

# YMCA Newspaper Building Strong Kids

By Jane Barry, The Greater Saint John Community Foundation

Samantha Hutchings, Paige Brown, Mark Myler & Byron DeWolfe are budding "cub reporters" for the most recent addition to community newspapers producing local news. The grade 5 students of Champlain Heights and Prince Charles Schools attend the YMCA's After School Program at their Prince Edward Square location. They are taking advantage of the large number of Y members who pass through the doors daily and marketing their broadside with a donation bottle at the reception area. By utilizing their own Y newspaper the enterprising youngsters are also demonstrating they care about other young people. The community-minded kids are turning all the donations over to the Y's Strong Kids Program. In their next issue they plan to create a thermometer tracking their success since they have already reached the \$242 mark.

Susan Hachey, Director of childcare & after school at the Saint John YM-YWCA, is impressed with their efforts. "What made me so proud was when the children decided they wanted to give 100% of the money to Strong Kids so they could help other children" she states. "This is one of the many examples of what makes the YMCA a special place to work" she adds. With Family Literacy Day being celebrated on January 27, it is a fine example of putting literary skills into social action.

Mark says the part he enjoys the most is watching other kids read the paper. Paige likes gauging their reactions and seeing the cash roll in while Byron just likes everything about it. They are looking forward to receiving two "new to you" computers from the Greater Saint John Community Foundation so their production can be stepped up a notch.

With 10 after school programs throughout Greater Saint John, the Y is a key provider of this important service. Janet Towers, Manager of New Initiatives and Childcare encourages her staff to give their charges new challenges and creative ideas. Responsible for serving 350 children ages 5-12 years old and 4 childcare centers serving 173 children ages 2-4, she watches out for the best interests of hundreds of youngsters, regardless of the economic background from which they come. The Strong Kids campaign is one way to ensure they are as inclusive as possible.

Shilo Boucher, the Y's Acting CEO says " We believe in our children and they are making real impact. " The YMCA's enduring mission of supporting the personal growth of people in spirit, mind and body, and fostering a sense of responsibility to each other and the global community continues to be fundamental to all YMCA programs and services.

"No Risks. No Returns." is the way the Y describes their Strong Kids program. By supporting it they believe a child's or teen's life can change for the better. By subsidizing memberships, entrance to programs and summer camps for children with challenges such as disabilities or social and economic disadvantages, it can make a huge difference in a young person's life and future. Gifts can be made monthly at \$25 or \$50 or for a family at \$1,000 for a year. Fun and healthy family experiences at camps, health, fitness, recreation or childcare centres, employment programs, leadership training and learning are all possibilities through Strong Kids. The Strong Kids Campaign will be launched on February 15.

For information:  
Janet Towers, Saint John YMCA-YWCA, 130 Broadview Ave. Saint John 634-7720

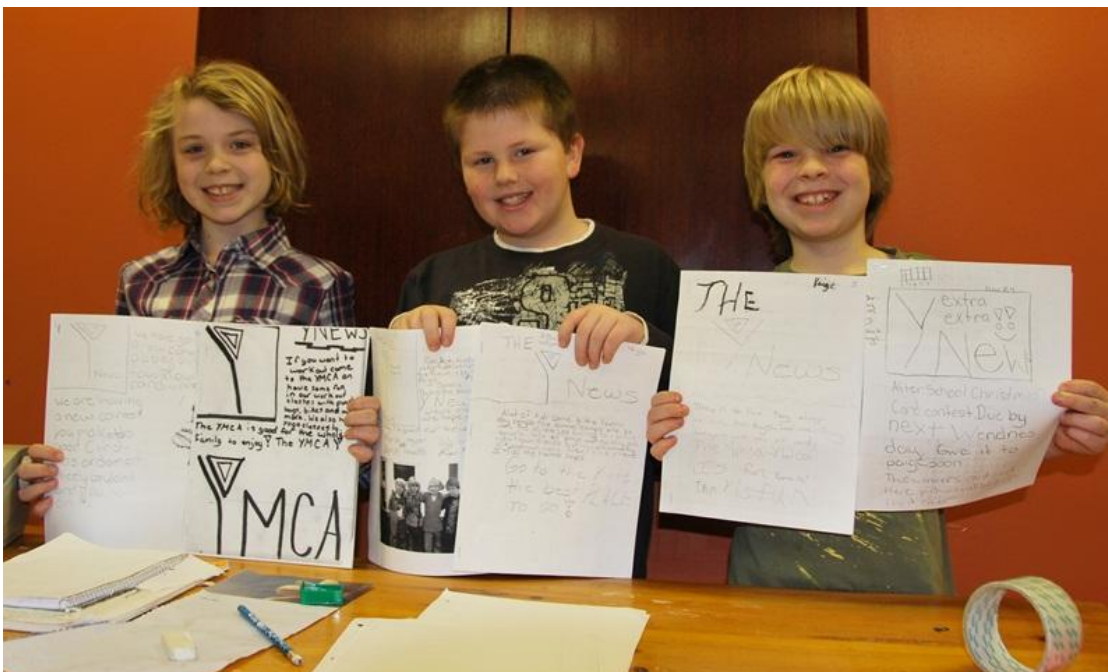


Photo: Samantha Hutchings, (missing from photo) Paige Brown, Mark Myler & Byron DeWolfe are grade 5 students at Champlain Heights and Prince Charles Schools who attend the YMCA's After School Program and have created a Y Newspaper which contributes 100% of donations to help support the Y's Strong Kids program.