



*“Making our community a better place to live,
to grow up, and to grow older”*

Catching Up with ActOut!

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It's been another busy season at Our Family and the ActOut project. Formerly known as the Teen Theatre program, ActOut now incorporates a Teen Film project providing youth with the opportunity to write, direct, act or perform, film and edit dramatic presentations for stage and screen covering the subject of sexual assault and relationship violence.

The ActOut youth have shown tremendous enthusiasm and dedication both in their creativity and commitment to participate in the numerous hours of rehearsal, writing, editing, presentation and outreach to their peers throughout the community. In addition to the recognized 'Afterthoughts' and 'One Voice' productions of the Teen Theatre, there are now several film works in various stages of production for our Teen Film Festival later this fall.

These two unique outlets of artistic expression provide for highly effective peer education by giving these creative young people opportunities to tell their stories (both dramatized and at times, autobiographically) in their own words and with their own vision. The impact of that vision is seen in the responses that we've had to both the Teen Theatre productions and the early versions of several films.

Additionally ActOut is in the process of planning Action Days. These events, organized by youth and supported by the adult staff of the Skrappy's Youth Empowerment Center, provide youth participants with training and discussions on civic engagement and public speaking led by Prevention Specialists. A 'Core Group' of youth selects events, forums, town halls, and other public meetings where they can speak about sexual violence prevention. We're tremendously excited by the youth's desire to bring the reality of their lives to the forefront of public knowledge.

The realities of rape and sexual assault among homeless and at-risk youth continue to be seen as tragic realities for many who come to Skrappy's seeking a safe space. Additionally, the need for positive peer-reinforced messages against sexual assault and violent relationships continues to grow. The ActOut project is proving to be a highly engaging method of bringing those messages into the open where shame, ignorance, and myths can be dispelled in an environment that encourages freedom of expression and freedom from harm.

The resiliency of the youth in the programs is tremendous and this was highlighted recently when beloved former director and playwright for the Teen Theatre program Tracey Manakee-Turner passed away after a lengthy bout with cancer. The ActOut youth, many of whom knew and worked with Tracey, stepped up to take care of one another and showed a strength and resolve that was inspiring to all around them. We wish to thank them for their energy and commitment to one another and the community.



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