS ENCOURAGED PHYSICALLY LITERATE AND RESILIENT GIRLS AT WEST HUMBER C.I., EMERY C.I. & RICHVIEW C.I.

You Grow Girl is a fun & dynamic resiliency-building program led by professional coaches and athletes. We use combat-based fitness classes to level up physical skills and experiential learning activities to level up the social-emotional skills of girls ages 13-18 across the GTA.

Since January, BTS has delivered 9 You Grow Girl programs. We collected pre & post surveys from more than 130 participants which reflect significant improvements in four key components: stress management, goal-setting, discipline and importance of sports after only 8 hours of classes.

We are excited to share the overwhelmingly positive experiences and outcomes from participants. You Grow Girl has empowered individuals, fostered connections, and left a lasting impact.

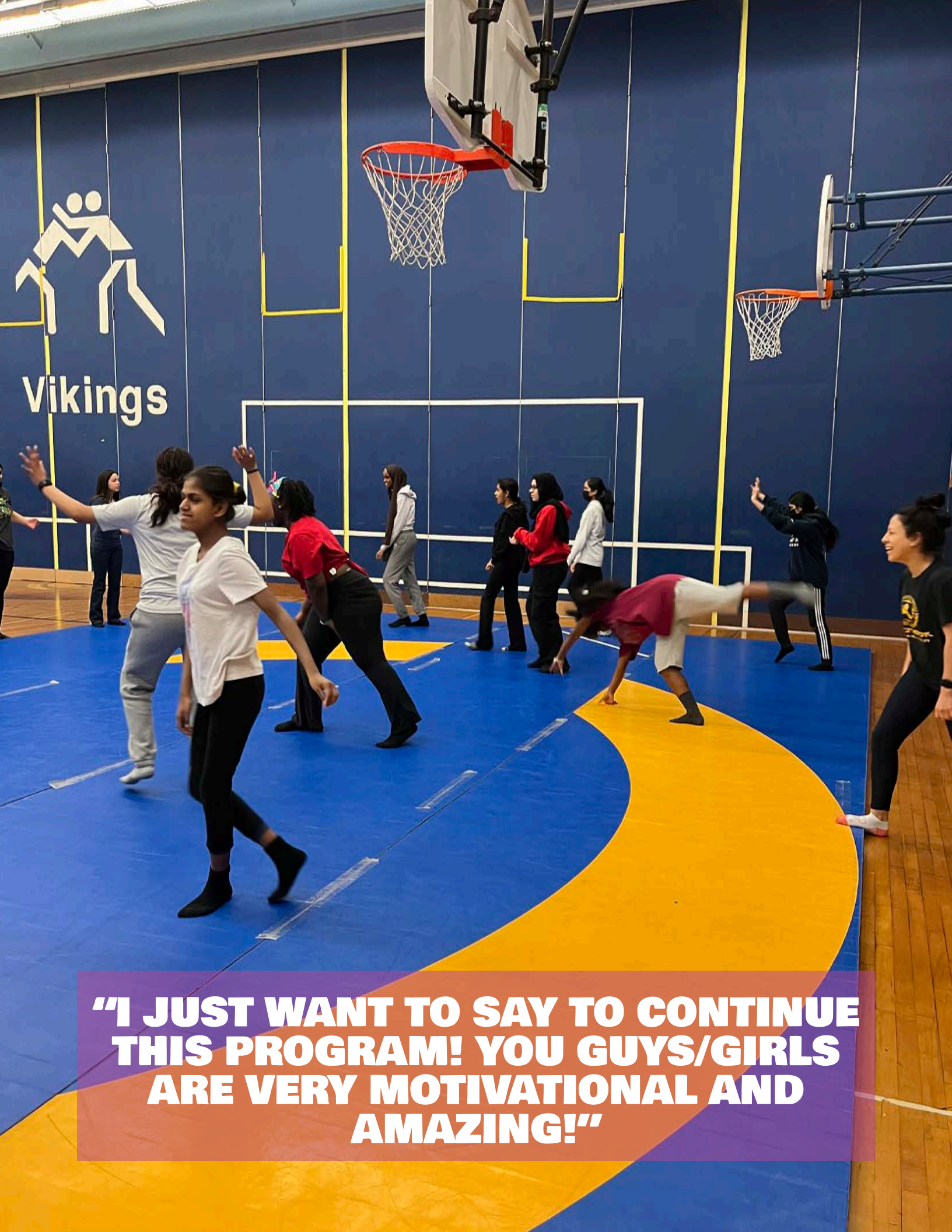
“Learning new things and feeling more confident about myself, also being able to interact with others a lot more,” one participant shared, highlighting the value of connecting with others and self-growth. Another participant mentioned, **“The brain teasers and the riddles were my favorite part of the program,”** emphasizing the engaging nature of our activities.

Our program has been a hub for continuous learning and personal development. Participants spoke of their growth with

enthusiasm. **“I really enjoyed learning new techniques for boxing. I now know the proper form for certain things,”** one participant expressed, reflecting the knowledge and skills acquired. Another participant added, **“Learning new things and feeling more confident about myself, also being able to interact with others a lot more,”** highlighting the confidence gained throughout the program.

The impact of our program extended beyond physical activities. Participants found guidance in self-expression through the support of coaches and instructors. **“The staff were very kind and the activities we did were enjoyable,”** one participant appreciated. Another participant shared, **“The warm games were so short, which was sad because I liked playing them a lot :(Overall though, it was super fun! Thank you!”** emphasizing the fun and supportive environment created.

You Grow Girl is impacting lives. The testimonials reflect the joy, confidence, and newfound skills participants acquired. We are proud to empower young individuals, foster connections, and inspire personal growth. **“Thank you for teaching me to kick box,”** one participant expressed their gratitude. The overwhelming positivity and gratitude expressed by our participants speak volumes about the impact of this program, and we are excited to continue this journey with them.




Vikings

"I JUST WANT TO SAY TO CONTINUE THIS PROGRAM! YOU GUYS/GIRLS ARE VERY MOTIVATIONAL AND AMAZING!"



INSIGHTS: HOW BTS ENGAGES YOUTH

PAUL RASO, BTS CO-ORIDNATOR & FACILITATOR



PAUL RASO

The Level Up and You Grow Girl programs have been remarkable successes this year, as we have served a total of five schools throughout both semesters of the academic year. We have formed genuine connections with

the youth we worked with, a realization that became evident upon our return to some of the schools during the second semester. Students actively sought us out to say hello, inquire if we were conducting a second round of the program, share their success stories, and ask about our well-being as facilitators. As an educator with 23 years of experience, I consider this level of engagement a true testament to the effectiveness of our program.

Our program was intentionally designed to provide an organic experience for each class we visit. This approach has proven to be a highlight, as students often do not respond well to scripted programs, workshops, or assemblies that feign care and concern. To gauge their perspective on enhancing support for mental health and promoting healthy and active living in schools, we asked one of the classes to write down their ideas on a piece of paper. The responses were insightful and, at times, encouraging, with some students expressing a desire for "more programs like this one."

One of the program's significant benefits lies in the relationships we are building with educators and students at the schools we work with. Numerous motivational speakers, workshops, and programs merely make fleeting appearances in schools, attempting to create a feel-good atmosphere without offering real solutions or long-term goals.

HOWEVER, OUR CONSISTENT PRESENCE AND THE FACT THAT TEACHERS ARE ACTIVELY REQUESTING OUR RETURN DISTINGUISH BEAT THE STREETS AS A DIFFERENT KIND OF SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS. WE ARE STRIVING TO DEVELOP A LONG-TERM SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR STUDENTS, AND THE POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM BOTH EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS AFFIRMS THE VALUE OF OUR EFFORTS.

This program is just beginning, and I envision its expansion beyond the school day. It has the potential to grow into an after-school and possibly weekend program, as students' issues and need for support extend beyond the confines of Monday to Friday, 9 am to 3 pm.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR NEW VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

THANKS TO SUPPORT FROM **JUMPSTART CHARITIES**, BTS HAS DEVELOPED AND LAUNCHED AN IMPACTFUL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM.



KATHY KHOA

In a recent interview, our dedicated volunteer coordinator, Kathy Khoa, shared her journey and the joys she experiences in her role. We caught up with her to learn more about her motivations, challenges, and volunteers' impact

on our organization.

When asked about her inspiration to become a volunteer coordinator, Kathy mentioned the incredible opportunity she received from Jessica and Coach Neal in September. The position helped her financially and allowed her to pursue her nursing degree and dance classes. However, what she enjoys most about her role is working closely with the students and discovering their goals. Providing a safe space for them to discuss their achievements, celebrate accomplishments, and encourage personal growth is truly rewarding. She finds inspiration in witnessing how the students strive for self-improvement each day, and she humbly acknowledges that she learns just as much from them.

As a volunteer coordinator, Kathy faces various challenges: managing multiple pilot programs while recruiting long-term volunteers and establishing partnerships with high schools and universities. Overcoming these obstacles required effective time management skills and perseverance. In addition, she learned

to navigate through rejections and setbacks, understanding that persistence ultimately leads to success.

FOR KATHY, BEING PART OF BEAT THE STREETS IS A WAY TO PAY FORWARD THE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT SHE ONCE RECEIVED, TRANSFORMING HER LIFE FROM A PLACE OF INSECURITY TO ONE FILLED WITH AUDACIOUS DREAMS.

Kathy shared the story of Moni and Hafsa. These individuals were instrumental in creating onboarding packages for field-placement training, crafting engaging newsletters, and injecting fresh energy into social media. Moni and Hafsa embraced the core values of Beat the Streets but also went above and beyond to achieve their personal goals.

For potential volunteers who need help figuring out where to start, Kathy recommends contacting Beat the Streets through direct messaging (Instagram page @beatthestreets.toronto) or emailing info@beatthestreets.ca. She encourages volunteers to seek opportunities that align with their interests and values. Volunteering in a space that resonates with their passions allows them to learn and contribute their knowledge and skills.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

BTS is grateful to Kathy Khoa, for all her work this year in developing and running our biggest volunteer program so far. She has been inspirational and motivational to all the volunteers and we thank her for bringing her unique perspective and experience to the position and program.

We are also grateful for the hard work of our 6 volunteers this year. Thank you so much for supporting the work of BTS and helping encourage healthy and active youth who realize their full potential.



SHAHEER ALI



KERTREINA BURROWES



ISSA KHAN



AAZIB PERVEZ



YUSUF QADRI



DOMINIQUE SCHIFANO



7 PILOT PROGRAMS	>2000 HOURS EARNED
>230 SERVED YOUTH	15 VOLUNTEERS

SPECIAL THANKS TO JUMPSTART FOR PROVIDING THE FUNDING TO MAKE THIS PROGRAM POSSIBLE.
THANK YOU QUELPH-HUMBER AND SCHOOLS WITHIN THE PEEL REGION FOR PARTNERING WITH BEAT THE STREETS TO MAKE THIS PROGRAM POSSIBLE.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH BTS INITIATIVES & NEW PARTNERS

Wrapping up school year programs

As the school year draws to a close, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the participants who engaged with our Level Up, You Grow Girl, and Wrestle 4 Fun programs. Your journey of personal growth has been remarkable. May your summer be filled with unforgettable joy and well-deserved relaxation.

Building capacity to serve at-risk black youth

Thanks to the generous support of the **Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative (SBCCI)** and the **Tropicana Community Foundation**, BTS will enhance its capacity to serve at-risk Black youth. We are currently developing our first pilot wrestling & resiliency-building program that caters to in-risk Black youth and are excited to deliver the program shortly.

Wrestle 4 Fun After-School Program

Exciting news! BTS has received a tremendous boost from the **Nike Community Impact Fund**, enabling us to establish two Wrestle 4 Fun after-school wrestling programs for the upcoming 2023/2024 school year. This funding will provide vital support to 60-80 low-income youth, offering them a platform to thrive and grow. We extend our deepest gratitude to the Nike Community Impact Fund for this invaluable partnership, building a brighter future for our youth.

Work It 2023

Through the **Summer Jobs Canada** grant, we extend our gratitude to the Canadian Government for supporting six talented students joining our team this summer. Welcoming two students already, we eagerly

anticipate four more exceptional individuals. Over the summer, we will empower these youth with essential employment skills and equip them for success in the workplace.

Work It, Girl!

BTS is thrilled to unveil our latest initiative, **Work It Girl**, in partnership with the **MLSE Foundation**. This transformative program combines evidence-based sports programs with an employment-focused curriculum. Through wrestling and kickboxing, we inspire healthy habits, active lifestyles, and personal development. Additionally, funding allows us to employ four girls during the summer, amplifying its impact.

HELP US EMPOWER MORE YOUTH

Take action today and be the force of change low-income youth need.

Together, through wrestling, combat sports & skill building programs, we can advance their education and empower them to overcome adversity, achieve greatness, and create a brighter future for us all.

Donate. Volunteer. Share.

Join us in empowering youth to realize their full potential.

Together, we can make a lasting impact.





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