



Building on rural youth assets to develop and maintain a health promotion website

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Rural Youth

- Huron County: 2006 Census
 - population of 59,325
 - population density 17.5 residents per square kilometer (one of the most rural regions in Ontario)
 - Larger proportion of youth 10 – 19 years of age than provincial average.



Rural Youth

- Binge drinking in the past 12 months in youth (12-19 yr)
 - 78.9% (95% CI 61.4 - 96.4) Huron County
 - 57.4% (95% CI 54.6 - 60.2) Provincial average

(Source: 2005 Canadian Community Health Survey Cycle 3.1)
- Between 2000 and 2003 Huron County Youth 12- 24 years of age:
 - 19 deaths (54%) caused by land transport occurrences
 - leading cause of death in this age group
 - age-specific mortality rate
 - 77.2 deaths per 100,000 population in Huron
 - 35.6 deaths per 100,000 for Ontario

(Source: Ontario Mortality Data, Provincial Health Planning Database, Extracted February 1, 2007)



Health Promotion and the Web

- 9/10 Canadian 15-year-old students have access to a home computer (Corbett 2002)
- Health seeking behaviour 3rd most popular activity on the Internet in Canada (after Email and Internet Browsing)
 - Women 54% versus men 41%
 - Fewer men (15- 24 yrs) search for health info on the Internet (25%)
 - After diseases (52%), lifestyle issues (fitness/ diet/ nutrition) is the most popular topic (28%) *Stevenson, 2002*



Challenges for Rural Youth

- Geographical isolation
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of anonymity
- Limited health services for rural youth
- Lack of social/community events & programs (“nothing to do”)





The SPARK Project

□ **Goal**

- To provide at-risk youth with the opportunity and skills to design and implement a web-based intervention, under the guidance of professionals, to serve as a resource centre for reliable information related to alcohol use

□ **Research Objective**

- Can a youth-driven interactive health promotion web site address health inequities particular to rural youth?



- WHATS HAPPENIN
- CURIOUS
- YOUR2CENTS
- GET INVOLVED
- ASK A PRO
- HOME



[local music player](#)
(will open in a new window)

Welcome to
SPARK

SPARK is a local website created by youth from Huron County, Ontario. SPARK connects area youth with local professionals to get the information that is important to you.

We want to know what you think!

If you are having a **crisis**,
please call The Huron Perth Crisis
Intervention Line at **1-888-829-7484**.

**WHATS
HAPPENIN**

CURIOUS?






STICKS & STONES
CLEAR YOUR MIND
USE & ABUSE
HEALTH SENSE
TALK SEX
SMOKE RINGS

**YOUR2CENTS
MESSAGE BOARDS**

**GET
INVOLVED**



Features and content of web site

-  Local health information (**Just Curious**)
-  Access to health professional advice (**Ask a Pro**)
-  Bulletin board to communicate with peers (**Your 2 Cents**)
-  Social events calendar (**What's Happenin'**)
-  Volunteer and job bank (**Get Involved**)



Evaluation

- Descriptive statistics of web site and discussion board use
- Content analysis of web site including:
 - Discussion board messages
 - Topics covered in “Ask a pro”
- Qualitative Data
 - Interviews with youth using the site
 - Exit Interviews with youth hired for Spark
 - Online survey results from youth and service providers
 - Focus groups with community and social service workers
- Use Statistics
 - Number of unique visitors to the site
 - Frequently visited pages



Strengths

- ❑ Increased anonymity supports more frank and honest communication
- ❑ More accessibility to health information
- ❑ Youth-friendly site
 - Genuine voice of youth
 - Youth-to-youth
 - Safe place with open / frank communication
- ❑ Local and relevant information
- ❑ Useful resource for parents



Ongoing issues and suggestions

- ❑ Keep it youth-run and be open
- ❑ Keep site current overall
- ❑ Keep events current
- ❑ More personal stories/ videos
- ❑ Anonymity versus credibility
- ❑ More use of Web 2 technologies



Building on what we learned and
moving forward to meet the
local needs of our community



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A New Spark





Ask a Pro - Q & A

How can you tell if a condom broke? [\[Read the answer\]](#)
Chances of being pregnant? [\[Read the answer\]](#)
Painful intercourse... [\[Read the answer\]](#)

Be a Rebel



Want to be a Rebel? Join us on Facebook and keep up to date with what we're doing...

What's New



SALLY LEARNS HOW THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY TARGETS YOUTH
Sally learns about the deceptive marketing tactics the tobacco industry uses to reach you! [\[Watch the video\]](#)



DON'T GET CAUGHT UP, GET HELP
If you have questions about drinking or drug use... reach out...Get help. [\[Read More\]](#)



STAYING FRIENDS
Being in a relationship can be one of the best, most fulfilling, stressful things you can experience as a teen. [\[Read more\]](#)





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Keeping the site youth-run



Youth Spark Ambassadors

Rebels with a Cause





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Bullying

BULLYING

Being a bully is not helpful. It isn't respectful, or kind, and it certainly isn't admirable.

Bullying does not make you friends. It doesn't up your status or make you seem more cool in the eyes of your peers.

Bullying doesn't help others, it doesn't make your school welcoming, and it doesn't make your home inviting.

But this is what bullying does do: it ruins people. It slashes self-confidence, increases stress, and weakens the mind. It whispers awful, meaningless words to the innocent and kills equality; then it creeps into the thoughts of its victims and strangles liberty.

Bullying stops people from being who they are. It is so destructive.

And yet there is one good thing about bullying, and that is: you have the power to choose whether or not you will take part.

Not just that, but you have the power to choose to stop bullying when you see it. No amount of cruelty around you can ever take freedom of choice away from you. Empower yourself and others. Report bullying and stick up for the underdog.

Remember, life isn't about being popular. It isn't about who eats at the cool table, who went to the party, or who makes the meanest jokes and gets the most laughs.



-Youth can submit content for Spark and be paid for their contributions

- \$30 for an article

-\$30 picture and caption

-\$50 for a video

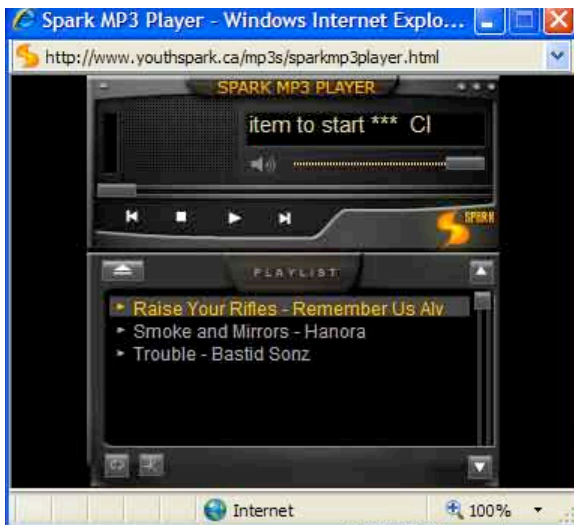




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Keeping it local



Add an Event | Calendar Disclaimer: RSS

YOUTH SPARK EVENTS						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 Week 40	29	30	1 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit Sexual Health Clinics-Huron County Health Unit	2	3 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit	4
5 Week 41	6 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit	7 6:00 PM Mensaji Nintendo Wii Tournament	8 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit Sexual Health Clinics-Huron County Health Unit	9 6:00 PM Hoaxaki Nintendo Wii Tournament	10 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit	11
12 Week 42	13 Health Unit Offices Closed	14	15 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit Sexual Health Clinics-Huron County Health Unit	16 6:00 PM Sussaki Nintendo Wii Tournament	17 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit	18 12:00 PM Rhyth Nintendo Wii Tournament
19 Week 43	20 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit	21 6:00 PM Godeitchi Nintendo Wii Tournament Zurich Nintendo Wii Tournament	22 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit	23 6:00 PM Snelforth Nintendo Wii Tournament	24 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit 8:00 PM London: Feist at S&C	25
26 Week 44	27 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit	28	29 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit 3:30 PM Community Flu Shot Clinic - Goderich 5:55 PM Wingham: Nintendo Wii Tournament	30	31 Health Link-Huron County Health Unit	

Web 2.0 technology & social media



spark Your Questions Answered

Search : **GO**

[Youth Spark Home](#) [Spark QA Home](#) [Ask a Pro](#) [RSS](#)

Will the Pill stop painful periods?

Q Im a fifteen year old girl and last week when i was on my period i experienced unbarable crippling pain in my pelvic and lower back area..so i went to the doctor and they said it was menstrual cramps witch wasnt a big help. and they sent me home.

but i have been talking to people who experienced kind of the same thing and went on the pill and it made them less like that and i made their flow less heavy (i have really heavy flow) and so i got my mom to make an appointment at our family doctor to talk about me going on the pill it is on monday but im nervous it will be embarassing because he is a male doctor what should i do...

A

In response to your crippling cramps: Sometimes it is so hard to be female!! Yes, cramps can be very difficult and take over your whole day! I am glad to hear you spoke with your Mom about your pain and that she has booked you a doctors appointment. You are started on the right path now for sure.

The doctor will discuss with you ways to try to decrease your menstrual pain. You need to actually tell him what the pain is like, when and where you are feeling it. He may choose to start you on a hormonal birth control method to help. Typically, women have a decrease in flow and days of menstruation after starting birth control.This can be a huge help for heavy crampy periods.There are a number of methods for hormonal birth control (which you may recall from health class..) pill, patch, nuvairing and injection - he very well may start you on the pill if that suits your needs best.

As for the male Doctor part. it sounds as though you are feeling uncomfortable telling a 'guy' about such a personal topic. As nurse or a doctor, we talk to either gender about very personal information. The information you tell him is not being judged, just being used to best treat your health concern not anything else. Try not to think about him being a male, just your doctor who is working with you to help you feel better. I have been in your shoes, after the first visit, it is not so awkward

Tagged Under : birth_control, menstrual_cramps, Menstrual_cycles

Posted by **Public Health Nurse** in Birth Control



RSS feed



Blogs



Podcasts



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Use statistics

February 08 – August 08

- **7811** unique visitors to all pages
 - 4573 first time visitors
 - 3238 returning visitors
 - 41.5% of all visitors were returning
- Most visited pages: Share your Spark, Ask a Pro, Healthy Living



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Content Analysis

Ask a Pro questions

- ❑ **Sexual health** – contraception, STIs, first-time experiences
- ❑ Relationships – parental issues
- ❑ Body image – self esteem



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Content Analysis

Submissions and generated content

- Health promotion
- Opportunities and experiences
- Relationships – romantic and friendships



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Where are we going

- Adult/ youth partnership to generate content
- Greater use of web technology
- Development of blog to replace discussion boards
- Promotion, promotion, promotion!



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Challenges

- ❑ Understanding the possibilities
- ❑ Receiving content
- ❑ Health Unit publication process
- ❑ Youth's busy lives



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Conclusions

It fits with a rural environment... well the access issue, the travel, the connecting, the anonymity. I mean there are so many different reasons that this fits.

(Health Unit Staff)



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www.youthspark.ca

Tailoring Online Health Promotion Toolkit

<http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/OHPToolkit>