



## OFF THE GRILL YOUTH MEAL PROGRAM Project Summary 2017

Now in its 5th year, Off the Grill is a community meal program with a difference. With its focus on supporting youth well being and healthy food access, OTG is working to create positive connections between youth and other community members in the main outdoor Britannia plaza where many of the youth like to hang out. Twice a week during the warm weather months, the plaza becomes a hive of community connection centered around a communal dinner prepared by youth under the mentorship of a professional chef. OTG's goals include youth food skills building, health promotion through nutritious food preparation, and community building and social inclusion through food sharing.

### Engaging Youth through Food

Off the Grill is much liked by youth who hang out around Britannia, many of whom have been affected by systemic impacts of colonization and poverty. Some youth help in the preparation of the dinners, gaining important food and other life skills, including teamwork, communications, food serving, and money handling. On any given day, between 2 and 6 youth were usually around to help with food preparation. This year's OTG however saw less youth involved, in part, due to the cycle of youth aging out with new, less connected cohorts of youth in the area, staffing changes with less connection to the new youth, or youth possibly finding new places off site to hang out.

Other youth simply showed up to eat a nutritious dinner and it was always interesting to see the numbers of youth suddenly appeared from wherever just as dinner was served. OTG ensured that these youth had access to healthy food through the week.

***It was really great how there was always a group of friends that would come together to make food from scratch. I liked how the more of us (youth) who came to the dinner, the more community members came out as well.***  
– Jonny, Youth Participant

***Alot of friends were there and the food was really great. It was good to meet lots of other people from the community.***  
– Ethan, Youth Participant

***Great food and a positive atmosphere. I met some wonderful people and everyone's spirits were lifted.***  
– Carol, Adult Participant



**1188 total meals served**  
**267 youth volunteer hours**  
**367 adult volunteer hours**  
**120 chef mentor hours**

*I liked that Off the Grill brought people together from all sorts of generations and backgrounds. Not only is it a great program to help teach young people culinary skills, it also provided a space for the community to come together to share a meal. It was always nice to see people sitting down together and chatting with people that they otherwise might not have encountered in their normal routines.*

*- Devon, chef mentor*

*Favorite memory:*

*One day when we were prepping food and I was delegating tasks to the kids, I quickly showed one boy how to chop an onion. I moved on to help other kids with their tasks, and noticed 5 minutes later that the boy who was supposed to be chopping onions was on his phone. I assumed that he was bored or didn't want to help out, so I went to ask him how he was doing. When I got closer, I noticed that he had googled "how to chop onions" and was looking at a step-by-step guide on a Gordan Ramsay website. Volunteering at Off the Grill helped me challenge my assumptions and pre-conceived notions about kids and technology.*

*- Devon, chef mentor*



## **Pasture 2 Plate**

A big thank you this year to Pasture 2 Plate who generously supported Off the Grill with 130 kg of organic, grass fed meat. We are extremely grateful for their donation and for providing this high quality food to our program, which was very tasty and much appreciated by all who joined in our dinners.