

# OPEN STREETS TO

**NEWSLETTER**  
**August 3rd 2017**



Check it out for updates on what you can look forward to at Open Streets TO this year!

# 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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# Working Group Member Profile: Alyssa Bird

## 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.

I got involved in Open Streets TO at the very beginning. I was working at 8 80 Cities and Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam was the only political champion at the time. The future for Toronto that we envisioned through the program was and is still a future I believe in. I was hooked from the start.

## 2) What does Open Streets TO mean to you? And what is your favourite part of the day/program?

Open Streets TO, to me, is a glimpse into how human a city can be. Open Streets TO offers the opportunity for children to stretch their legs on the two-wheeler they're learning to ride, while their parents chat with neighbours they haven't seen in a while. People feel safe and welcome. They smile. That glimpse into the future is my favourite part.

## 3) Being part of Open Streets from the start, can you please share a bit about how the program has evolved through the years

It's quite incredible how the program has evolved from the beginning. In 2014, there was a lot of concern that Open Streets TO would bring the city to a halt because we were closing some of our most iconic streets. We had some very vocal critics. Today, our attendance continues to grow and we have far more champions who are helping to make the program the best it can be.

## 4) Finally, what are you most excited for this year in particular?

This year, we're planning a special Activity Hub at Yonge and Bloor that's focusing on celebrating diversity in our city through dance. It's going to be such a blast! So many different cultures of the world will be represented and each is giving a lesson for the audience to participate in the dances.



# PROGRAMMING PARTNER: THE 519

Interview with Curran Stikuts Community Organizer

## 1) Hey Curran, could you please just give a bit of background about yourself, the 519, and how you came to be involved in Open Streets TO.

The 519 is a City of Toronto Agency that is committed to the health, happiness, and full participation of the LGBTQ community and beyond. We strive to make a real difference in people's lives, while working to promote inclusion, understanding and respect.

This is The 519's fourth year participating in Open Streets and my second as hub leader for the Yonge-Wellesley hub! Last year was a great experience. It was wonderful to see so many folks out on a Sunday morning, exploring their city and trying out new things. As one of The 519's community organizers, I engage with members of our communities and our partners to work together to find solutions to local problems. A key issue for the Church/Yonge/Wellesley neighbourhood is a lack of public space. I love that Open Streets addresses this issue head-on by showing Toronto what can happen when people come together and turn their streets into truly public, accessible space.

## 2) The 519 has a strong mandate of promoting inclusion and accessibility, how do you think this plays out during Open Streets TO?

Space is at the heart of inclusion and accessibility. We need space for different communities to come together, to organize, to work towards common goals and new ways of experiencing the world around them. From encountering a new neighbourhood or community group, to making new friends through a spontaneous dance party, Open Streets creates unique spaces for inclusion and accessibility to be put into practice.



### 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 sure do! We'll have a button-making station for folks to make their own or to grab some great queer +trans themed buttons. We'll also have a basketball net set up, along with a soccer net. Of course, we'll also have information about the services and programmes we provide at The 519.

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

I'm an avid walker – my daily commute is about 8k and I walk home most days. As a life-long Torontonian, it amazes me that I can still find something new or interesting almost every day. Open Streets taps into the innate potential that some of our busiest streetscapes have to connect Torontonians to each other and to their city. By creating these opportunities for engagement and recreation, Open Streets helps make this giant city seem a little smaller and a lot friendlier. I can't think of anything more meaningful than that. And just like last year, I'm excited to see everyone out on the street, getting active and having fun!



**TOGETHER**

IMPACT THROUGH  
COMMUNITY



Happy Birthday Ontario! This year at Open Streets TO we're celebrating Ontario's 150th birthday. How? Through dance! We're hosting a special Activity Hub at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor that will celebrate the multiculturalism of our province. We'll have back to back dance performances from 10am-2pm with mini lessons for the audience to participate in. Drop by on both August 20 & September 17th to join in the fun.

Check out: <https://www.openstreetsto.org/ontario-150-hub>

ONTARIO  
150

# CITY DIVISION PROFILE: Municipal Licensing & Standards

Interview with Mary Lou Leiher, Program Manager,  
Partnerships & Marketing, Toronto Animal Services

## 1) Could you please give a bit of background about yourself, Toronto Animal Services within City of Toronto's Municipal Licensing & Standards Division, and how you came to be involved with Open Streets TO.

Municipal Licensing and Standards is participating as a whole division. Municipal Licensing and Standards contributes to the safety, vibrancy and maintenance of our communities by being a leader in the professional delivery of bylaw enforcement, administration and animal care services to the City of Toronto.

Toronto Animal Services (TAS) encourages safe and enjoyable communities for both people and pets. TAS promotes responsible pet ownership, encourages voluntary compliance with animal-related laws, promotes pet adoption and pet licensing and microchipping.

We were approached by the organizer of Open Streets TO and are happy to be participating for the first time.

## 2) Building off that, what does Open Streets TO mean to you? And what are you looking forward to the most?

Because this is our first year participating, we are excited to see what unfolds!

## 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 will be hosting a dog walk at 12 noon from the Bloor and Sherbourne Hub to the Bloor and Spadina Hub! We are working on some fun activities to share at the other location as well, such as trying out juggling our hula hooping.

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

We are excited to have the opportunity to be part of this great event, and have the ability to interact with so many people!



## 1) So just to start off, could you please tell us a bit about your self and what led you to volunteer with Open Streets TO!

I've been running, cycling, and walking the streets of Toronto since moving here in 2012. I love exploring new neighbourhoods, attending community festivals, and picnicking in parks. I studied urban planning at U of T and learned about many organizations doing amazing work for our city, including 8 80 Cities. When I heard about the Open Streets initiative, I was keen to get involved. I saw video clips of the extensive Ciclovias taking place in other areas of the world, like in Bogota, and couldn't help but feel excited at the thought of bringing this event to our community. Walking, cycling, and running through Toronto can be fun as it is, but nowhere near as inviting, special, or safe as taking cars out of the picture and giving the entirety of the street to the people. As soon as the call for volunteers went out, I jumped on board!

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

For me, Open Streets TO is about bringing people together from different neighbourhoods and providing a safe, welcoming space for everyone to engage in fun activities that get our bodies moving. I love everything about the program, but if I had to pick a favourite component, I'd say dancing in the street. Joining a group of strangers smiling, laughing, and dancing along to live bands in the middle of Bloor Street is a wonderfully positive feeling.



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

My favourite part about volunteering is seeing the joy the event brings children. It's a unique experience to step or roll throughout a space typically reserved for cars, especially when that space is filled with games, music, and thousands of other people. Watching kids take in the experience and truly play in the streets keeps me coming back as a volunteer year after year.

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

This year I'm most excited to see what new and returning activity hubs are set up along the route, and any impromptu activities that spring up! Though I'll have many tasks and responsibilities during the day, I'll also have some moments to participate in the fun and catch some performances. I'm also hopeful that we'll have even more participants than ever before! The bigger the better :)



Don't miss out on the fun! Dance on over to  
<https://www.openstreetsto.org>  
and get excited!

There's still time left to submit a proposal for an activity hub! If you have an interactive activity you want to share with Toronto, check out  
<https://www.openstreetsto.org/activity-hubs>  
and apply before Sunday, August 13th or September 10th for the next one!

Think this is an awesome event and want to help maximize the fun? Open Streets is also looking for a few more volunteers to help us out!

If this sounds like you, bike on over to  
<https://www.openstreetsto.org/get-involved>  
for more information!

**STAY TUNED FOR MORE NEWSLETTERS**

**SEE YOU AUGUST 20th AND SEPTEMBER 17th 2017  
to dance together in the streets!**