

# WHY MALVERN IS A SPECIAL COMMUNITY TO ME

**Karissa Young**  
Community Submission

Malvern is special to me because it is the place where I have grown up, gone to school since junior kindergarten and the place where I have experienced some of the best memories of my life.

I remember learning to ride my first bicycle, on the sidewalk outside of my house, which seemed so big at the time. Back then, a bike ride from my house to the mailbox down the street was such an accomplishment, but now that I'm older, I'm able to explore the area more and go farther away from home by myself.

My parents still tell me stories about when I was little. I spent countless days with my three siblings in the backyard, having picnics and running around. There are so many pictures in our photo albums of my siblings and I spending time together, just having a good time in our community.

For ten years St. Bede Catholic Elementary School has been my second home. For the past couple of years, my class and I have been walking to the Malvern Recreation Centre to go skating. It was a fun way to get exercise and also spend time with my classmates outside of the school. Skating was always so much fun.

I spend a large amount of my time in the Malvern Public Library, borrowing all kinds of different books. I mainly like fantasy and fiction, but a lot of other books interest me. I can recall being extremely excited when I found out that the library was going to be renovated. I love the new library.



For seven years I participated in Girl Guides within the community, and met many people from other schools in Malvern. I still keep in touch with many of these friends. In Girl Guides, I learned a lot about how important it is to really participate in the community.

Some of the badges that my friends and I earned involved thinking about and volunteering in the community.

I've lived in the same house for my whole life, and I'm happy about that. It's nice to know that there is always one thing in my life that will stay the same.

One of the things that I love about Malvern is that there is so much diversity. The people here are all so different. Many of my friends are from different countries, so we can all share our cultures with each other. The people in Malvern are what make the community such a special place.

As I transition from elementary to high school I wonder about the community I will be visiting everyday. My new school, Mary Ward Catholic Secondary School, is not located in Malvern, so I hope that I continue to make friends from many different cultures and that people are as friendly as they are here.

Although my new high school will be outside of Malvern, it is comforting to know that I can come home to a familiar community.

*Karissa Young is a runner up in the MY ROOTS Summer 2010 writing contest.*

# FROM THE STREETS TO THE CLASSROOM

**Ashley Abdul**  
Community Submission

'L' is for the love we get. 'O' is 'cause we over stand. 'S' is for the streets we rep, and 'T' is for the truth we give. It's more than just an after school program. It's a life changing experience.

Lost Lyrics is a program that teaches youth about the roots of hip-hop and how hip hop became what it is today. The first year I was apart of this program I thought it was very interesting because nobody had ever taught me about hip-hop.

All I knew was I liked Beyonce and Lil Wayne, but I never really knew what made them who they are. If it were not for the Africans hundreds of years ago just playing a drum made of things they found on the ground, hip-hop wouldn't be around today.

I found Lost Lyrics to be an amazing environment so I decided to keep loyal to the program and many other students felt the same way.

Natasha Daniel and Amanda Parris the creators of Lost Lyrics, watched us grow and eventually they thought it was time for Lost Lyrics to move forward in their teachings. So students started learning how to write rhymes, we talked about more mature things than we were used to like hood politics.

Once we reached our third year, the Lost Lyrics students were no longer just friends with each other, we were a family. Daniel and Parris watched us grow and eventually they saw that we were very comfortable with one another so they decided to take on more topics we could relate to.

We talked about things like relationships, why it is more common for a child coming from a split family to be more likely to be living with his/her mother and one specific topic that really resonated with me, 'shadism'.

'Shadism' is similar to a chart or rule people went by a long time ago that meant the lighter your skin was the more advantages you had. For a couple classes Daniel thought we should take this history and compare it to our reality today. For example, there are still Facebook groups claiming people with light skin are more beautiful than people with dark skin, and the quote "light skin is the right skin" is still used in our community.

I really related to this because before Lost Lyrics brought 'shadism' to my attention I did question my skin color, I felt like less of a person and I always felt like I had to be that ideal girl we would see in the media. The type of girl that was very skinny, fair skinned and had light eyes. As we all started digging deeper into this topic we recognized that we are beautiful the way we are. We don't have to get implants or bleach our skin to be



# OUTSTANDING STUDENT OF THE SEASON

**Hilori Kaloti**  
Community Reporter

"For me it is about knowing where you came from, knowing the opportunities you can get and not wasting any of them" – Brian Woon-A-Tai

What started off as just an idea in high school has now sparked Brian Woon-A-Tai's career and passion in media and film.

Woon-A-Tai is now a second year student in York University's film studies program and co-founder of CreAction Media Group, a professional media company which offers services from video recording to online promotion and development.

Woon-A-Tai first became interested in film at his high school, West Hill CI.

"It started in film class, I realized I was pretty good at video and I enjoyed doing it...Our group put out a comedy skit and a lot of people at school really liked it. So we thought, maybe we could make something out of this. So from one of the characters in the comedy skit, we actually made a mock reality show out of him and put it up on vimeo...From that point we just kept moving and we thought that maybe a legitimate company could come of this and we have been moving forward since then."

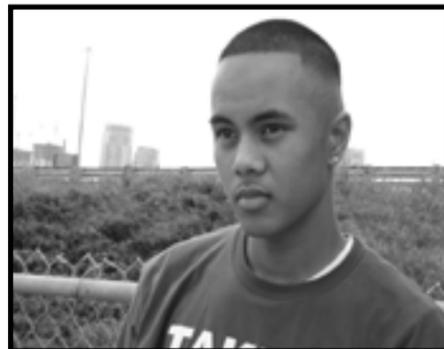
Since the founding of CreAction Media Group, Woon-A-Tai has had the opportunity to work with a number of professionals in the industry and he is currently travelling between New York and Toronto working with several debuting artists on film and video blog projects that will be releasing in the Fall of 2009.

Among the things that encouraged Brian to pursue film as a career was his inspiring trip to Washington, DC.

"In 2008, I went to Obama's inauguration and that was just a big inspiration for me. It was pretty much right after this that my friends and I wanted to make CreAction a company. It was literally a life changing experience and a real eye opener for me. I honestly don't think things would be going the way they are right now if I didn't go there..." he said.

Brian is also actively involved in the community as the media coordinator for YOUunited.

"I am actually a mentor and teach youth how to do video editing, promotion, graphic design and video design," he explained.



»»» BRIAN WOON-A-TAI

He is also a mentee for The Remix Project where he is working on a goal to complete a film reel showcasing all of his work that he has done so far in his career.

"Most of my work so far film wise, has been volunteer work because I just want to get my name out there to build connections and build my network," he said.

Coming from Malvern has made a significant impact on Woon-A-Tai.

"I think a lot of my values, I learned living here and just a lot of basic lessons that I try to keep true to today...Malvern has this stigma attached to it but just because you hear a lot of bad things, it doesn't mean there aren't a lot of good things happening at the same time."

Woon-A-Tai is still working hard towards his future goals.

"I want to go independent in the future and I'd like to be a freelance director and just work for myself. I know I don't want to do the 9 to 5 thing at all, I just want to do what makes me happy. I'd like to move on to doing major commercials, films, everything in that nature but just to a bigger level," he said.

**DO YOU KNOW  
AN OUTSTANDING  
STUDENT FROM  
MALVERN?  
SEND YOUR NOMINATION  
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malvern.youth.roots@gmail.com**



# MALVERN ALUMNI: JARRATT BEST

**Devin Persaud**  
Community Reporter

From an early age Jarratt Best recognized that he wanted to make a change in his community. Raised in Malvern, Jarratt came to the realization that growing up in urban- low income areas made slipping through the cracks very easy. Most households are single-parent run and sometimes scholarly success or respected progression is often put aside in the chase for "Easy Money". Jarratt's tremendous drive and progressive thinking towards education enabled him to create and implement the "Rise & Flow" program.

"Rise & Flow" engages youth from the age of ten and provides them with the skills and lessons necessary to understand their worth and potential. They learn of others who came from little and overcame adversity, proving that success is not limited only to those who are more fortunate. The program stresses four key beliefs: academic excellence, physical & mental health, confidence and self-awareness, and social development & innovation.

Jarratt is a true educational innovator, and his relentless pursuit in making his community a better place makes him an ideal role model to anyone interested in making a change.

*Q: What was it like growing up in Malvern?*

A: For me growing up in Malvern was not as challenging as it was for some of my peers; I had good parents, parents that made sure that I was focusing on the right things. To be honest though, there were a lot of negative influences. There were not a lot of people telling you to go in the right direction.

For someone who was impressionable, it was easy for them to get mixed in with the wrong crowd even though there were community programs that were targeted towards helping these youth. However, perhaps some of these community programs did not see the turnout they wanted because of their structure and the way they were targeting participants. Instead of youth being lectured or brought to programs, they needed a more grass roots structure to be seen as more than just a number.

*Q: When did you decide that you wanted to make a change?*

A: When I was in school, I didn't feel that it was easy to communicate or connect with the positive reinforcements we had on hand. I mean I had the discipline and love from my parents, but some of the other youth did not have the same luxury. When I was 13 I decided that I wanted to do something, I wanted to be the guy that someone could talk to, and steer them in the right direction. I had an idea but that was all I had, I lacked structure and the know how to put this idea into action. I received really inspirational coaching though from community members like Ricky Francis, Shawn "Blue" Rose and Cheryl Brunet. It was they who got me invigorated in community work, and it was my teacher at Mother Teresa Catholic Secondary School, Joseph Destiny, who set me on the right course.

*Q: How did you come up with "Rise & Flow"?*

A: Well, it definitely occurred while I was studying at Carleton University in Ottawa.



»»» JARRATT BEST

I myself wasn't content with just doing school work. I wanted to concentrate my energy on building a summer program geared towards youth. I wanted to provide youth with opportunities to express themselves. I didn't want just your traditional daycare that does sports and arts and crafts. I wanted youth to have a place where the goal was building on yourself, building your confidence, and expressing issues that affect you. I wanted them to be able to express themselves all the while learning math, science, literary skills, and even French. I knew that the content had to be relatable, which is why everything we do is done through the medium of music.

*Q: What obstacles did you have to overcome?*

A: Well, the hardest part was first just getting people to listen to what I had to say. Many people didn't know what Malvern was or what it represented. Most didn't understand the magnitude of knowledge that we have in the community. The major issue was finding funding, in terms of where to go and who to talk to. When you're starting out an organization there are certain ways you must communicate in order to get things moving. I received a considerable amount of mentoring from my Associate Dean at Carleton Mr. Ted Jackson, who showed me the more structured side of things. Having

a passion for changing the community is great, but passion alone doesn't win you grants. You need to be able to answer those tough questions with a business mind set, which was a key learning experience for me.

*Q: What was the first year of the program like?*

A: The first year went well in the end, we ran off of only a five thousand dollar budget everyday for two weeks. "Rise & Flow" provides its participants with free nutritious meals, free transportation, not to mention the costs of running the actual program. We pride ourselves in making our program totally accessible to youth, by making it free of cost. However, that first year was tough. I remember waking up at 4:30 in the morning in order to make breakfast and lunch. But when you're truly dedicated to a goal, you don't mind doing things like that to see it succeed.

At the end of the day the youth make it all worth it. Seeing them smiling, learning and creating happy memories has an effect on me. If they are able learn something that gives them the opportunity to grow as people and students then I feel fulfilled.

*Q: What do you see in the future for the Program?*

A: You know I want to take this program to be in every major city across Canada. I want to take it from Toronto to Montreal and to Halifax. In addition to the Ottawa location, we will also be starting a "Rise & Flow" in Malvern very soon, so keep an eye out for it.

*Q: If you had to describe Malvern in one word what would it be?*

A: Inspiration

**www.riseandflow.com  
or email Jaratt Best at  
JBEST@RISEANDFLOW.CA**

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO GET BACK ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS

Farah Alli  
Community Submission

Dr. Marion Hilliard Public School brings back many warm and happy memories for me. Everyday I would be excited to pack up my school bags and get prepared for a busy day organizing fundraisers and participating in school clubs and committies.

Graduation day was probably one of the most memorable days of my life. As I smiled for the cameras, shook many hands, and collected several awards including the principal's choice award and student of the year, my parents looked back at me with pride in their eyes. I remember those times, I was involved in so many wonderful causes, an avid reader, and I was never afraid of trying new things. I was absolutely confident with who I was inside. I remember all of the adults at graduation telling my parents that they will not have to worry about me in high school. "Farah is not the typical Malvern student."

When I got to grade nine I was so excited that I could hardly stand still. I had all these new clothes that I was just itching to wear. With my new bag in hand, and my optimistic eyes gleaming, I walked into Pearson Collegiate Institute, ready for the adventure of a lifetime, and believe me, I got it.

I introduced myself to everyone I met, although I had a group of friends entering high school with me, I wanted to meet new people. I came across a new set of friends who also seemed nice. Day by day we got closer. I was spending so much time with them that I started to become distant from my old friends and the person I used to be.

My new friends and I became so close that by the beginning of November it felt like I had known them forever. This is when my mom and old friends began telling me that they didn't think these new friends of mine were the best people for me to be around. I just figured that they didn't truly know them. I thought I did.

These new friends were not as committed to their school work as I was, they occasionally skipped classes, and lied to their parents about skipping. For some reason, I did not see these characteristics to be negative. I didn't realize the influence they were having on me or where I was headed.

My grades began to drop, I acted differently at home, I had more attitude, and even I started to use the same rough language as my friends. It came to the point where I started to skip classes with them.

By the time winter came around I became so obsessed with how everyone expected me to act and speak, that I completely forgot who I actually was. I used to be disappointed with a 79%, by February I was satisfied just knowing that I had a mark above a C. I used to be in nine extra curricular activities, and I was the leader or the president for at least five of them. By this point I did not participate in a single activity. All because of my inability to stand up for myself and walk away from the influences of my new friends.

I don't know when I started changing or why it happened. Maybe it was because of the people I was hanging around or decisions I was making. One crew, one mistake, one wrong turn in the road and everything went wrong.



»»» FARAH ALLI AT THE MALVERN PUBLIC LIBRARY

One day I got my wake up call. My mother found several forged notes that I had written to the office so that they wouldn't call home when I was skipping classes. My mom and I had the most meaningful conversation we probably have ever had before. She explained what she has watched me become and basically told me that I needed to change.

In one conversation she reminded me of who I am and what I stand for. I knew that I needed to find myself again so I went back to my old friends and they accepted me, and reminded me of who I used to be. They supported and helped me get back on the right track. Now, I have made that change. I may not be back at the top of the class, but at least I am on the right path to success. I'm me again.

It's difficult on us Malvern kids to truly understand and accept who we are and what we stand for, when so many negative stereotypes are buzzing around about our community. We're the bad kids, the ones that don't try and fail. Malvern has taught me so much about being true to yourself and not caring what anyone thinks of you. I now know that anyone can make a mistake that takes them down a dark and scary path, but it's never too late to make a change and try again.

Yes Malvern is the place that I go to school.

Yes Malvern is the place that I met my new best friends.

Yes Malvern is the place that I started to go bad.

Yes Malvern is the place that got me dressing differently.

Yes Malvern is the place where my grades fell.

Yes Malvern is the place that I got mixed with the wrong crowd.

Yes Malvern is the place that I skipped class. Yes Malvern is the place where I got lost, confused, caught up, cantankerously engaged and forgot everything.

BUT...

Yes Malvern is the place where I had a few wrong friends and a million right ones.

Yes Malvern is the place where my real friends brought me home.

Yes Malvern is the place where I looked to find myself.

Yes Malvern is the place of a life lesson that I will remember forever.

Yes Malvern is the place that my friends and family stood by me.

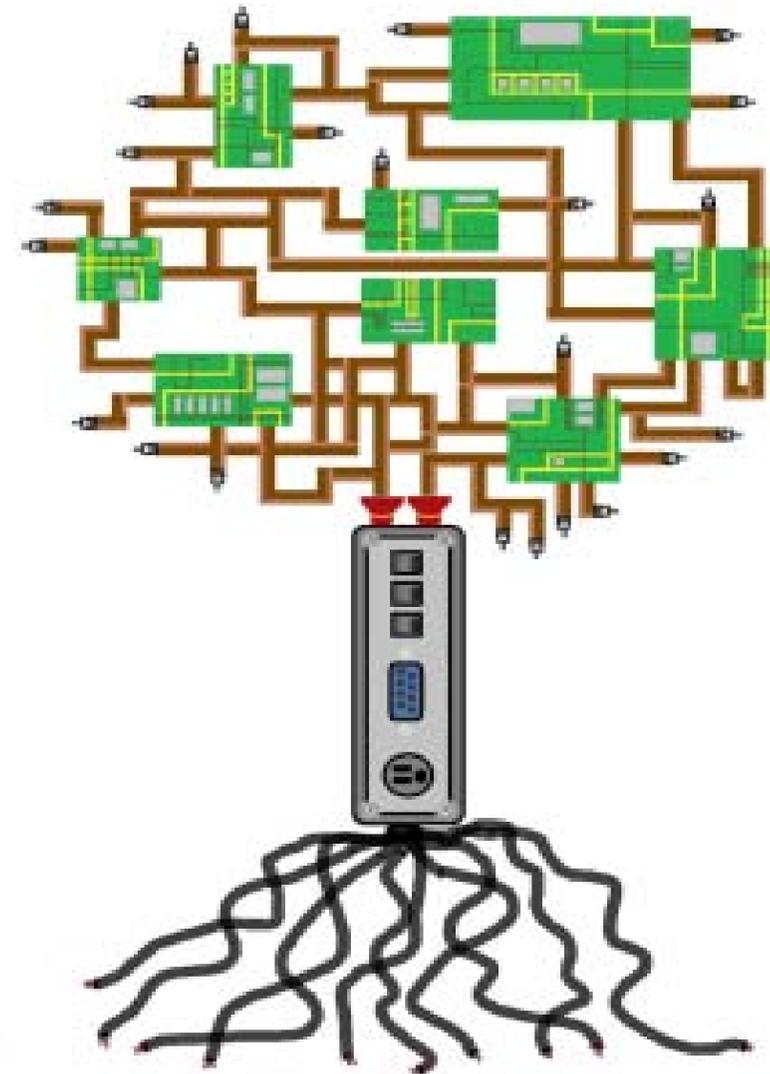
Yes Malvern is the place that shaped me into a stronger person no matter how bad it looks now.

Yes Malvern is the place of my family, my friends, my home, my pride, my mind and my life.

Yes Malvern is the place where I stood up, tripped up, messed up and fixed up my life.

*Farah Alli is the winner of the MY ROOTS Summer 2010 writing contest. Thank you to all those that submitted entries. We appreciate your participation! Please visit our website for more information about future competitions.*

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# MY ROOTS

MALVERN YOUTH RECOGNIZING OUR OPPORTUNITIES TO SUCCEED

## Brooks Road PS Closing



»»» ANGELI JAIN, A PAST STUDENT AT BROOKS ROAD PS IS DISAPPOINTED WITH THE DECISION TO CLOSE HER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

### Malvern's French Immersion students look for answers

**Natasha Rajaratnam**  
Community Reporter

Angeli Jain, will never forget her eighth grade trip to Quebec City with Brooks Road Public School. After spending 10 memorable years at the Scarborough elementary school, Angeli and many of her friends are upset to hear that the building they had once considered their second home will soon be closed.

Over the past year, Toronto's School Board has been planning to shut down several schools in the City and Brooks Road PS is one of them.

"I couldn't believe that literally, my whole childhood was going to be closing down" said Jain.

The 42-year-old building, located in the Seven Oaks Community has 400 students, many of them are Malvern students studying in the French Immersion program.

"My friends and I were all so upset...we sat together when we found out and just talked about memories we had there," said Angeli.

Nadia Bello, trustee for Scarborough East confirmed that there is no set timeline for when the school will be closed. Bello verified that the closure will only occur once a new school located at Meadowvale and Sheppard is finalized, funded and built.

Bello explained that at the June board

meeting, the majority of trustees voted in favour of The Accommodation Review Committee's (ARC) recommendations concerning school closures.

According to the meeting minutes the recommendations state that Brooks Road PS is not required for long-term accommodation needs for students within this area based on the location, projected enrolment, maintenance costs, and future facility conditions.

The current site at which Brooks Road PS is located, will be handed over to the Toronto Lands Corporation for sale and the French Immersion programs will be provided at two new locations.

Sukhvir Rakkar, the mother of a Malvern student currently in the French Immersion Program at Brooks Road PS, worries that this school closure will be the loss of a very important Early French Immersion opportunity for her child.

"I'll be happy if another school opens with a French Immersion program," she said. Parents like Rakkar are concerned about when the school will close and when they must organize alternatives for their children.

Bello says that although Brooks Road PS is not part of the Malvern community she understands that many students originate

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### MY ROOTS WRITING CONTEST



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### SUMMER CAMP IN THE CAPITAL



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## MY ROOTS EXECUTIVE



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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Butterflies fluttering in my stomach, my notebook in hand, and hoping I'll make new and interesting friends, I headed off to The London School of Economics and Political Science, for my first day of school.

It's odd that at any point in our lives whether we've been in school for ten years or in my case nearly two decades, the first day still brings back those anxious feelings of the unknown. Although in Malvern you are all well into the second month of your new school year, here in London, England the academic calendar commenced on October 1st. I will be here for one year while I complete an MSc in Media, Communication and Development. Let our new academic journey begin!

Now that you all are settled into the new school year, we hope you will take the time to read the Fall Edition of MY ROOTS that we have been working on all summer.

First, I must discuss something that I am

sure you have all noticed. Colour! We sent many of you an online survey about MY ROOTS and the general consensus was a desire for coloured copies of publication.

In this edition, Natasha Rajaratnam reports on the closing of Brooks Road Public School, and with the help of Trustees Shaun Chen, and Natalie Bello she finds the answers to many parent and student questions. Our writing contest winner Farah Ali and runner up Karissa Young tell us about what it is like growing up in Malvern. Also, be sure to read about an inspirational program called Lost Lyrics and the impact it is having on young women in Malvern.

When your new school schedule allows you the time, kick back, relax, and read about what people are talking about in your community this Fall.

Happy Reading,  
*Laxmi Parthasarathy*  
Founder/Editor -MY ROOTS

»»» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

from Malvern and are bussed across the 401.

Bello explains that local students as well as French Immersion students from the Seven Oaks community will attend High Castle PS, which is close by and which will also be renovated.

French Immersion students will be relocated to schools within their own communities and will not need to be transported long distances, said Bello.

The Board will be launching two new French Immersion programs in order to accommodate the growing demand for a second language.

Shaun Chen, trustee for Scarborough-Rouge River, explains that students attending schools closer to home will make it easier for

parents to get more involved in the community and the activities of their children.

Chen explains that students living in Malvern that currently attend Brooks Road have the option to relocate to Alexander Stirling Public School, where one of the two French Immersion programs will soon be available.

New classrooms will also be built at Alexander Stirling to accommodate the new program.

"This is a great opportunity to build a strong French Immersion program in the heart of Malvern," said Chen.

Students like Angeli, will always cherish their Brooks Road PS memories, while current students at the school can look forward to new opportunities, at a new school, or in the case of Malvern students, in their own communities.

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that "it" girl, and at the end of the day, we should love ourselves because we are all smart and gorgeous people that can do anything if we put our heart and soul into it.

Lost Lyrics has put on many performances around Toronto. We have performed at places like the Malvern Public Library, No One is Illegal Protest and 106 and York.

Our most important event is The Live Report Card. The Live Report Card is a show where all the staff and students of Lost Lyrics put together the work they have created throughout the year through a showcase. Performances include songs, poetry, monologues, plays, and simple paragraphs trying to portray our point of view.

The Live Report Card was very successful this year because we

had sponsors like Grassroots Youth Collaborative and Schools Without Borders supporting us. With the help of these organizations we were able to gain more publicity, which meant we had a larger audience. At the end of the night, we raised over \$1000.00 in donations and were on Global News.

Lost Lyrics is truly an amazing creation.

Each year students are eager to come back because it is a space where people can be themselves and feel comfortable with who they are. Being able to perform at such a young age has really helped me boost my confidence and has made me feel brave, and it made me believe in myself. Lost Lyrics has kept me motivated throughout the years and it has made me strive to be a more aware, and educated citizen.



»»» PERFORMANCE FROM THE LIVE REPORT CARD SHOW

URBANOLOGY MAGAZINE ::



Established in 2004, Urbanology Magazine is Canada's leading urban, lifestyle and culture magazine aimed to entertain and educate the hip-hop generation through coverage of music, fashion, social issues, technology and the arts. Urbanology is offering 11 internship opportunities this Fall – 8 are for Staff Writers and 3 Assistant Editors.



Newcomer Services for YOUTH

- English Conversation Circle

Tuesday, September 28  
5:00 PM - 6:00 PM  
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- How to Study Effectively

Wednesday, September 29  
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

- ART ATTACK

Thursday, September 29  
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