

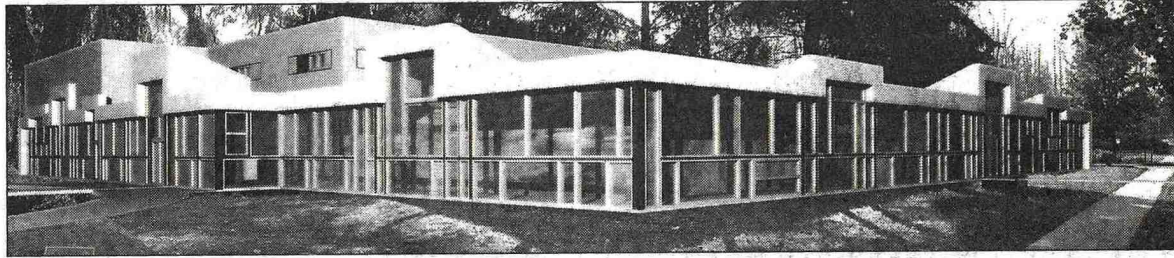
Building a better kids' club

\$4M makeover for centre in at-risk environment

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In a neighbourhood home to the once notorious Galloway Boys gang, expanding a child and youth centre could be a key to steering youth away from crime.

The Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough, which provides services such as mentoring, leadership training and licensed child care, is to undergo a nearly \$4 million makeover next year — an expansion that will add arts, media and dance



An expansion of the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough will add arts and dance studios, and a second floor.

studios, room for new programs and a second floor. Sketches for the 8,500-square-foot expansion — on top of the current 22,260 square feet — show a lot of new windows and a fancy, glass-enclosed walkway around the building.

Last year, the club served 16,000 young people; the goal is to stretch that to 25,000.

The centre caters to children and youth in the Kingston-Galloway area, one of Mayor David Miller's priority communities.

This week, with Miller present, it began a campaign to raise the \$1.5 million more needed for the expansion —

kicked off with a \$30,000 gift from former councillor David Soknacki, who represented the area until 2006 and donated his severance to the project.

The City of Toronto is set to contribute \$1.4 million, and the Youth Challenge Fund (which brings private and government funds together). Jays Care, the Toronto Blue Jays' foundation, is chipping in \$1 million.

The club is a community hub — a vital service, given the problems with which the area has struggled.

"The community centre is a safe haven for young kids," said Ron

Rock, executive director of the club. "Young people are treated with dignity and respect. We work with them and tell them about the disadvantages of being in gangs," Rock said.

The addition is scheduled to be completed in November 2010.

In 2004, a massive police operation busted alleged members of the G-Way or Galloway Boys gang.

Three men are currently standing trial on first-degree murder charges in the death of Brenton Charlton and the attempted murder of Leonard Bell during a drive-by shooting in March 2004.