

# OPEN STREETS TO

**NEWSLETTER**  
**August 18th 2017**



WE ARE NOW 2 DAYS AWAY! Are you ready to play in the streets? Check out this edition of OSTO News to see what's in store

# WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE

We interviewed those involved with Open Streets TO to find out what Open Streets means to them, how they came to be involved, and what YOU can expect this year!! Read through to learn more about what these dynamic two days of fun are all about!

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# PROGRAMMING PARTNER PROFILE: COME ALIVE OUTSIDE

Interview with Sarah Walker, Executive Director

## 1) So just to start off, could you please just give a bit of background about yourself, Come Alive Outside, and how you came to be involved in Open Streets TO.

Come Alive Outside is an incorporated nonprofit in Canada and a 501c3 registered charity in the U.S. that works closely with partners in the landscape profession in order to get people off the couch and back outside in communities across North America! Our mission is to inspire collaborative community systems that create the awareness, intention and opportunity for people to live healthier lives outside.

I am currently the Executive Director of CAO, but have been involved in the organization for a few years. I'm from Prince Edward County and my love of connecting people to nature is rooted in a childhood filled with exploring the fields and forests of rural Ontario. I'm currently a PhD student at Colorado State University studying conservation, focused on the intrinsic link between health communities and healthy environments.

We've been running our Green Street Challenge for the past few years, but with the support of our sponsor, Cub Cadet, we were able to really expand the program this year. We knew we wanted to partner with the Landscape Company, Urban Garden in Toronto but we needed to find the right partner to make it happen! Open Streets TO is an obvious partner for us because our missions align so closely. We both believe in the importance of outdoor active play and the power of transforming streets into places for play and community!

## 2) Come Alive Outside is all about encouraging people to be active and engaged in outdoor spaces. What do you feel the benefits of these programs are, and how does Open Streets TO fit?

The work that Come Alive Outside does is strongly rooted in our “why” and our “why” comes from the large body of research that highlights an impending health crisis. For example, in 2005, the New England Journal of Medicine published a study that made a striking statement. The article read that “for the first time in two centuries, the current generation of children in America may have a shorter life expectancy than their parents”. Researchers linked these findings on increasing rates of childhood obesity and indoor sedentary lifestyles. Today, we have reached a point where the average North American child spends on average, 7.5 hours a day inside in front of a screen. The study concluded that if this trend continues, the consequences on the health of our communities, both rural and urban, would be detrimental. Since that study was published, hundreds of studies have documented that increasing children's time spent in nature is a strategy to combat these concerns. Research shows that raising our kids outside builds a generation that is healthier (both physically and mentally), does better in school, has stronger social relationships and has a deeper sense of environmental stewardship (Chawla, 2015). While getting more kids outside seems to be a simple solution to this impending health crisis, increasing access to green spaces is both a complicated and critical piece of this solution. With more than 80% of North America's population living in urban communities, only conserving our natural spaces, while important, is not enough.



Open Streets TO fits in because our definition of “nature” is much larger than a provincial park or conservation area. We love to use the term “nearby nature” and that means connecting to nature that’s most accessible to you. That can mean climbing a tree on the side of the street, watching ants crawling up through a crack in the sidewalk and or simply sitting on a bench underneath a tree in your local park. Open Streets TO gets people outside, connects communities together and encourages people to get active in their own communities! We need more programs like this if we’re going to be able to reverse the trend of sedentary lifestyles in both urban and rural communities.

### **3) It sounds like you have some exciting activities planned this year! Do you mind letting participants know what to look forward to?**

We’re wrapping up our Green Street Challenge for the year in Canada! The Green Street Challenge creates an opportunity for children and families to play outside and enjoy all the benefits that community green spaces have to offer. With childhood obesity and mental illness on the rise, time spent outside getting active and connecting to nature has never been so important! The Green Street challenge is a way for communities to make a statement and celebrate outdoor play and green spaces as essential ingredients to the well-being of our society. We are working in 11 communities this summer, and after Toronto, we still have Edmonton and London to go! We also have a program called the Design Challenge where we bring landscape design students from different colleges together to partner with an elementary school and work with their students to design a new outdoor learning space. We’ll be running two of the design challenges in Ontario this fall, one East of the GTA and one West of the GTA. 2017 has been a year of growth for CAO! We have been piloting several new community programs in Rutland, Vermont that focus on farm to school education, exploring local green spaces and a walking challenge that gets families and businesses outside and active! We are working to bring those programs to communities in Ontario in the next few years.





**1) So just to start off, could you please give a bit of background about yourself, Toronto Public Health, activeTO, and how you came to be involved with Open Streets TO.**

Hi, my name is Lyndsey Matsumura and I am a health promotion specialist for Toronto Public Health. Physical activity has always been important to me, and it's something I champion both personally and professionally. When I'm not promoting physical activity during the day, I also teach spin classes, run, and I am an avid Jays fan.

About a year ago, Toronto Public Health relaunched the activeTO campaign with a goal to improve physical activity levels amongst Torontonians, and reduce sedentary behaviours that increase the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Simply put – we want to get people away from their screens, to sit less and to move more. Small changes to lifestyles can make big differences.

We often hear that time is one of the biggest barriers to active living and that is why we focus on providing simple ideas to add physical activity during your day. Our website, [activeTO.ca](https://activeTO.ca), has simple and fun ideas to get you moving every day. You'll find a list of community TO events, easy tips on staying active and cycle and trail maps to discover the city or for your active commute and family friendly activities.

**2) What does Open Streets TO mean to you, and how does this program complement or support the goals of Active TO?**

When I think of Open Streets, I think of the concepts behind an Active City, the Built Environment, and Community Engagement. Open Streets encourages participation in physical activity and healthy recreation, and it aligns perfectly with what we are trying to achieve with our activeTO campaign, which is to promote free and accessible physical activity for all.

**3) Do you mind sharing some of the activities Toronto Public Health has planned for participants during Open Streets TO?**

This year, we will be having an activeTO photo booth where people can show how they are physically active, family friendly games, and Zumba demonstrations from our friends at Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

**4) Finally, what are you the most excited for this year?**

We are excited to get people moving and engaged and to provide easy ideas to add physical activity to your day.



# VOLUNTEER PROFILE: NICOLAS BELLO

## 1) So just to start off, could you please just give a bit of background about yourself and how you came to be involved in Open Streets TO as a volunteer.

I've been an active volunteer for over 10 years with the City of Toronto Greeter Program, the Toronto Trailblazers tandem cycling club for blind/visually impaired, and Woodgreen English Conversation Circles.

I came from Chile to Canada as an infant and fell in love with Toronto. My volunteer work is a way of giving back to the community. Helping with Open Streets again this year was an easy decision.

## 2) What does Open Streets TO mean to you and what do you like most about the program?

It means a way to show residents that streets are not just for cars. They can adapt and change as required by Toronto's citizens. I like seeing people out enjoying their city in a whole new way.

## 3) What is your favourite part about volunteering?

My favourite part of volunteering is watching people interact with each other. Spontaneous dancing, games, etc were just some of the highlights from last year.

## 4) Finally, what are you the most excited for this year

I'm excited for the continued support and awareness with regards to Open Streets. It feels like the event has a very positive impact on all those that come out to explore the various offerings.



# PROGRAMMING PARTNER PROFILE: RU A PLANNER?

Interview with Danille Culp, RPGSA President, CO-Lead

## 1) So just to start off, could you please just give a bit of background about yourself and RU a Planner?

My name is Danielle Culp and I am a co-lead of the RU a Planner Initiative. Olivia Magalhaes, Amanda Mackaay, and Jennifer Le are also co-leaders of the RU a Planner team. RU a Planner is a joint initiative between Ryerson's Urban Development (MPI) students and the City of Toronto. The goal of RU a Planner is to empower students to realize their capacity to change the cities in which they live. We accomplish this through an interactive presentation and various activities and discussions that kick-start this thinking.

## 2) That's great you guys are students and getting that visibility! What motivated you to get involved with Open Streets TO?

As urban planning students, we really resonate with using streets to connect people and the landscape and to support pedestrian friendly ways of engaging, so it was a no brainer for us to get on board. Also, the fact that Open Streets connects just outside the doorstep of Ryerson Campus really helps us share our knowledge and outreach with a wider audience to get not just students but children, youth and families engaging with urban planning. Additionally, we wanted to be able to test out some of the great ideas we have for our RU a Planner workshops and Conference set to take place this year.

## 3) It sounds like you have some great activities planned this year, do you mind sharing some of them and what participants have to look forward to?

We really want to get people thinking about how they enjoy their City and how they can play an active role in shaping a City they can live, work and play in. We plan to get people thinking about these things by asking key questions related to what they love and what they would like to see more of in their city by using a simple, child-friendly staple of sidewalk chalk and the pavement as a canvas to allow people to share their responses through words and/or pictures/drawings. The purpose of this activity is to spark conversation about urban planning.

## 4) Finally, what does Open Streets TO mean to you and what are you the most excited for this year?

Open Streets TO means reducing barriers to accessing and engaging with great initiatives and people. In our opinion, it is all about building a better city together for all ages and abilities! We are really excited to host the first RU a Planner Conference this year and to take part in Open Streets TO!



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Interview with Catriona Moggach, OSTO Team Member

Hi, I'm Catriona, part of the Open Streets TO Team! I've been putting together these newsletters, so thought it was about time I turned the tables and share my thoughts on what Open Streets is all about!

**So just to start off, could you please just give a bit of background about yourself, and how you came to be involved in Open Streets TO.**

I have always been interested in Open Streets Programs! As an avid walker, I love exploring the city- in fact, I think it's the best way to get to know a place, and walking definitely helped me find my way around Toronto! I moved here two years ago to start my Master's degree in Urban Planning at Ryerson. I was a bit nervous coming to the city, but as soon as I got to know it better through things like walking, or through my studies, Toronto quickly felt like home!

I have background experience in youth engagement and believe they have the power and capacity to influence the way cities are shaped. Open Streets TO is definitely a great program for kids and youth, as it allows them to experience Toronto in new ways, and see it from a new perspective. I think this goes for all people who attend, but it's pretty magical to see the excitement, energy, and how spaces are used. When I heard about an opportunity with Open Streets TO this year, I jumped on board and have been having a blast helping where I can- like putting together these newsletters!

**What does Open Streets TO mean to you? And what are you the most excited for this year!**

Being involved this year has been a really special experience so far. Through compiling these newsletters, I've gotten to speak with some of the amazing people who are involved with making Open Streets TO happen, and hear their stories about Open Streets means to them! As they shared, Open Streets TO is not stagnant: it's always moving and evolving. It's about creating a place and space where everyone is welcome. It's about encouraging people to get outside, explore their city, and connect to their neighbourhoods. It's about developing a platform for active transportation, and for learning all about what the city has to offer. Open Streets TO brings these things together, and brings people all together, by being open to it!

So to me, and through this experience, Open Streets TO means exactly what it says: Streets are open!! They are open to all the possibilities and potential that accompanies city living, and city life. Open Streets TO can take on so many different meanings depending on the diverse experiences, backgrounds, and relations of individuals who use them. Our city streets guide us around our cities, so it seems only natural that people should be able to use them in ways that are safe, inclusive, and that make their day better! Open Streets TO is a way of viewing the city beyond the daily traffic. I'm excited for this Sunday to see Open Streets TO in action, and to see the smiles on kids' faces as they experience all the great things going on!

**THANKS FOR STAYING TUNED!  
SEE YOU ON SUNDAY! :)**





Don't miss out on the fun! Skip on over to  
<https://www.openstreetsto.org>  
to learn more!

Want to plan your route? Check out  
<https://www.openstreetsto.org/activity-hubs>  
for a breakdown of our activity hubs!



**SEE YOU AUGUST 20th AND SEPTEMBER 17th 2017  
for Toronto's BIGGEST Street Party**