

Communications Office

Peterborough County-City Health Unit
10 Hospital Drive
Peterborough, ON K9J 8M1
(705) 743-1000, ext. 391
www.pcchu.ca



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Challenging Body Image Stereotypes with Barbie

*Health Unit Youth Group to Host “Barbie Jamming” Event
on February 6*

Thursday, February 4, 2010, Peterborough

Youth staff of the Peterborough County-City Health Unit invites local youth to participate in their Body Image Display where a “Barbie jamming” activity is taking place this Saturday, February 6 from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Lansdowne Place Mall.

At the display, located by the top of the mall escalators, participants will have the opportunity to make Barbie and Ken dolls look “real” using a variety of materials such as clay, fabric and paint. The Health Unit’s youth staff are offering this event to promote positive body image and to help youth accept and feel good about their natural sizes, no matter what they see in the media or hear from others.

“Society and the media put too much pressure on youth to achieve unattainable and unhealthy expectations of beauty,” said Rachelia Giardino, youth staff member at the Health Unit who is organizing this event. “The Barbie Jamming event gives participants a chance to change Barbie to reflect what beauty means to them.”

After each doll is made “real”, youth staff members will interview each doll creator and have them explain the changes they made. These videos will be posted on the Health Unit’s website at www.pcchu.ca. Participants will also be encouraged to reinforce positive body image messages by taking pictures of what “real” means to them and posting the image to the Health Unit’s Facebook group entitled “Speak Up! Speak Out!”.

Ms. Giardino explained that every day young, impressionable youth (male and female) are bombarded with images on TV, magazine racks, and in video games promoting “the ideal beauty”. This version of

Ways to Promote Positive Body Image:

- Be realistic about your body size. Give up trying to change your body into a shape it was never meant to be.
- Let go of the need to change your physical appearance to feel good about yourself. Realize your weight does not determine your self-worth.
- Stop thinking that changing your physical appearance is the answer to all life’s problems. Deal with and set goals about the real issues in your life.

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“beauty” is often unhealthy, unattainable and unrealistic and puts negative pressure on youth to achieve these ideals.

The Health Unit’s February 6 event is based on the idea of “culture jamming” which is an attempt to disrupt cultural norms by tapping into an audience’s subconscious thought process, making them think about a situation from a different point of view.

Barbie jamming started at an art gallery in San Francisco in 2002 as part of the “Altered Barbie” exhibit which became an annual event drawing over 60 artists and hundreds of creations. This activity has been used locally by the Peterborough Body Image Coalition to help people recognize that healthy bodies come in a range of weights, shapes and sizes.

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For further information, please contact:

Keith Beecroft
Youth Development Worker
Peterborough County-City Health Unit
(705) 743-1000, ext. 238

Erica Diamond, RD
Public Health Nutritionist
Peterborough County-City Health Unit
(705) 743-1000, ext. 261