

# SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM REPORT



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**SUMMER 2024**

The Victoria Youth Empowerment Society

Prepared for The Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee



The Summer Opportunities Program (SOP) is a fun and engaging program that offers recreational, social and education activities for youth. It is offered throughout July and August and operates out of the Alliance Club drop in centre in VYES' downtown location. The program is coordinated through the SOP staff and this year worked closely with the Wellness program to offer a broader range of programming.

The Summer Opportunities Program allows the Victoria Youth Empowerment Society (YES) to offer preventative programming by addressing certain needs within the community which include: youth coming downtown in the summer seeking peer groups which can lead to unhealthy peer relationships, a lack of support being available for youth over the summer and the cost of summer activities which are becoming a significant barrier for families dealing within economic challenges.

SOP addresses these gaps by offering free recreational and social activities throughout the summer in an environment that also offers mental health supports and intervention services. This ensures that if a youth begins to destabilize or engage in unhealthy patterns of behaviours, our wrap-around service model can identify action steps and put supports in place.

This program allows youth to have access to activities that they would otherwise not be able to afford, and as such creates positive opportunities for them to engage with peers while being supported by the SOP youth worker.

# S O P O U T C O M E S

**Number of Youth Who Participated In 2024 Summer Opportunities: 103**

**Average Number of Youth Who Participated Each Week: 22**

**Number of Youth Who Identified an outcome of  
Improved Mental Health: 81**

**Number of Community Connections Made: 44**

## *Intended Outcomes for Summer Opportunities Program*

<b>OUTCOMES CORRELATED TO EVALUATION FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>NUMBER OF YOUTH*</b>
Youth experience an increase in healthy activities	103 Youth
Youth experience improved emotional well-being and coping strategies	81 Youth
Youth experienced positive peer and mentor relationships over the summer	44 Youth

Youth may experience more than one outcome\*

*Evaluation frameworks include spreadsheets that track the number of youth participants, feedback forms that corresponded to outcome measures and the tracking of community connections made on behalf of youth.*



SOP Youth Worker and Alliance Club staff receiving donations from a community member

Throughout the summer, our Summer Opportunities Worker provided over 30 unique opportunities for youth to participate in healthy recreational activities. These activities allowed them to develop life skills while also ensuring they were connected to services throughout the summer. 103 youths attended SOP programming and were regular participants of the activities. Although there were less overall youth than last year, the youth who did engage this year had several positive outcomes. On average, 41 meals were provided to youth per week. Similar to last year, SOP recognized that food related activities would meet some basic needs around hunger, but also are an opportunity to make connections. SOP staff offered approximately 44 referrals to support youth with community resources over the summer. The most common were the following: The Kiwanis Emergency Youth Shelter, Sanctuary, and the Foundry Youth Clinic.

There was a good mix of art, recreation, food and other activities this year. This included art projects such as tie-dye t-shirts, tote bag painting and sticker making. For recreation, there was swimming, soccer and other outings to local Victoria sites like the Bug Zoo, Board Game Cafe and Butterfly Gardens. Our SOP staff also taught yoga, hosted a manicure event and an amazing talent show. As needed, the SOP youth worker was flexible and adapted activities to meet the interests and needs of the youth. This flexibility looked like adjusting the activity to suit their interests, as well as adjusting activity time frames. For example, many youth enjoyed the art activities, and so our SOP worker would leave out the projects day to day and youth often chose to keep working on those rather than going on an outing.

This program is popular and we begin getting phone calls and emails about it beginning in May as youth look forward to the summer offerings and knowing there is a safe and welcoming space for them. Dawn, our SOP staff, is in her third year of the program and has a kind and engaging way that encourages and welcomes participation. She inspires creativity and cooperation through her respectful and joyful presence. The consistent feedback from the youth was a sense of feeling included and that the activities were planned for them.

A highlight from the SOP this year was the talent show. This is an area of vulnerability for many youth and some were hesitant at the beginning, but staff and youth created some guidelines to ensure that it was a safe and respectful space. As such, several youth showed up and shared their talents. This included music, a magic show, poetry and storytelling. It was incredible to see some of the shy youth step forward. Although there was lots of food to celebrate, the best outcomes were the big smiles and increased confidence that shone brightly. This is a reminder to our team that creating these opportunities truly does make a difference in the lives of the youth.

## SOP Schedule July 29 - Aug. 1

Monday  
Board  
Game Cafe  
Outing



Tuesday  
Inside Out 2  
Movie  
Outing



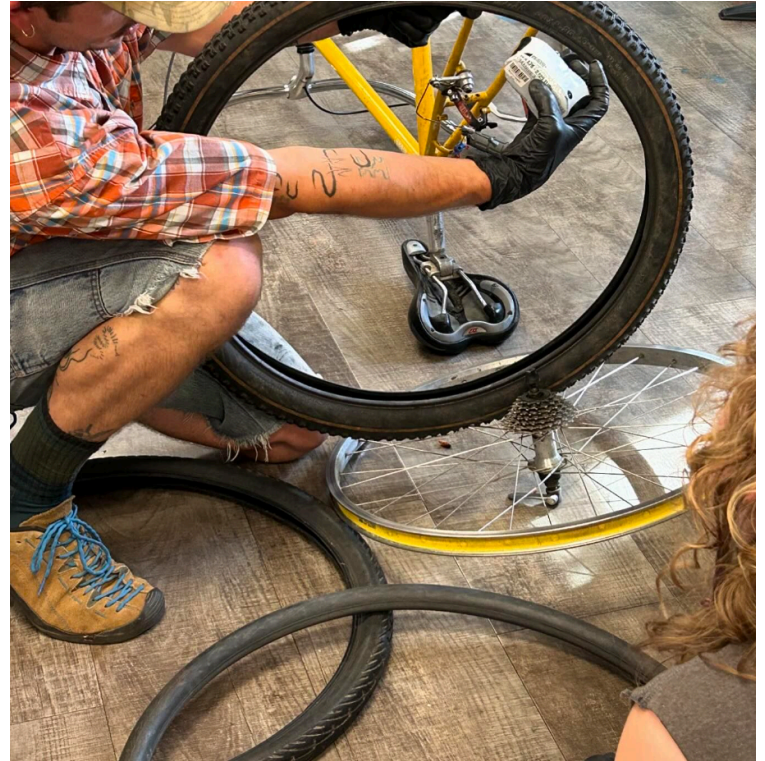
Wednesday  
Worms n' Dirt  
Pudding Cups



Thursday  
Bike Repair  
Workshop



Example of an SOP Week



Bike repair workshop

VYES is grateful to the Victoria Youth Family Court Youth Justice Committee for the grant that allowed us to offer the popular Summer Opportunities Program this year. SOP focuses on youth do not destabilize over the summer, providing much needed prevention programming for youth in the downtown core.

### Contact Information

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