

Internship and report no trash talk for recycling St. James Town resident, engineering student

Aerin Guy

What started out as homework has turned into a home improvement project for Sachet Siwakoti, a St. James Town resident and a first year environmental engineering co-op student from the University of Waterloo.



Siwakoti's family has lived in St. James Town since 2005, when he, his mother and his sister emigrated from Kathmandu, Nepal, to join their father, who had moved to Toronto in 2001. They made their first home at 240 Wellesley St. E. He attended Jarvis Collegiate and was involved in the school's environment club, including an after-school recycling initiative and community cleanups in the Garden District. He credits teacher Cindy Watson, for sparking his interest in environmental issues.

Siwakoti was accepted into Waterloo's environmental engineering program in 2008. As he began to plan for his mandatory work term (required within the engineering faculty's cooperative education program) he initially explored options within engineering companies—but didn't find the right opportunity.

A close family friend and neighbour, Uttam Makaju, directed him to the Wellesley Institute and Dr. Nasim Haque, director of immigrant health and director of the St. James Town initiative.

The St. James Town initiative is the institute's largest community based research and community action initiative. The project, begun in March 2007, focuses primarily on the newcomer residents in north St. James Town.

The cluster of 18 high-rises is home to almost 30,000 people and is one of the most densely populated and most diverse areas in Canada. Approximately 64% of residents are newcomers; 26% of these arrived in Canada within the last five years.

The goal of the project is to help these newcomers

maintain the good health that they enjoy when they arrived by focusing on physical, social, environmental, and economic characteristics that impact health and well-being at the neighbourhood level.

Through research and collaboration, the initiative is expected to produce findings that will be a catalyst for concrete actions that will make the neighbourhood a healthier place to live.

When he learned about the initiative, Siwakoti saw his opportunity. He had already become concerned about the recycling practices within his own neighbourhood, thanks to his years of environmental education and activism. And at Waterloo, he noticed that his fellow students were educated and aware of proper recycling practices and environmental issues.

During his visits home, he had become increasingly concerned that the smell and mess of improperly disposed garbage affected the people in his community. He knew that recycling was not being done effectively—and could even see it on the streets, where materials and debris would fly and scatter in the breeze, creating a dirty and unsanitary environment for residents.

Siwakoti couldn't believe that his fellow residents didn't care about their effect on the environment, but he understood that the largely immigrant population—who didn't have recycling programs in their home countries—lacked education about proper recycling practices. Complicating the issue further was the lack of clear recycling and garbage disposal instructions for

residents of the high-rises, the distance from the buildings to the disposal areas, and accessibility, safety, and hygiene concerns within the existing facilities.

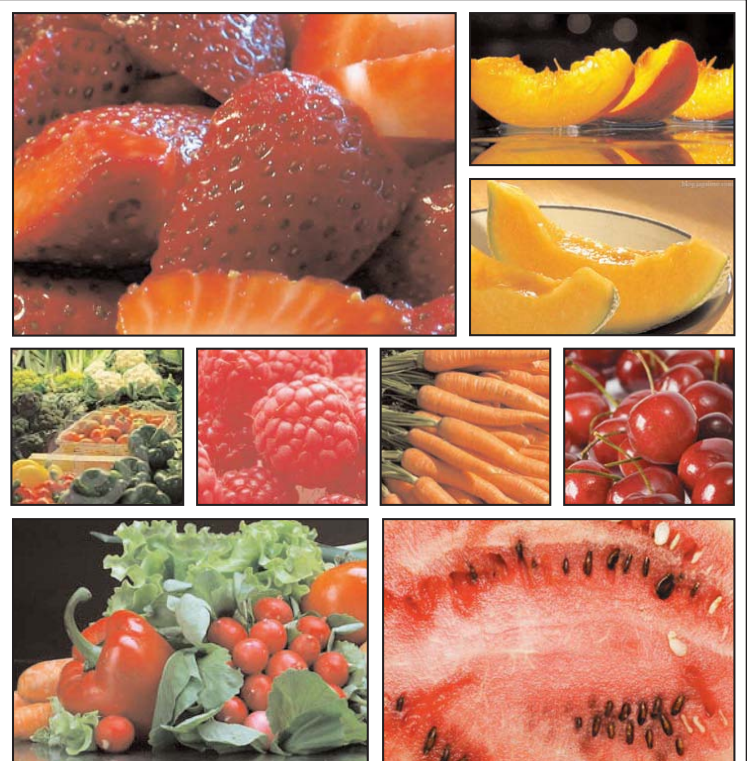
He worked with the Wellesley team to choose an appropriate research project, and decided on one that was to focus on recycling practices within the SJT community. His project would tie in to waste management and recycling program focus groups currently happening in the community.

Siwakoti's project, "Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices of Women and men towards recycling in North St. James Town, Toronto" was completed in April 2009. In addition to a survey and observations, he also took photographs of the existing waste disposal facilities around each of the 18 high-rise buildings.

The results of the study reveal that residents have very positive attitudes toward recycling, but that the lack of knowledge of proper practices combined with the poor accessibility to disposal areas prevents them from effectively sharing information or participating in recycling efforts. His recommendations for change include improving accessibility to the recycling bins currently located outside the building in a poorly lit, dirty enclosure. He also recommends a multi-lingual information awareness program to support residents who do not speak or read English.

His findings were presented to the Wellesley Institute staff in May 2009. Also present at the launch was Sean McIntyre, constituency assistant to councillor Pam McConnell, who passed the findings of the study on to the city's by-law enforcement office. The study and accompanying photos will be used as a baseline measure to monitor progress over time.

Siwakoti is excited about the impact that his work can have. Download Siwakoti's report from the website at www.sjtinitiative.com.



the flavours of summer

Ontario fresh produce awaits you at Toronto's premier market, known for variety and freshness. Over 120 specialty merchants and vendors offering: Baked Goods, Bulk Foods & General Groceries, Cheese, Dairy & Eggs, Delicatessens, Flowers & Plants, Fruit & Vegetables, Meat, Organic Products, Poultry, Restaurants, Snack Bars & Take-out, Seafood, and Specialty Items such as hand-made jewelry, natural and herbal bath products, souvenir and gift items, arts & crafts, clothing and much more!

Regular Market Hours:
Tues. to Thurs. 8 am - 6 pm
Friday 8 am - 7 pm
Sat. 5 am - 5 pm
Farmers Market
(North Market)
Saturdays from 5 am

Saturdays at the Market:

FREE PARCEL PICKUP SERVICE
Leave your parcels or bagged groceries in the holding area outside the Lower Level on Market Street, pull up in your car and we'll load them for you -- at no charge and with pleasure.

FREE CAR-CARRY-OUT SERVICE
Our service assistants will be glad to carry your parcels to your car if it's parked within the specified boundaries. Boundary map is displayed at the depot (outside the Operations Office on Market Street).

Food and History Walking Tours of the Market and surrounding area with The Bulletin's own Bruce Bell. Call 647-393-8687 to book a tour or visit www.stlawrencemarket.com
Tours also available in French.

Saturday August 1, 9am -1pm corn roast

it's Ontario corn season! Come and enjoy complimentary hot buttered roasted corn on the cob. South Market

The Market
93 Front St. E.
(at Jarvis)



www.stlawrencemarket.com