



Friday, November 24, 2023

Media Advisory

The Oakwood-Vaughan Community Hub is hosting an Open House on November 28 at the former Vaughan Road Academy, 529 Vaughan Road (Door #9) with the official opening ceremony at 4:00 PM.

The OV Community Hub is a partnership of three community organizations serving the Oakwood Vaughan community:

- Oakwood Vaughan Community Organization
- Learning Enrichment Foundation
- Reena

Deputy Mayor Mike Colle, MPP Jill Andrew, local trustees and representatives from local councillors and community agencies and local residents will attend the ceremony.

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Our Story

Community advocacy for a local hub finally bears fruit

Drake's alma mater, Vaughan Road Academy (VRA), closed at the end of the 2016–17 school year. To avoid its being sold to developers, the local community, led by Oakwood Vaughan Neighbourhood Action Partnership (OV NAP), organized several community meetings, which resulted in the school being declared a "core holding" by the Toronto District School Board (TSDB).

Since then, it has been a temporary location for schools under construction in other communities.

Given the lack of community space in Oakwood Vaughan, the community has expressed over and over again its desire to establish a hub in the VRA school.

Major achievement

OV NAP's sister organization, Oakwood Vaughan Community Organization (OVCO), opened negotiations with the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Lands Corporation for community use of available school space. OVCO wanted a "head lease" for three rooms on the ground floor of the building.

OVCO mobilized the community to sign a petition, regularly updating the growing supporters' mailing list on its progress. A well-attended meeting in September 2022 underlined the strong desire for movement on this issue.

After months of negotiations, OVCO signed a "head lease" in September for three rooms in the old VRA building, an unprecedented arrangement for the community use of school space in Toronto. Says OVCO member and chief negotiator, Peter Clutterbuck, "Working out a partnership agreement with the TDSB was incredibly challenging but was finally accomplished."

OVCO's seniors (healthy aging) program had been using the space under permit. It now runs three days a week, comfortably sharing the school space with students and teachers of the currently relocated Hodgson Middle School.

Local seniors are loving the space where they can drop in, socialize and participate in workshops. Resident Barbara Geiger says, "45 people came to a Hallowe'en karaoke party. Many of them already consider each other as new friends."

OVCO could not assume the responsibility as head leaseholder without two key partnerships to make the OV community hub viable. The Reena organization, serving developmentally disabled adults, and the Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF). LEF has provided child care in the school for over 25 years.

Commenting on the partnership, Bryan Keshen, CEO of Reena says, "Reena is honoured to operate in the Oakwood Vaughan community. We recently made a major funding announcement with the City of Toronto and the Federal Government about our 20-story Frankfort Family Reena Residence in the Oakwood/Vaughan community. Our ongoing commitment and participation as a founding partner of the Oakwood Vaughan Community Hub in the former Vaughan Road Academy is a stepping stone to the opening of our program space in the new building. Over the next 2 years, we will get to know the wider Oakwood Vaughan and the Hodgson Middle School community, which currently operates out of the Vaughan Road Academy Building, and they will get to know us as strong partners."

"This is an historic day", adds Peter Frampton, LEF Executive Director, "The leaders of the Oakwood Vaughn Community Organization have worked relentlessly to ensure that the school remain open and that it remain relevant to the local community. LEF, who has supported families in the neighbourhood with child care for over 25 years, is overjoyed to see this unique arrangement with the TDSB and community partners become a reality today."

OV Community Hub Charter Members

The [Oakwood Vaughan Community Organization](#) (OVCO) is a resident-led, non-profit community organization bringing community members together to advocate for an inclusive and healthy neighbourhood.

[Reena](#), a 50-year-old social services agency provides a variety of support services, including affordable housing models with integrated supports and programming for neuro-diverse individuals.

For over 40 years, the [Learning Enrichment Foundation](#) (LEF) has provided community services support in West Toronto through immigrant and newcomer services, child care, employment services and Linc classes and skills.