



Urban Lights

**Y O N G E
S T R E E T
M I S S I O N**

HOPE IN THE CITY SINCE 1896

"Evergreen helped me get an outlook on how to start a career and choose the right college course. I want to help other youth. My job placement at the youth club was great!"



J. Cowie

A SECOND CHANCE... FOR FIRST SUCCESS

BY KATHLEEN MAGLADRY

"You gave me a second chance! I failed before, but you guys still believed in me. I admit I was too much into street life the first time. I never thought I could try again, let alone succeed..."

Kevin* is a young man who was on the streets for several years. Two years ago, Evergreen Centre for Street Youth accepted

Kevin into an intensive employment program called Connecting Youth to Work (CYTW). But he didn't take advantage of the opportunity and had to drop out.

Last fall we gave Kevin a chance to start afresh. This time, he made the most of it. "Working with other youth in my placement was challenging. I had to separate myself

from my peers somewhat. But I actually helped some of them! What a cool feeling. My advice to other youth: CYTW can help you so much!"

Kevin is now receiving extremely positive reviews from his supervisors at a city-run recreation centre where he just started working!

"The determination of the youth in our program continues to amaze me," says CYTW Program Facilitator Coralie Martens. "Every group includes someone who I'm not sure will make it through – and

In this issue...

- *The Biker and the Silver Lining...page 4*
- *A Mother's Love...page 5*
- *Love is foundational to all we do...page 6*

Continued on page 2 ■■■▶

...Continued from front page

then that person just blossoms. There's a lesson for all of us in that."

Connecting Youth to Work is a 32-week program, now in its seventh year, aimed at helping street-involved youth succeed in the workforce. Applicants are screened closely as spaces are limited. The first part involves 60 hours of life and employability skills training. Group work allows youth to form bonds with others going through the same struggles. It's a new and positive feeling of belonging for many young people who have experienced estrangement from family.

In Part II, youth are placed in positions throughout the Mission to gain on-the-job experience while still meeting regularly with staff and fellow participants for ongoing support and skills training. Because YSM is so diverse, we can offer placements in food service, recreation, maintenance, retail service, child care and administration.

Youth who successfully complete Part II go on to a 20-week job placement in the wider community. Most are entry-level positions that offer youth the chance to explore opportunities in their chosen field.

"The CYTW program gave me the opportunity to gain hands-on experience working in a food service environment.

I want to be a chef!

Thank you, Yonge Street Mission, for the opportunity to pursue my dreams!"

Milestone celebrations are important. We hold a ceremony at the end of each part and give a certificate to each participant. Many have not graduated high school and may never have received a certificate before. At the end of Part III graduates receive a reconditioned laptop and a completion bonus.

"If I weren't in this program I'd be looking for a minimum-wage job with no future," said Will*, who is enjoying a job

placement where he facilitates activities between young people and seniors. "This program allows you to get insight into better positions and realize you can take off in different directions. It has given me the determination to get the end result I want."

"Participants say that the program gives them the skills and opportunities they need to be successful at work and in life. Employers have asked to hire more CYTW participants. The program is designed to be 'win-win' for all involved," explains Coralie.

What happens when the program is over? Youth have gained work experience, valuable transferable skills and the confidence to pursue their employment goals. Many youth have been fortunate to find permanent jobs through their placement. Others have chosen to further their education.



What most youth learn is: "I can do it!" They gain transferable skills that help them in any job.

"Maia* graduated a year ago. She is stably housed now and working in child care. She is actively pursuing good health after some addiction issues in the past. Recently she began a post-secondary program – what an amazing young woman!" Coralie and Evergreen staff beam with pride remembering the success stories.

"Youth can get derailed easily - if they lose their housing, for example," explains Gail Meats, Director of Evergreen. "Lots of intensive one-on-one support is needed especially during Part I and II. So we rejoice with the youth who reach their goals – they give us hope!"



"Thanks for the chance to be part of the team!"

Connecting Youth to Work has proven to be a program that works, helping youth who need extra support, encouragement and mentoring. But we need your help. We are in need of employers willing to take a young person on for a 20-week placement, especially in the trades, social services, hospitality and administration sectors. If you think you might be interested, please contact Coralie Martens, CYTW Program Facilitator at 416-929-9614 ext. 2239. You can make a wonderful difference in a young person's life.

We were really pleased with the capable young woman from YSM. You must have an excellent screening and pre-employment program. We're in the process of arranging another placement from YSM.

From the employer's viewpoint, there is effort involved in making sure the youth understands the culture of your workplace. But you have a chance to see how a potential permanent employee fits in, you receive a wage subsidy from the government and you have the satisfaction of knowing you are helping a young person gain access to a very competitive marketplace.

Michelle Coombs, Executive Director,
Elizabeth Fry Society

*names changed for privacy



www.ysm.ca

Email: info@ysm.ca
 Phone: (416)929-9614
 1-800-416-5111

Administration:

DR. RICK TOBIAS
President and CEO

KAREN BACH
Mission Program Officer

PAUL DAVIDSON
Mission Operations Officer

RAY MARSHALL
Chief Development Officer

KERRY BOWSER
Senior Program Director

MOREEN WHITE
Director of Finance

CARL CHU
Director, Donor Programs

Branches:

GAIL MEATS
Director of Evergreen

MATTHEW PARKER
Lead Pastor/Director of Church at the Mission

CLAIRE BARCIK
Director of Community Services

RUTH PENTINGA
Director of Volunteer Resources

BILL RYAN
Director of Staff Care

KATHY WEBSTER
Double Take, Store Manager

LAURA AWOSANYA
Genesis Place, Housing Manager

Publication No. 1632817

Mark your calendars
ANNUAL
GENERAL MEETING

Thurs. Feb. 18, 7 p.m.
Refreshments 6:30 p.m.
270 Gerrard St. East

THANK YOU

To everyone who supported the 12th annual Downtown Towers Clothing Drive!



Lend a **HELPING** hand

MAKE A CARING COMMITMENT

Love is the foundation of all we do.

Love is the highest core value of Yonge Street Mission. It is the motivation for what we do and how we do it. You can see love in action when we pick up a lonely senior for a community lunch, help a child with homework, or sit down to talk with a newcomer to Canada in crisis.

Love flows around the Mission and it also flows into the Mission! Every month a group of faithful donors known as Partners in Compassion demonstrate their love for people in need by making a pre-authorized donation.

Our Partners in Compassion show care and concern by providing consistent gifts every month. One supporter told us:

"It is a joy to be a monthly contributor. The Mission can depend on my monthly support to make an ongoing difference in the lives of people who need help."

Your commitment of \$25 a month can accomplish so much.

- Hot meals for 8 hungry, homeless or hurting people every month
- Over a year, provide two weeks at summer camp for a child from the inner city
- Contribute to computer literacy training for a new immigrant

To become a valued Partner in Compassion, please contact us at 416-929-9614 ext. 4273 or donorservices@ysm.ca. Your caring commitment will be so gratefully received.



Yes, I'll make a caring commitment!

Please use my donation: Wherever the needs are greatest
 Other _____

Enclosed is my donation of: \$ _____ My cheque is enclosed.

Charge: VISA MasterCard American Express

Card # _____ Expiry _____ Signature _____

Name _____ E-mail _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ Prov. _____ Postal Code _____

Phone (____) _____ Fax (____) _____

- Please send me: Information on planned giving, bequests, gifts of securities
 Information on In Memory and In Honour gifts
 A listing of Volunteer Opportunities
 I would like to arrange a tour

Yonge Street Mission, 306 Gerrard Street East, Toronto ON M5A 2G7
 Phone: 416-929-9614 Toll Free: 1-800-416-5111 Fax: 416-929-7204
 E-mail: donorservices@ysm.ca Web site: www.ysm.ca

Please make cheque payable to Yonge Street Mission. Charitable Number 11930 6181 RR0001

THE BIKER AND THE SILVER LINING

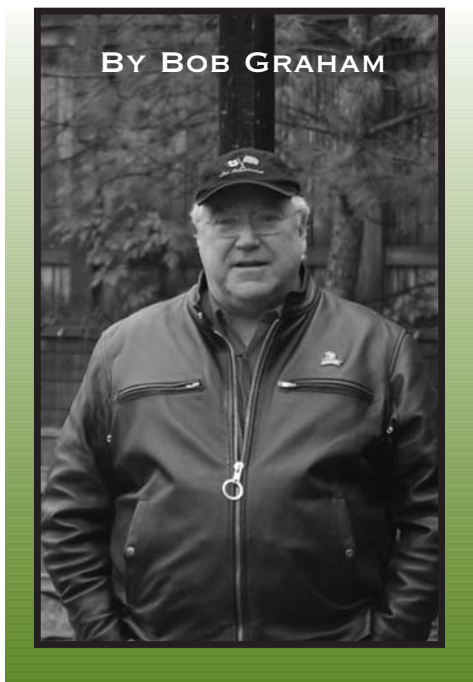
How did Yonge Street Mission come to have a motorcycle club named Los Silverados as one of its greatest supporters? The answer is fascinating. I dream and my wife Jane executes ... plans. It was Jane who shaped the Silverados we have come to know and love.

In August 1997, Barrie Sprawson, a member of Yonge Street Mission's Board of Directors, asked for my help to raise funds to establish several new YSM projects, including the Double Take store and the Computer Lab for children in the Regent Park community.

Like a thunderbolt the idea hit me. Let's start a motorcycle club to help raise awareness and money for YSM. I have never met a biker who doesn't have a big heart and \$100 in his pocket. The object was to get a loose network of guys and gals, bikers as well as non-bikers, who could each contribute \$100 to help the Mission bring about positive change in the lives of poor and disadvantaged people.

Our labour of love has seen Los Silverados grow from six members in 1997 to over 1,300 today. Each member is assigned a number, with the number One being reserved for God. Some members actually ride motorcycles, while others ride skateboards. Our youngest member rides a tricycle.

Silverados are scattered throughout Canada and the United States and chapters are sprouting in various countries like Israel and Russia. Members include the working poor and millionaires. What holds us together is our common desire to make a charitable contribution, to make someone's life a little better and to have fun doing it. There are no meetings. The only rule is that all the net proceeds from whatever we do go to the



Mission, whether from the sale of our handsome jackets or tickets to 'Smoke on the Water.'

Over the years we have witnessed the amazing generosity of members. Not only do they regularly volunteer their time to mentor or serve meals to street youth, but they financially support the Mission's Scholarship Program, the Computer Lab, and Evergreen. Silverados also make gift-in-kind donations. I remember the example of the VP Operations of a boot company who inquired if the Mission was interested in a few pairs of "Greb Boots". He sent over 2,500 pairs of Kodiak shoes to the Mission. Another Silverado sent skids of ice cream for YSM kids. Then there was a young Silverado film-maker who used her talents to produce a film for YSM, gratis.

Looking back over the past 12 years, Jane and I have had a lot of fun. We have seen the Evening Meal Program at Evergreen grow from one night a month to five nights a week. The annual Silverado Golf Tournament grossed \$187,000 this year with proceeds to

the Mission's Computer Literacy Centre. In spring 2003, the Silverados started The Yonge Street Mission Endowment Fund, now grown to a fantastic program assisting financially challenged youth to further their education. These are only some of the many achievements of the Los Silverados.

It has been a thrill for Jane and me to be part of a network of people with silver in their hair and silver in their jeans, who are still passionate about finding life's silver lining.

Words from Rick Tobias:

It would be easy to go on at length about Bob and Jane's involvement in the life of YSM but in enumerating their initiatives one might miss the core truth. Bob and Jane love us. They love the Mission and they love our people. I count them among my closest friends and like so many others have enjoyed the warmth of their love...

Rick

**Come and Join
Los Silverados!**

Membership \$100

www.lossilverados.com

Contact Info:

**Stephanie McMahon
416-929-9614 ext. 4227.**

Motto:

***"To make a contribution
and enjoy the ride!"***

Get involved: VOLUNTEER

INDIVIDUAL MENTORS

Mature adults to act as mentors to youth at Evergreen or in our Scholarship Program. Must be good role models and excellent listeners. Consistent longer-term roles allow you to develop meaningful and supportive relationships. Minimum one year commitment.

GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS

Community Engagement Volunteers

Individuals or groups of six interested in deeply engaging adult New Hope Fellowship program members in one-on-one discussions, fun activities, reflections and the weekly debrief meeting. Thursdays 5-9pm. Call to book one or more evenings.

For more on volunteering at YSM, please visit www.ysm.ca/volunteer. To discuss mentoring opportunities, contact Ruth Pentinga, Director of Volunteer Resources, at 416-929-9614 ext. 4236.

Thank you to all our fantastic volunteers!

SPECIAL NEEDS

- Chairs: we continue to replace seating throughout the Mission's common areas with easy-to-clean plastic chairs: \$65 each
- Enhance special events and weekly children, seniors, youth and adult programs. Sound system (2 wireless microphones and speakers) for Community Services: \$2,000
- Refrigerator for Women & Family preschool program and the women's busy catering group: \$600
- Kids play on the floor! Women & Family needs a new carpet for the preschool program: \$400

Your generous response to our special needs is deeply appreciated. Thank you! For more information, contact Anne Keyes at 416-929-9614 ext. 4247 or akeyes@ysm.ca.



FACES OF YSM

"I left my four children behind in Uganda when I came here in the summer of 2006," says Elizabeth Kagabe. "The decision to claim refugee status in Canada still causes me terrible anguish but I believe I acted out of love for my children."

Elizabeth was married at the age of 16 and did not find out until the birth of her fourth child that her husband had infected her with HIV/AIDS. That devastating revelation eventually opened the door to a new life.

"After I got the diagnosis, I separated from my husband (who has since died of AIDS) and my mother welcomed me and the kids into her home. I was trained as a community educator and began to combat the stigma and discrimination suffered by young women infected with AIDS. I travelled to Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Malaysia. How fortunate I was to have the love and support of my mom!"

Three years ago Elizabeth was accepted as a delegate to the International AIDS Conference in Toronto. Her health was beginning to fail and she needed treatment that she could not get in Africa. For the sake of her children, she chose life in Canada – even though it meant living apart from them for an unknown amount of time.

"I feel guilt that I am not there for them. As teenagers I know they need a mother's guidance. But if I die, they will have no parents at all. That is why I chose to stay in Canada and fight for my life."

Elizabeth found a place of refuge and friendship in the Mission's Women & Family Program. The staff and other women have helped her through medical treatments and legal proceedings. Their support has been a comfort when the burden of loneliness and ill health seemed unbearable.

"I am totally alone in Canada. So whenever I achieve something, I run straight to YSM to celebrate. It is a place where I find peace, encouragement and loving care. It has become my family."

Elizabeth is now a permanent resident; her health has improved significantly; she has completed training to be a health care worker; and she has begun the process to sponsor her four children to start a new life in Canada.

"Women from different religions and all parts of the world have shown so much love for me. I know they will rejoice with me when I am finally re-united with my children."



ELIZABETH (RASHIDA) KAGABE

A MOTHER'S LOVE

BY: KATHLEEN
MAGLADRY



Digital Storytelling links the generations

“We want to do it again!”

BY ANNE KEYES

Love – our primary core value – can be expressed in many ways. A love of learning and sharing is bringing together two very different groups at our Community Centre in an exciting new program.

Our media-savvy youth group is collaborating with YSM Seniors to produce a series of digital storytelling showcases. This combination of wisdom and creativity has resulted in seven remarkable

visual testaments from our cherished elders, passing on stories from their past and their hopes for future generations.

“I really appreciate his wisdom,” said Gemsan of Ivan, his Senior partner, when the first seven videos were shown in November. Children and adults from the Mission community were deeply moved by a range of stories spanning personal triumph and sadness.

Digital storytelling is a multimedia technique of taking old scraps of personal media materials – photos, music and home video – and incorporating them with the storyteller’s words. The youth worked with their Senior partners to blend their mementos and verbal recollections into the computer.

Senior participants were proud of being able to preserve some of their most significant life experiences as a loving gift for families and friends. “It felt good talking about this so other people will benefit from it,” said Elaine about a difficult family relationship. Margaret worked with Mavra, telling her inspiring story about learning to read at age 74. Now she chides her grandchildren when they grumble about their schoolwork: “If I can do it, you can, too!”

All of the youth enjoyed the chance to experience how their senior partners look at life. “He’s a very curious guy!” said Jo-Hannah after helping Stanley recount his working life from the age of eight. The storytelling teams and their friends in the Youth and Seniors programs shared a pot-luck dinner after their premiere, celebrating their new bonds of friendship.

Volunteer Corner

ST. MAURICE & ST. VERENA COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

“We love and respect everyone! And we love seeing that Yonge Street Mission is open to everyone,” says Leonard Chen of St. Maurice & St. Verena. “At YSM we see Hindus, Muslims and Christians working together as a tightly knit community – it is a joy to serve, both at the Christmas market and throughout the year.”

This vibrant and culturally diverse young congregation – established only two years ago – embodies the Mission’s core value of love as the foundation of all we do. The cheerful willingness to serve and generosity in holding major food drive campaigns for us is a testament to their living faith, and their openness to all newcomers reflects Yonge Street Mission’s culture and values.

“They are a wonderfully enthusiastic group,” says Ruth Pentinga, YSM’s Director of Volunteer Resources. “If we need a group of volunteers in a pinch, St. Maurice & St. Verena is always glad to serve.”

In each of the next seven issues, Urban Lights will highlight one of the Mission’s core values, beginning with our first value: Love.

YONGE STREET MISSION CORE VALUES

As a Christian faith community we strive to consistently demonstrate our core values.

Love: of God and love for neighbour is foundational to all we do

Creativity: We embrace the creative spark in the expression of our calling

Integrity: We strive for transparency and truth in who we are, what we say and how we behave

Dignity: We value people as unique individuals and respect and care for all of creation

Justice: We recognize the rights of all for inclusion, and advocate for and with those living with injustice

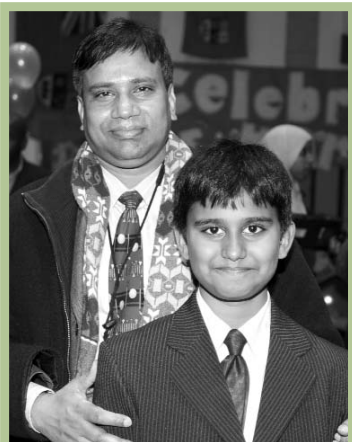
Gratitude: We radiate joy and appreciation for all of God’s gifts and celebrate the privilege of serving

Peace: We seek harmony with God, wholeness in relationships and health for our city.



CELEBRATING A DECADE AT THE TD SECURITIES COMPUTER LITERACY CENTRE

“Way to go – the future is yours!” said Dave Pearce, Vice President & Director, TD Financial Group, to the 71 graduates at the 10th Anniversary Graduation in November. Dave went on to tell the graduating class – our largest ever – of how his passion for computers from age 12 led him on a career path from software developer to a senior job with TD Securities.



“I love computer class! It enlightened me with new ideas every time,” said Shammo, Grade 4 valedictorian.

The evening’s theme – Celebrating the Harvest – captures the dynamic results of the seed planted with the first small computer lab class in 1999. Over 1,400 students have graduated from the introductory level course this decade; all have earned a computer to help them continue their studies.

Pride in the grads’ accomplishments was expressed by everyone from our CEO, Rick Tobias, to a little boy, aged six, who could hardly wait for his turn to enroll in the computer program. Computer education at YSM would not be possible without corporate support and we were pleased to host guests from Dell Canada, Xchange Technology Group and TD Securities. Julian Williams, Computer Education Coordinator, thanked the 30 volunteer teachers who spread the joy of learning to so many bright young minds.

Way to go to everyone who has reached out to reap such an amazing harvest!

CHRISTMAS CHEER 2009

The multi-purpose space at our new H.B. Martin Family Centre for Urban Education made it possible for us to spread Christmas cheer farther into the Mission’s community this year. The annual toy market helped 880 families in the new premises, freeing up space in the Community Centre gym. This allowed us to extend hospitality to more people closer to Christmas. One new event was a Christmas Eve brunch for 150 people from the neighbourhood.



“Thank you for the delicious meal!”

“We are truly thankful to everyone who made Christmas this year such a wonderful experience,” said Senior Program Director, Kerry Bowser.

Thanks to generous donor support, we also hosted a Christmas open house and pageant, a craft & sports activity day for children and youth, and 13 seasonal banquets for all of our program areas. Over 900 volunteers gave well over 3,000 hours to help serve festive meals, pack and deliver the seniors gift hampers, and operate the toy market – their infectious good cheer made Christmas joyous for everyone!

MARTIAL ARTS AWARD FOR EVERGREEN

“Without this program I’d be in jail or dead, I’m sure of that,” says a young man of the Street Vents Jiu-Jitsu program offered through Evergreen Drop-in. He was previously involved in hustling and gangs but is now enrolled in school, working and training.

The Street Vents program provides a structured environment to channel aggression, while using Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu to teach discipline and respect. Jiu-Jitsu is a non-striking martial art that focuses on leverage, technique and positioning, and provides excellent self-defence for women in assault situations. The program provides youth with a greater sense of self-control and self-confidence, and a healthy sense of community. Since



Young men and women learn self-control.

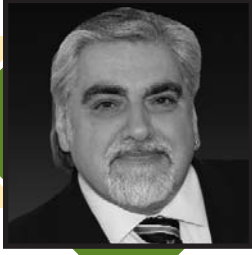
beginning in March 2009, it has expanded to include young women.

Participants have a variety of needs and backgrounds, including prison records for violent acts,

mental health and anger management issues. Through the mentoring aspect of the program many youth have received employment opportunities or have decided to return to school.

In October, the program won the **Street Level Advocate (Mentoring Program) Award** given by the Toronto Youth Cabinet and Mayor David Miller.

In noting the program’s success, Evergreen staff members Deb Stanbury and Dwight Catanus explain, “When you are pinned to the mat by your opponent, you learn humility!”



THE BACK PAGE

By: Dr. Rick Tobias, YSM President and CEO

Love – Number One in YSM's Top Seven

There was never any doubt when we decided to name Yonge Street Mission's core values that love would head the list. The list grew and shrank as our internal discussions unfolded through 2008 and 2009 – there were as many as 57 at one moment before we settled on seven – but love was always firmly in top place.

Of course, everyone has a definition of love. I don't mean just every poet, musician, and advertising copywriter, but every single person at YSM – more than 100 notions of what love is and should be. We settled on a very concise statement, suitable for an inventory of core values: "Love: of God and love for neighbour is foundational to all we do."

Why does this come first? Because love is paramount: this core value is all about motives. We're here because of the love of God and love for our neighbours. And at YSM, this kind of love is all around.

Love is the youth worker on the streets in the cold and dark, seeking a particular young person who has disappeared from our programs. Love is the staff member who has never given up on someone. Love is the volunteer tutor who can absolutely be depended upon and who is an anchor for a young child.

Love is a couple from the suburbs who travel in every week for years, to cook and serve food. Love is our receptionist cheerfully receiving and directing all comers –

and taking the time to listen to those who simply must be heard. Love is our day care workers who so often inconvenience themselves to accommodate struggling families.

And that's without considering board members who have served for years and donors who have given sacrificially, literally for decades. It is their love that is remarkable.

"to love our neighbour as we would be loved"

So if there's one thing about Yonge Street Mission of which I am proud, it is this – the motivation of our staff, volunteers and donors, so visibly anchored in the bedrock of real love.

But we don't have a monopoly on love. Because the people we serve also know what it is to love, deeply and truly. We see the teenage street mother who finds in her child's eyes reasons and motivation enough to change her life.

We see the beaming parents at a graduation ceremony in our computer lab – hearts bursting with love, awash in

pride, and tremendously grateful that others have recognized what their child is worth.

We see one senior caring for her neighbour when neither can really cope, the man struggling with addiction helping his friend to stay straight, the single parents providing child care for each other, the teens coaching each other towards success.

What emerges is a community. Out of community comes accountability. And out of accountability comes one of the greatest expressions of love – forgiveness. I can tell you first hand that it is humbling and yet strangely healing to have no option but to ask for forgiveness – and receive it freely – from someone I might be tempted to count as down and out – but who knows how to forgive out of love.

The YSM community is far from perfect. Love, as with all our core values, is aspirational. In our faith tradition, as in others, the standard we strive for is "to love our neighbour as we would be loved," and even higher, "to love others as God loves us".

Whatever we hope to be at Yonge Street Mission, whatever we become, let it be characterized by love – our most fundamental core value, and our greatest calling.