

DESIGN HOPE  
TORONTO

# shelter

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# The PARC Ambassador Project

— WWW.PARC.ON.CA

The Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre or PARC as it is known, opened in 1980 as a response to people with mental health histories and people living in poverty in Parkdale who had no place to go during the day. Today PARC provides a combination of services, programs and opportunities to marginalized adults — primarily, but not exclusively, adults living with mental health issues.

In May of 2007 PARC was awarded the opportunity to develop 1495 Queen Street West, the gutted, 51-unit rooming house that was the scene of a tragic fire in September of 1998. A fire in which 2 tenants perished and the rest lost their housing and all worldly goods. The redeveloped building will be named Edmond Place, in honour of Edmond Yu, a Parkdale resident and former tenant of 1495 Queen Street West who was shot and killed by police while carrying what was mistaken for a dangerous weapon.

Although PARC had no illusions about how much work it would require to develop the burnt-out building into a safe, affordable and supportive environment they were not prepared for the level of negative comment and open NIMBYISM (not in my back yard) that their proposal attracted. Partner agencies rallied against them. Resident's Associations attacked their plans and the proposed tenants.

To combat the outpouring of thinly veneered discrimination against poor people and people with mental health histories required direct action. PARC needed the means to have a conversation with, and potentially change the attitudes of, the few who owned property and enjoyed the access and privileges that come with higher than median wealth (26% of Ward 14 residents are homeowners while 20% live below Canada's Low Income Cut-Off).

## **TAKING IT TO THE STREETS: A CONVERSATION AT YOUR DOOR.**

The question became how to best engage the community? PARC's Housing proposal budget had a line for community consultation — why not use this to train PARC members to go out and engage the neighbours as a group of Ambassadors.

PARC asked Jacques Tremblay, an acknowledged expert in community development, to assist with the creation and development of the PARC Ambassador Project. The Project's vision could be best described as using the inherent social assets within a community to develop the capacity of that community to represent itself. If NIMBYISM is a xenophobic response, what better way to combat it than by having the perceived outsiders come to meetings, businesses and front doors to provide information and answer questions.

The PARC Ambassadors have been engaging the Parkdale community since July of 2007 as Edmond Place worked its way through the various planning and approval processes.

Originally PARC interviewed and hired ten ambassadors and they currently have nine Ambassadors with seven who are very active. The Ambassadors all receive income assistance through the Ontario Disability Support Program and are provided an honorarium by PARC based on an average of ten hours per month of community engagement.

The project works by **increasing capacity**. Ambassadors are provided with training and coordination opportunities which increase skills and experience in practical ways. The PARC Ambassador Project addresses NIMBYISM directly by developing the skills and capacities of people who are poor or have experienced homelessness and are embedded in the community into which the housing is slated to enter.

There are two key areas for results:

- 1 COMMUNITY CAPACITY** PARC Ambassadors develop important skills such as public speaking; community engagement; focused and simple research; healthy debate; increased profile; decreased isolation and improved integration.
- 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT** Edmond Place will be well known to the community within a reasonable radius of PARC; Greater Community stakeholder attendance and participation.

# The PARC Ambassador Project (*continued*)

## **BUILDING ON CURRENT AND PREVIOUS WORK:**

A number of the Ambassadors were graduates of the award-winning *Knowledge Is Power* course which focuses on an anti-oppression and rights-based approach to learning to which the Ambassador Project is an obvious extension because it is about developing capacity and voice. It is also not difficult to see the effect of NIMBYism as a human rights issue.

Similarly, the Ambassador Project aligns with PARC's Strategic Plan (*Goal One is Working to Mission*): PARC is a place where people rebuild their lives. The results will be measured by developing more opportunities to increase knowledge and capacity.

## **RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

The Ambassador Project has not been easy. Some members have dropped out and there have been conflicts within the group from the stress of engaging a public that has for the most part been approachable and accessible. Nonetheless there is the experience of feeling inadequate or not on a level playing field with local businesses and home-owners. The on-going pressure of being a 'spokesperson' means forgoing anonymity and sometimes feeling obligated to the project as opposed to oneself.

On the plus side, there is the pride of being identified with a tangible solution to homelessness and poverty.

Also, the Ambassador Project adds to the conversation that has been propelled by the Centre for Urban Studies and the St. Christopher House Community University Research Alliance (CURA) Project on community change.

Finally, there is the real possibility of developing the Ambassador project as a curriculum and training opportunity for other affordable and supportive housing providers.

The Project Vision could be best described as using the inherent social assets within a community to develop the capacity of that community to represent itself.

OPPOSITE: PARC members, Ambassadors and members at various events; including Ambassador Glen Pappin speaking at Design Hope Toronto's 2009 event (lower left)





TOP: Local artist Nicole Pena and the grade 9 students of Parkdale Collegiate Institute brightening the hoarding at the east end of the property with cheerful paintings. MIDDLE: The finished murals. BOTTOM: architect's rendering of the finished Edmond Place.

# Edmond Place — Where it stands today

— WWW.PARC.ON.CA

TO DONATE TO EDMOND PLACE — PLEASE VISIT CANADA HELPS AT WWW.CANADAHELPS.ORG AND TYPE PARKDALE ACTIVITY-RECREATION CENTRE (TORONTO) OR CALL US AT 416-537-2262 X 244 OR MAIL A CHEQUE TO PARC AT 1499 QUEEN STREET WEST, TORONTO ON M6R 1A3

If it takes a village to raise a child, then it takes a community to build affordable housing.

It has been a busy winter, spring and summer for PARC and Edmond Place. A tremendous amount of labour has been needed to keep the original building standing. From January through March, the site for Edmond Place went through a period of stabilization and consolidation that required a temporary roof. With these improvements now complete, the construction is set to move ahead.

These issues are a reminder of the necessity to provide people of Parkdale with the steady housing they deserve. PARC would like to acknowledge that these improvements would not have been possible without the thanks and efforts of the City of Toronto's Affordable Housing Office, the Heritage Department, Councillor Gord Perks office, Construction Control, Tri-Phase and Hilditch Architect.

Here are some current updates regarding the progress of Edmond Place:

**CONSTRUCTION** After a targeted call for modified Construction Management was offered to a select number of contractors that met a list of rigorous criteria, the project was awarded to DASD Contracting Ltd. who are well known in Toronto for their work on affordable housing projects like Edmond Place. Construction is slated to begin shortly — look for the scaffolding any day now!

**FUNDING** We are halfway to our goal \$350,000 — our share of the \$6.5 million required to keep and restore the Georgian heritage exterior, remove and replace the fire damaged interior and add a fourth floor. Thank-you all for the support! If you would like to help further, you can do so in a number of ways: go to our website — [www.parc.on.ca](http://www.parc.on.ca); call us at (416) 537-2262 extension 244; or mail a donation to PARC — 1499 Queen Street West Toronto M6R 1A3, c/o Edmond Place.

Thank you everyone  
for your support!

## COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

**THE BOULEVARD CLUB** The second annual *The Boulevard Gives Back* event is being planned. Club members generously raise funds for PARC/Edmond Place and the Gatehouse charities.

**PARKDALE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE** Local artist Nicole Pena and the grade 9 students of Parkdale Collegiate Institute worked tirelessly for weeks to cover the hoarding at the east end of the Edmond Place property with bright and cheerful paintings.

**PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION** This group of young designers approached PARC about assisting with the design and fabrication of furnishings for Edmond Place. Examples of their work can be seen at the Gladstone Hotel and at [www.publicdisplaysofaffection.ca](http://www.publicdisplaysofaffection.ca)

PARC has been overwhelmed by the moral support from not only Design Hope Toronto, but so many corners of Parkdale, including West End Food Co-op, Poor John's Café, Mitzi's Sister, Fixed Point, Another Story Bookshop, St. Christopher House and the Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses. Edmond Place is being warmly received everywhere, due in large part to the PARC Ambassadors and the many staff, board members, volunteers and members who have all given time, energy and money to the vision of Edmond Place.



CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: Raymond's right hand Doris Ng keeps Welter running smoothly; Welter's new location at 1 Defries Street; the pride of the office: one of many aquariums; the printing floor showing one of their three presses.

# Donor Profile: Welter Studio

— [WWW.WELTERSTUDIO.COM](http://WWW.WELTERSTUDIO.COM)



**RAYMOND WONG** is the owner of Welter Studio Inc. Born in Hong Kong, he grew up — almost literally — in his father’s print shop. Emigrating to Canada, he studied graphic design at Humber College. After a few years in the graphic design field — all the while studying George Brown College’s print technology course in his evenings — Raymond switched to the printing industry. Five years at other print houses gave him the experience necessary to set up Welter Studio Inc. in 1982, and he’s never looked back.

“I saw how much hard work Design Hope Toronto puts into their event and I simply had to help.”

When Design Hope Toronto reached out to find a printer for our 2009 event catalogue, Welter Studio Inc. eagerly stepped up. Already aware of our organization and sympathetic to our goals, Welter simply could not say no.

That’s not unusual for Welter.

For the past twelve years, Welter happily operated on the edge of Parkdale. It was the perfect location — rent was affordable and it was near sizeable segments of the city’s design and art communities.

But, as owner Raymond Wong points out, the area is evolving. While it is not as bad as it once was — the stores, hotels and restaurants, like the people, are changing — gone are many of the artists and disenfranchised who made the community what it was. When Welter first moved to the neighbourhood, they saw first-hand the struggles and sadness that many in the community faced day-to-day. Now, Raymond wonders what has become of so many of those who once called Parkdale home and can no longer find the room or acceptance to live their lives there.

But he remains hopeful and is encouraged by the efforts of organizations like PARC and is glad to be able to have helped in his small way.

In fact, Welter has had to move recently as well — the building they were in is being replaced by apartments. Since July, they’ve switched their previous address for a new location in the east end.

Eventually Raymond would like to retire — maybe travel, go back to fine art printing on a small scale, or even return to the pottery he’s let lapse for far too long — but for now he is excited by their move and the prospects it holds for them. Change can be exciting, even if it means a lot of hard work.

It has now been nearly two months since their move and there is still some painting to be finished and additions to a mezzanine, but for now, it’s back to business as usual.

*(profile continued on next page)*

# Welter Studio (*continued*)

TO SEE WELTER STUDIO INC.'S WORK — PLEASE VISIT THEM ONLINE AT [WWW.WELTERSTUDIO.COM](http://WWW.WELTERSTUDIO.COM), OR DROP BY 1 DEFRIES STREET, TORONTO  
TEL: 416 531-7449 | [WELTER@BELLNET.CA](mailto:WELTER@BELLNET.CA)



Well-known in the graphic design community, Welter Studio has been ably serving satisfied customers for over 25 years, and has yet to come across a printing job they couldn't fulfill.

“Welter Studio really cares about the quality of their work. They pay attention to detail, go out of their way to accommodate the project and are never afraid to raise issues or offer suggestions to help us get the most for our dollar.”

— Andrew Arntfield, President & Creative Director, Field Day Inc.

With three presses, Welter Studio Inc. provides high quality digital and litho/offset commercial print services with a fast turn-around and at a competitive price — regardless of quantity.

They are capable of producing a wide range of products and business collateral from stationery to posters to brochures and flyers to annual reports, newsletters, books and magazines and much more.

They also offer specialized print services including extra thick cover stock, die cutting, foil stamping, thermo and steel engraving, raised and spot uv coating, embossing, metallic and special inks, and printable vinyl.

OPPOSITE: A range of projects printed by Welter Studio Inc.



# Call to Action

— HOW TO GET INVOLVED

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THOSE WHO SUPPORT US. IT IS ONLY WITH THEIR HELP THAT OUR ENDEAVOURS ARE AN OVERWHELMING SUCCESS.



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Jackie Siddall  
GRAPHIC & INFORMATION DESIGN



GLADSTONE  
HOTEL

Lightning

PARKDALE-LIBERTY  
THE VILLAGER

**WHAT BEGAN** as a patchwork job by a few graphic designers has turned into a much larger effort on the shoulders of many more people from many different backgrounds. We are always on the lookout for new committee members, volunteers, donors, ideas and other resources. If you can, please help us help the homeless. **TO DONATE OR SPONSOR** For more information on becoming a donor or to sponsor our event, please visit our web site or contact us at [info@designhopetoronto.ca](mailto:info@designhopetoronto.ca). **TO VOLUNTEER** We are always seeking volunteers to assist with planning leading up to our event, as well as helping out the night of. For more information on volunteering, please visit our web site or contact us at [info@designhopetoronto.ca](mailto:info@designhopetoronto.ca).

## IMPORTANT DATES

> **SEPTEMBER 2 TO 19, 2009** — URBANSCAPE GALLERY PRESENTS: GROUP "MY CITY EXHIBITION" WITH EVA LEWARNE; OPENING RECEPTION: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, FROM 6:00 — 9:00 PM > **SEPTEMBER 24, 2009** PARC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING; AT PARC > **OCTOBER 15, 2009** THE BOULEVARD CLUB GIVES BACK EVENT



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