

West End parade lets happiness take over

March for Jesus shows district's positive side

By: Kevin Rollason

In a neighbourhood where children have recently been victims of shootings and a sexual assault, dozens of kids paraded a message of love and forgiveness on Saturday.

About 200 children and adults walked through



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Britnay Lamy joins dozens of kids in the March for Jesus Saturday. Organizers hoped the event would help the West End heal from recent violent crimes.

streets in the West End in the annual March for Jesus organized by Living Bible Explorers.

Some children held long yellow ribbons they waved around, while others held signs carrying messages including "Respect God," "I Love Jesus" and "God Loves You."

George Hill, LBE's general manager, said the parade, which began at the Mission Baptist Church on Home Street and Sargent Avenue and ended at Jacob Penner Park, across from the Health Sciences Centre on Notre Dame Avenue,

is an annual one, but with the recent violence this year's had even more meaning.

"We want the community here to know that God loves them," Hill said.

"Our kids and families have been directly involved in this violence... we will carry a banner of forgiveness. We are extending the forgiveness through the community."

A six-year-old girl was enticed away from the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre near Ellice Avenue and then sexually assaulted on May 23.

On May 25, 16-year-old Kyle Earl was shot dead sitting outside a Toronto Street home while a 13-year-old was wounded.

The next day, two young girls were injured when a 14-year-old boy allegedly opened fire on a Victor Street home.

LBE, an inter-denominational Christian ministry, has been working with children, teens and families in the city's West End since 1969.

Marching with his four children, West End resident Wesley Kennedy said the parade was "a good thing for the area.

"It's something positive instead of young people getting killed all the time."

Cheryl Penner, another marcher who lived a few blocks away, said she's hoping seeing all of the children in the parade shows area residents "there is hope.

"It shines a positive light in the area... there's always shootings, but there is always hope, too."

Karina Lewis said she wanted the children watching and taking part in the parade to feel joy.

"There's so much joy going on in them, but a lot of times they can't express it," Lewis said.

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