

Big step for Little Community That Could East Scarborough Storefront moves

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The Little Community That Could moved this week and took Ryan Ing, Monica James and thousands of others with it.

Ing, 22, had gone to the East Scarborough Storefront in Morningside Mall looking for something to do. James, 63, came because she and her elderly husband, staying nearby, needed a place of their own.

"These people (we were staying with), they were not treating us very nice," she explained, remembering Storefront staff found the couple a subsidized apartment, a bed and other furniture.

Now learning to use computers through the 35-agency partnership, James has joined the ranks of Storefront volunteers. On Monday, she helped prepare food for visitors at Storefront's new home, a former police station at 480 Lawrence Ave. E.

The new location is the site of the old 43 Division police station, which later became the 42 Division sub-station after a brief closure, and it is complete with still-working lockup and cells. The facility has 7,600 square feet, compared to the 5,400 Storefront had at the mall, a kilometre away.

"The agencies and community come in with ideas and we make them happen," Storefront co-ordinator Anne Gloger said.

"A lot of people have a lot of ideas about what to do with this place."

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Mirror photo/DAN PEARCE

OPENING DAY: The East Scarborough Storefront moved from its Morningside Mall location and set up shop on Monday at the old Toronto police 43 Division building on Lawrence Avenue.

Storefront moves to old police station

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Storefront had 50,000 visits last year, almost 10 times what it drew in 2001, the year it opened on the mall's third floor to help the surrounding area, including a Kingston-Galloway neighbourhood struggling with poverty and a lack of services.

During a ceremony in the mall's centre court on Monday, Nigel Levy, one of the city's community youth outreach workers, recalled the day Gloger opened Storefront "with one table, a chair, a computer and a big desk."

A federal funding cut two years ago endangered Storefront but "it wasn't too long before the superheroes came flying in" with money that saved it, Levy said.

But Storefront, which Levy called The Little Community That Could, wasn't

safe yet.

It soon needed more superheroes to find itself a new home because the mall at Morningside Avenue and Kingston Road is being torn down, said Levy, adding all residents who marched or wrote letters in support of Storefront share credit for its survival.

LITTLE COMMUNITY THAT COULD

"You are The Little Community That Could," he said.

Ing, who wasn't working and went to the mall almost every day, said he found out Storefront was a friendly place where he could use a telephone or a computer for free.

"You could be social. You could talk to a lot of people," he said. "After a month or two, I actually started volunteering for them."

Now volunteering with the YELL (Youth Employment Local Leadership) program on 4403 Kingston Rd. to learn skills and do things that benefit the area, Ing said Storefront has made a difference with its outreach and safety programs.

"They keep the community basically safe," he said. "A lot of people that I know, I told them about this place."