

# HOME RUN SCHOLARS PROGRAM REPORT 2019





***“I like when we go outside and I like when staff teach us new things. Staff makes us feel good about ourselves.”***

**-HRS Participant**

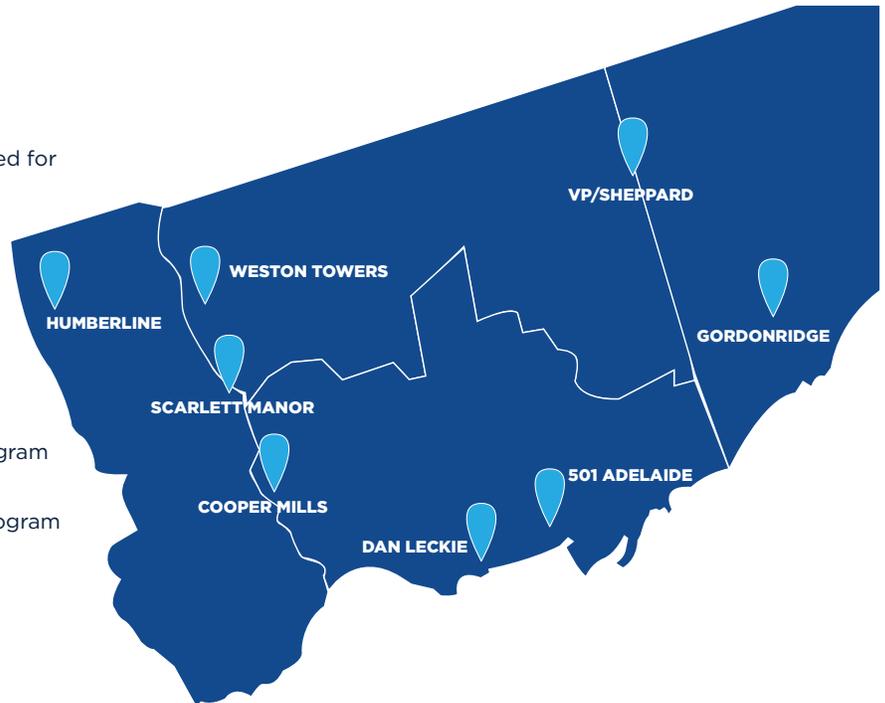
**200**

**Children aged 6-12 participated in the program**

# Program Map

The Home Run Scholars program took place in the following Toronto Community Housing buildings in 2019:

- 6** Professional Development days were hosted for staff throughout the year
- 8** TCHC Sites ran the program
- 23** Clinics were hosted at sites exposing participants to a variety of new skills and experiences
- 28** Staff supported the program
- 200** Children aged 6-12 participated in the program
- 624** Meals were prepared by children in the program

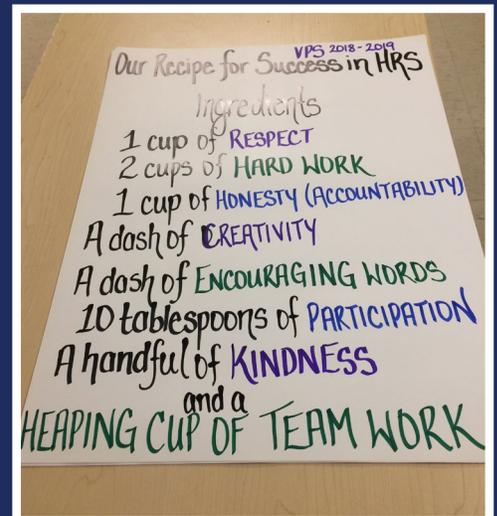


## What is the Home Run Scholars Program?

The Home Run Scholars program is an accessible after-school program for children in grades 1-6 aimed at improving academic performance, enhancing physical health and promoting social and emotional well-being. By collaborating with Toronto Community Housing Corporation to implement the program, Jays Care is able to create responsive and tailored programs that meet the needs of children and families in different neighbourhoods across Toronto.

At Home Run Scholars we believe that after-school programs should provide an opportunity for every child to:

- 🏆 Work and play with others
- 🏆 Develop strong and lasting relationships with peers and staff
- 🏆 Learn new skills and improve existing ones
- 🏆 Learn more about themselves, their abilities, their limitations, and their potential
- 🏆 Learn to be a contributing member of the group and of the community
- 🏆 Learn about the assets and challenges that exist within their community
- 🏆 Develop the skills required to see obstacles and design solutions to overcome them
- 🏆 Develop self-confidence and resilience as a leader



# Why Does the Home Run Scholars Program Exist?

In 2011, the TDSB Student Census key findings in underserved communities found that many students struggle academically, lack adult support after-school, seldom participate in sports and recreation outside of school and spend more time on TV and/or computer games. As a result the Board advocated for funding for critical after school programs that work to help level the playing field.

Toronto Community Housing Corporation has 2,100 buildings across the city of Toronto and more than 41,000 children aged 6 to 12 living in TCHC buildings. Many of them attend schools across the city that do not have after-school programs, and others attend schools with programs that are too expensive. As such, TCHC and Jays Care Foundation partnered to proudly offer Home Run Scholars in 8 TCHC buildings in 2018-2019.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Children and youth who have positive mentors are 4 times more likely to give back to their community. According to a study conducted by Boston Consulting, 90% of at-risk youth who had a mentor wanted to become a mentor themselves and were 55% more likely to enroll in college later on. Children and youth who had a mentor were 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking. Children and youth with a mentor are more likely to participate regularly in sports and activities (67% of at-risk youth with mentors compared to 37% of those without)

Source: Bruce, Mary and Bridgeland, John (2014). The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring. Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises with Hart Research Associates for MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.



# What is the Impact of the Program?

We conducted pre-post surveys with participants and parents as well as interviews with parents to better understand the impact of the program and ways we could enhance the quality of the experience for children and families. Here is what they said:

**“My daughter has become more confident in cooking and trying new things in the kitchen”**

**- HRS Parent**



**80%**  
of participants reported feeling better about themselves as a result of the program.



**“Her reading skills have been getting better, she has made new friends... is excited and looks forward to going to program”**

**-HRS Parent**



**75%**  
of participants reported they play more sports and activities than they do at home as a result of the program.



**70%**  
of participants reported that they are performing better at school as a result of the program.



**“Since being a part of the program he has come out of his shell and feels very comfortable in the space”**

**-HRS Parent**



“ They are very excited about learning to cook for their peers. And come home excited about what they had prepared. ”

- HRS Parent



87%

of participants reported feeling more confident in themselves as a result of the program.



“ Home Run Scholars has provided my grandson with a safe place to go after school. ”

-HRS Guardian



70%

of participants reported that they improved their skills and confidence in preparing healthy food options.



70%

of participants reported feeling more confident when completing their homework as a result of the program.



“ He is more social and doesn't want to just stay alone anymore... his behaviour is better. ”

-HRS Parent



## What Are the Goals of the Program?

Across all Home Run Scholars sites, the program aims to achieve the following key objectives:



### INCREASE INTEREST IN PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**DID YOU KNOW?** Children from low-income households are 25% less likely to participate in sport than a child from an average income household? This tells us that there are some major barriers that need to be addressed so kids can participating in sport.



### INCREASE IN SOCIAL SKILLS (TEAMWORK/COMMUNICATION)

**DID YOU KNOW?** Sport and play helps children develop social skills, including communication, conflict resolution, and co-operation that are essential for success in peer relationships, school and work environments? This tells us that sport and play is essential to helping children and youth to develop their skills and be successful in and out of the classroom.



### INCREASE THE NUMBER OF POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS EACH CHILD HAS

**DID YOU KNOW?** Children in low-income neighbourhoods have fewer emotional, mental, and physical support systems and parents struggling to meet their children's basic needs are often unable to afford activities that promote social skills? This tells us that providing programs that contribute to healthy social networks are important for children's healthy development.

**“I noticed many, many changes: He is more social and doesn't want to stay alone anymore; he is more on top of his homework; He likes a lot of new foods; his behaviour is better.”**

**- HRS Parent**



## How is the Program Unique?



**The program is barrier free for families –** To make sure the program is fully accessible for all families Home Run Scholars is offered for only \$15 per child and held in multiple locations across the city. The program also provides a healthy meal each night that complements the focus on healthy, active lifestyles.



**Staff are hired, trained and developed locally –** To make sure that kids in Home Run Scholars create lasting relationships with mentors who they can relate to, we concentrate on hiring youth and young adults from the communities where we work. This means kids see themselves represented in their leaders, and that they are surrounded by local role models.



**Staff participate in robust training and on-going professional development –** Staff participate in a week-long on-boarding that enhances their skills and confidence in program planning, promoting positive behaviours, de-escalating conflict, and creating trauma-informed spaces. After the program launches, staff participate in one evening of Professional Development each month to further enhance their skills and work as a larger team to address issues and creatively enhance their programs.



**Teams of participants make a healthy meal for the entire group each night –** At Home Run Scholars sites, kids not only get a healthy snack and meal, they also get the opportunity to help create it! In kitchens all across the city kids have been learning about the nutritional benefits of food and how to prepare meals in a fun and affordable way. Small teams of participants work with our nutrition staff each night to prepare a meal for the larger group. Once prepared, participants present what the meal is and some interesting facts about the food used to prepare it.



**Monthly Challenges –** Throughout the year, sites are tasked with working together on a series of challenges that encourage teamwork and creativity. This year these challenges included: plant an herb garden challenges, movie making challenges, banner challenges, mini neighborhood diorama challenges, and create a site newsletter challenges.



**Exciting Clinics, Big Events and Celebrations –** In order to keep programs varied and as engaging as possible, the program includes many additional fun clinics, events, and celebrations for sites. Participants got a chance to learn about and pet different exotic animals, work on solving mysteries through science and improve their skills in various sporting activities through a wide range of specialized clinics offered at their sites. The program also provided a chance for participants to visit Rogers Centre for the Annual Snowball (a fun indoor carnival), a Cook-Off (four of the best teams of junior cooks compete in a MasterChef style cooking competition) and a Big Closing Event (hosted for 4 sites that celebrate the incredible accomplishments of participants and staff). To conclude the program, staff celebrated at the end of program staff celebration with awards and a trip to an amusement park for a job well done!

# Home Run Scholars Staff

With 28 phenomenal staff, it's hard to recognize just one of them for their incredible dedication and impact on participants. That's why we host an annual Home Run Scholars staff gala where many staff are recognized for their unique contributions. At the gala two additional important things happened:

## 1. WE IDENTIFIED A HALL OF FAME WINNER.

This is a staff member who has gone above and beyond each day of the program and through their efforts, dedication and hard work, they have proven to be a formidable role model for their peers. This year, the Hall of Fame Winner was Shanyah Mark. It was Shanyah's first year as a staff member in the program and she quickly earned the reputation of "All-Star" for her creativity, ability to connect with all participants, positive attitude and her incredible work ethic. Shanyah was such an incredible asset to the program and to the team that she joined Jays Care and Toronto Community Housing for another four month work experience as a Camp Director in our Rookie League program!



## 2. WE COLLECTED FEEDBACK FROM STAFF USING ANONYMOUS SURVEYS.

Here is some of that feedback:

- 100 % of staff reported they have increased their confidence to lead and facilitate programming for children and youth.
- 77% of staff reported they built deeper positive connections with children in their program.
- 86% of staff observed that participants had increased their knowledge of how to cook healthy food options.
- 71% of staff reported seeing increased enthusiasm in participants for being physically active.

“As an HRS staff I have developed skills such as patience and courage when it comes to leading program games. I have learned that even though we are older than the kids and our minds are very different we still all were a kid at a point in life and we know how to get a child's attention and how to keep them focused. I also learned how to bond with kids whether it's with homework or rec time or even lunch table conversations. I have learned to expand on all of the skills.”

- HRS Staff

“My skills as an aspiring youth educator have been improved thanks to the Home Run Scholars program. With the shortly allotted 3 hours a day, I found more time than I thought I'd have to help out the kids and facilitate.”

- HRS Staff

“The cooking program was very successful, committing one hour to each section of the program provided great structure.”

- HRS Staff

“I learned how to be a better leader, this includes leading children in the program as well as my other staff. I also learned to be more patient as there were many times where I had to be patient with the participants in different situations. All in all, HRS was beneficial to help me grow as a person and staff.”

- HRS Staff

## SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to everyone who makes the Home Run Scholars program possible:

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