

Remarks by Christian Carrizo, participant in the Downsview Mural Project at the My City My Art reception

Good afternoon. On behalf of all of the participants in the My City My Art multi-media exhibit, I'd like to thank Mayor Miller and all of our guests for coming today.

I've been asked to come here and talk about what's been happening to me and the community arts programs I've been involved with in the past two years.

Back in September of 2005, I was hired to work on a mural at Downsview Park.

I'd never been employed as an artist and I was excited about the chance to showcase my skills ...though I was nervous since I'd never worked with spray paint before.

But it was an amazing experience. Artists are often off on their own, doing their own thing; and I loved being around people and getting to work with other artists.

After the project ended, I still wasn't sure what I was planning to do with myself career-wise, but it felt good that someone took me seriously as an artist.

In summer 2006, I was asked by Art Services Toronto Culture to talk about the mural project at the Mayor's Community Safety Awards. When the term "starving artist" is so often true, it is good to see so many people come out to support the arts.

Days like that, and today, really make it all worthwhile.

Last fall, I was hired to work in an after school program in the Jane-Finch community, during which, I assisted my now good friend Jen Chin and realized what I wanted and am now going to do with the rest of my life.

I learned a lot very quickly and found out that working with children is something that I both love and apparently was pretty good at.

It's always great when you find out you have a talent for something you never thought you'd ever do.

Having peers in a field you love recognize your skills and having the opportunity to teach it to someone who is enthusiastic about it has given me a motivation I've never had before, and pushed me to do as well as everyone has been telling me I've been doing.

It really makes you want to work harder, gives you confidence and makes you grow fast.

I'm really grateful for both the career opportunity and all the support that Art Services Toronto Culture has provided for me.

In December, all my efforts came to fruition when Arts For Children offered me a full-time position.

I've never been happier or more productive in my life.

I know for a fact that, if it wasn't for that first employment opportunity provided for me back in September 2005 working on the Downsview mural, I would neither have the great job I have today nor would I have ever had the confidence to pursue a career in art.

Things could have worked out differently and I'm grateful I'm here to speak today.

This is a great city in that there are programs and organizations for people to get the opportunity to pursue the work they really want to do.

Organizations like JVS, Arts For Children, and of course, Arts Services Toronto Culture.

I'd like to thank Mayor Miller for supporting the arts and his extemporary community safety planif more cities had the vision to prioritize their underprivileged areas, the world would be a better place.

I'd also like to thank Nadira Pattison and Ann Brokelman with Arts Services Toronto Culture who has been there for me from the start.

Julie and Lisa and everyone else at Arts For Children, and most importantly of all, all the young wonderful and so amazingly talented kids who I had the privilege to work with on these beautiful murals and paintings.

I really hope you all continue to love art as you grow older and I wish you all the success in the world.

Thank you.