

Say No to Drugs, Yes to Life

by Shirley Hall

The Drug-Free Marshals of Toronto recently held their 18th annual "Say No to Drugs, Say Yes to Life" Christmas Festival at Nathan Phillips Square in downtown Toronto. It was a day of family fun with Santa and his elves, seasonal and multicultural entertainment, and activities for kids, all with a theme of saying "No" to drugs. Over 2000 people in the community attended, as well as the Honourable Derek Lee, MP for Scarborough-Rouge River and other community leaders.

One of the activities at the festival was an essay contest for children between the ages of 6 and 16. The theme was "Why I Want a

Drug-free Community."

The prizes for the contest were donated by local businesses.

Children from the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough were among entrants who wrote some very interesting and touching essays.

10 year old Tevia Francis won 2nd place in the 10-12 age group with her informative essay on "The Facts on Drugs". She received a \$50 gift card from Chapters bookstore.

Christina Richards, 11, won 3rd place in the 10-12 age group with a touching "Prayer to God." She was awarded two tickets to the Art Gallery of Ontario.

The awards ceremony was held at the Orton Park branch of the Boys and



The Drug-Free Marshals with essay contest winners. From L to R: David Charbonneau, Christina Richards, Tevia Francis and Shirley Hall. David, Shirley's son, has been a Drug-Free Marshal since the age of six.

Girls Club of East Scarborough where Drug-Free Marshals Pat Felske and Shirley Hall presented the girls with certificates and their prizes.

The Drug-Free Marshals

then delivered a short drug education lecture where the children learned what drugs are and the dangers of street drugs.

Drug-Free Marshals, Madison Whitmore and Kingsley Whitmore, both 10 years old, led the children in the "Drug-Free Marshals Pledge" where they promised to remain drug-free for life. All of the children and the Boys and Girls Club supervisors then signed the pledge board and received their own Drug-Free marshals badges and copies of the drug education booklet "The Truth About Drugs."

The Boys and Girls Club

of East Scarborough provides children and youth from birth to 19 and their caregivers social, recreational and educational programs that are designed to enhance their growth, personal development and potential as contributing members of society. The club recently celebrated its 50th anniversary and is proud to have been a United Way member agency since 1956. It is located at Galloway Rd. in Scarborough.

The Drug-Free marshals is a branch of the "Say No to Drugs, Say Yes to Life" campaign sponsored by the

Church of Scientology of Toronto. For 18 years, The Drug-Free marshals have been educating kids on the harmful effects of drugs and providing a peer group to support them in their decision to say "No" to drugs. With escalating violence in our communities, which can be linked to illicit drug use, the Drug-Free Marshals program and how to start an anti-drug group in your community, or to get a free copy of the booklet "The Truth About Drugs", contact Drug-Free Marshals Coordinator, Melanie Dickinson at 416-925-1779