



Urban Lights

YONGE
STREET
MISSION

HOPE IN THE CITY SINCE 1896

Living with Violence



Working for Peace

BY KATHLEEN MAGLADRY

'I love you, kid. Now just take this bag for me and give it to ...'

That's how boys are recruited into gangs at age 13, according to Rahim Remani, a former gang member. "Young boys with no father or male role model hear 'I love you' and don't think about the criminal activity they are getting into. They're desperate for love and acceptance."

Rahim never heard anything of his own father. At age 13 his mother fell ill and he lived with various relatives. He started

hustling – and was soon into a life of petty crime, drug deals and weapons. He was expelled from school at 16 for bringing a handgun to school.

"I landed in juvenile detention and came out madder than before. I knew I was alone in the world and had to fight to get ahead – or so I thought then."

When Rahim's son was born three years later, he experienced his first change of heart. He got a legitimate job, determined to be a good father and positive role model for

the baby. But his relationship with his son's mother fell apart, and he reverted to a life of crime, even ending up in jail.

Although charged with serious crimes including drug and firearm offences, he was never convicted. He continued to be involved in escalating gang warfare and violence.

But once again, it was his son who prompted him to reform.

"One day he said, 'Daddy, don't disappear again.' I realized he needed me. Around that time I started visiting Evergreen and became one of the first graduates of the STAND program (Street

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Trade Alternatives and New Directions). Everything I've achieved is thanks to God and the staff at Evergreen."

"In August 2010 I had begun the Connecting Youth to Work program at YSM. I'd turned away from my violent past but it came after me. Some enemies from years ago ambushed me and I was shot at 13 times. Miraculously, only one bullet hit me – it left permanent damage to my hand."

"I asked myself, why was I still alive? God must have wanted me to survive even after all the sinful things I did."

"I remembered that the week before I had taken a toy gun away from my son and told his mother never to send him to me with that toy again."

"These thoughts made me realize I could not retaliate for the shooting, although I could easily have done so. But I didn't – I thought of my son's face. I want him to live, not just survive, as I had been doing. I want him to experience love from a real father, not from an older guy who lures him into a gang."

"It's not easy to sleep when you're a criminal. I still have paranoia. I want my son to have peace."

"How can we prevent violence? I think it takes knowledge of love," reflects Rahim. "A child needs to feel loved. If he doesn't get love and support from his family, he'll find it with a gang family."

Bradley and Natasha are two teenagers in the Leaders in Training program at YSM's Community Centre in Regent Park. Although they have chosen to live very differently from Rahim in his teenage years, brutal violence has still touched their lives.

"Last fall there were four guys shot to death just blocks from here," says Bradley. "I knew all of them and I was close to two of them through the YSM Youth group."

"I was totally shocked," says Natasha. "I thought Regent Park had calmed down

but now I feel a bit more insecure. This is not how a community should be – we should work together."

Both agree that YSM is a place of peace.

"The staff helped us a lot. We all went to one funeral together and they talked with us through some hard times."

Bradley and Natasha both work as peer counsellors in a local drug prevention program, actively pursuing peace in their neighbourhood. In the fall Natasha plans to enter George Brown College to become a counsellor for assaulted women and children.

"How can we prevent violence?" reflects Bradley. "I think we need more one-on-one mentors for younger kids. They can make deeper positive connections and stop the kids from listening to bad influences and falling into gangs."



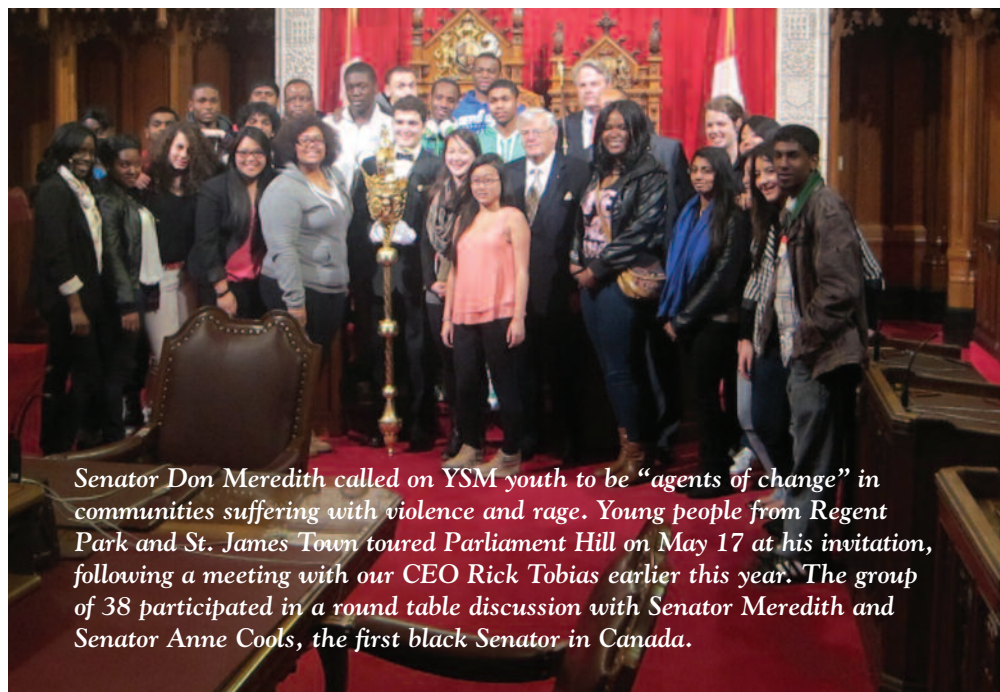
Jorge. "Fights over money, family issues."

"Bullying is bad," adds Nareen, age 13. "I've been bullied inside school. In YUVA we learn to be a leader and how to co-operate. I think we can work for change. If one person does something good or sets a good example, the whole community can change."

"I don't think you can work for peace just on your own..." says Jon.

"You can start with your own family," suggests Jorge. "Like a little government, everyone in your family can have an opinion. Families should try and work out their problems and a community is like a family. Everyone should have a voice."

At YSM we mourn youth lost to violence, encourage young men like Rahim trying to leave violence behind and offer stable homes to their own children, celebrate



Senator Don Meredith called on YSM youth to be "agents of change" in communities suffering with violence and rage. Young people from Regent Park and St. James Town toured Parliament Hill on May 17 at his invitation, following a meeting with our CEO Rick Tobias earlier this year. The group of 38 participated in a round table discussion with Senator Meredith and Senator Anne Cools, the first black Senator in Canada.

In St. James Town to the north of Regent Park, YSM staff notice that gang violence is considerably less. Several Grade 8 students* in our YUVA group (Youth United in Visionary Action) reflected on violence in their densely populated neighbourhood.

"We see a lot of drug deals when we're out walking," say Carlos and Damien. "It makes us feel unsafe. Plus it's embarrassing for our community to be in the news for bad stuff."

"I see lots of arguing in public," says

teenagers like Natasha and Bradley who actively pursue the way of peace, and offer practical support and leadership training for younger teens like Nareen and Jorge.

Thank you for being a part of this critical work! You are helping to bring harmony and health to our city.

** some names changed for privacy
Please see page 4 for a poem by Rahim.*



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Publication No. 1632817

RUN OR WALK FOR YSM

at the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon on Oct. 16.
 Call Rebecca Chan for more information at 416-929-9614 ext. 4255

BRIGHT LIGHTS

At The Carlu
 Thursday, October 27

To buy tickets or support our Student Awards program, visit www.brightlightsevent.com.
 Thank you!



Lend a **HELPING** hand

MAXIMIZE YOUR GIFT

Meet Scott Cameron, a faithful donor and volunteer for many years. Most recently, his donations have been gifts of securities.

“Mary and I work and live in downtown Toronto and believe that by helping the poor we make a vibrant city for all,” says Scott. “It started when I was on a golf vacation about eight years ago and was asked to support the YSM golf tournament. That led to serving dinners at Evergreen Centre and over time I developed a heart for people in different circumstances.”

“We have found the staff and volunteers at the Mission to be great people to hang out with. YSM is a warm supportive community and you don’t find that in very many places. One of the highlights for me is working with the Los Silverados Golf Committee. The golf tournament is fun and raises much-needed funds for young people.”

As someone who owns and operates a boutique mortgage banking firm, Scott is highly aware of the tax issues surrounding business deals and land ownership. That knowledge helps him donate effectively as well.

“I can donate shares that have an adjusted cost basis of zero, and not have to pay taxes. If I sold them to donate the proceeds, then I wouldn’t have as much to give,” explains Scott.

Thank you, Scott, and all who are able to maximize their gifts by donating shares. For more information, please contact Jon Unger Brandt at jungerbrandt@ysm.ca or 416-929-9614 ext. 4259.



Yes, I want to help, too!

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 Milestone gifts

I would like to arrange a tour

Prayer for the City weekly prayer guide with my Urban Lights

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

You can make a secure online donation at www.ysm.ca.

COMMUNITY POLICING NEEDS YOU



BY SUPERINTENDENT JOHN TANOUE
UNIT COMMANDER OF 51 DIVISION, TORONTO POLICE SERVICES

Peace is a concept that is often sought but seldom found. We are fortunate to live in a country where peace is highly valued and preserved as sacred and precious. This commitment to peace has drawn people to Canada from all parts of the world.

On a smaller scale, peace within a community means that individuals are able to move freely though their neighbourhood without fear of becoming the target of violence or crime. Feeling safe and secure ensures that people can enjoy a higher quality of life.

Police in our society exist to prevent crime and disorder, nothing more and nothing less. The development of today's community policing model first arose in the UK in the 19th century. Those chosen to keep the peace were unpaid community members who were charged with ensuring that standards and societal norms were upheld.

In our current Community Policing model, the police are expected to work with the community and together develop solutions to local problems.

In Regent Park, one new community initiative has residents of several of the buildings holding tea parties in the lobbies of their apartment complexes. The intention is for residents to show that they refuse to live in fear of their environment. Anyone wanting to sell drugs or engage in violent activity in

these spaces must face community members having tea and socializing with each other. 51 Division officers attend these gatherings not to provide security, but as members of the community who want to engage others.

A very important part of Community Policing is having the community identify problems, suggest possible solutions and supply resources and knowledge to correct the problems. We are certainly not experts in all fields and must rely on the vast experience and knowledge within a neighbourhood. Community leaders and social agencies can encourage others to become involved in problem-solving and in initiatives that address safety issues.

It is essential that anyone with knowledge of a crime provide this valuable information to assist our detectives in their investigations. Unfortunately, very serious crimes go unsolved because an important piece of evidence is missing. A call from a community member could provide the missing piece to a puzzle and allow investigators to bring an offender to justice. Information can be passed on either by calling 51 Division at (416) 808-5100 or anonymously through Crime Stoppers at (416) 222-TIPS(8477).

The Regent Park neighbourhood experienced a significant decrease in gun violence in the first half of 2011. We hope that residents, business owners and social

agencies will be involved in ensuring that the trend continues.

As members of the community that includes Yonge Street Mission and the people it serves, the officers of 51 Division look forward to meeting and working with everyone to ensure that we are all able to enjoy peace in our lives.

Untitled/Freedom

I am me
But this isn't who I've always been
I've survived it all
From incarceration
To knife and gun wounds
I've survived hatred
And now

I'm free

Like a caterpillar incarcerated
Within a dark sunless cocoon
For 60 days
Transformation into a butterfly

I'm free

Free to fly
Fly far from hatred
In the direction of light
Love
What a metamorphosis

I've survived
Now I live
Live to fly free
Believe in yourself
Fly with me

*Rahim Remani, age 24,
shared his poem at the Evergreen
Connecting Youth to Work graduation,
March 2011.*

Get involved:

TWO LOONIES, FOUR QUARTERS, ONE DIME AND A PENNY...



That cash, totaling \$3.11, was taped inside an envelope we received last spring with the message “For your Easter dinner from an 11-year-old boy.” We surmise that our anonymous young donor had set aside some of his allowance to provide a hearty dinner for a stranger in need.

It is heart-warming to see members of the younger generation embracing the chance to help others. Perhaps there are young people in your life – children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews – whom you would like to nudge in that direction. For that purpose, you will find a sheet enclosed with Urban Lights mailings inviting children to think about what they have, as well as what others lack.

Your child may want to colour a picture of “things to be thankful for” and mail it back for our draw and to help us decorate for Thanksgiving banquets. Or an older child may enjoy our word search. Now may be the moment to talk with your child about stewarding their resources – and that applies to people whose allowance is \$5 as well as to millionaires.

If you have a tip to share on modelling philanthropy for the younger generation, please drop us a line or email info@ysm.ca. We'd love to hear your ideas!

FACES OF YSM

Good neighbours strengthen a community – this is the view of Cabbagetown residents and Mission supporters David Clark and his wife Tracy Wynne. David is a professor of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University and Tracy practices law with a downtown law firm. They chose to live centrally in a small townhouse and become active participants in their community.

“We’re in this together with other citizens of Toronto,” say David and Tracy.

They have lived behind the fence from our 310 Centre on Spruce Street since 1996 and watched as Yonge Street Mission reclaimed a derelict building and lot in 1999, calling it “a huge change for the better!” Soon the couple became YSM monthly supporters.

“I work mainly out of my home office,” says David, “and it gives me great joy to look out the window and see the kids coming to the 310 Centre computer classes. I see the Mission creating hope, through all you do, and giving people tools – a book, meals, access to a computer.”

“We live on this incredible line between two worlds,” David says, describing living in affluent Cabbagetown, literally across the street from Regent Park. “My wife and I have worked very hard, but we have also been very lucky and have had many opportunities. We feel a basic responsibility to people we live cheek to jowl by, that we must work to right inequities.”

They do this by being active participants in many community outreach projects, including rescuing feral cats residing behind the Mission’s Gerrard Street buildings (most now are neutered and kittens placed in good homes).

As a teacher, David sees the potential in the community YSM serves. “Regent Park is dominated by young people – therein lies the secret and future of this country. The youth demographic is similar to my students at McMaster. Many are from immigrant families and struggle in all sorts of ways. A big part of being an educator is inspiring, encouraging and telling young people, though they may be disillusioned and cynical, that they can still create a future. I see this focus at the Mission – your programs are purpose-built to do this.”

Our good neighbours David and Tracy say, “We live in and want to support a mixed community – that’s Toronto in essence!”



DAVID CLARK

YSM FRIEND AND NEIGHBOUR

BY: ANNE KEYES



"I plan to teach teenagers, but it was fascinating to see how toddlers progressed and changed over three months."

SERVING IN THE NAME OF PEACE

BY ANNE KEYES

A desire to serve the world in a peaceful way brought volunteer Jan Smitmans across the Atlantic to help with the programs at Yonge Street Mission.

For Jan, one of the Mission's busiest volunteers, the choice was clear. A citizen of Germany, he was facing conscription into the German army. In lieu of military service, he opted for community service – a much longer time commitment – and found a placement in Toronto last September through the Mennonite volunteer service.

"I asked to be placed in an English-speaking country and really enjoy working with such a diverse group of people in this huge city."

An army of volunteers like Jan makes it possible for YSM to create positive change. By sharing their gifts of time and talent, our volunteers take an active part in the community, answering the needs of others while also seeing an impact in their own lives.

From staffing the food bank to serving meals to seniors and street youth, helping children with their homework, or stuffing envelopes, volunteers make the crucial difference in the Mission's ability to deliver

services. The success of major events relies on time donated: at the Book Fair last May, for example, 198 volunteers donated 589 hours. At YSM, organization of books or food bank shelves is as essential as the skills of medical practitioners at our Evergreen Health Centre.

While Jan's career goal is to teach high school English, he found he really enjoyed helping at the children's after-school clubs and the Evergreen Nursery.

The time he has spent volunteering at YSM over the past year will help him get into a university teacher training program, and will qualify as a school placement prerequisite.

"For me, it was a really good year at YSM!"

Volunteer administrator Wendy Robbins will miss Jan: "He worked everywhere in the Mission, averaging 36 hours each week, whenever there was a need."

Jan, we all say "danke" and many blessings on your future career!



In this issue, Urban Lights highlights the Mission's core value of Peace.

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

SERVICE UPDATE

OUR SERVICE TO PEOPLE IN NEED:

(number of visits in the first six months of our 2010-2011 fiscal year)

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Food Bank	20,238
Computer labs	4,132
Meals and other programs	24,810

EVERGREEN

Meals and Drop In	41,279
Health Centre	4,653
Employment Resource Centre	6,288

Thank you for helping to welcome 8,821 different people for meals and programs during this six-month period!

SPECIAL NEEDS

Flat panel monitors: 60 needed at the Computer Literacy Centre for the next graduation of the Introductory class. Contact Anne Keyes at 416-929-9614 ext. 4247 or akeyes@ysm.ca.

Donate your points!

You can give your Shoppers Optimum Card points to YSM.

Visit www.shoppersdrugmart.ca and follow the links for Optimum/Transfer your Points.

Thanks to all who have donated points so far – you enabled us to purchase sunscreen and insect repellent for our summer camps!

New Program Space Opens



A 16-station computer lab opened in the Community Centre in June. Toddlers, seniors and teens all love the new space. Thanks to Green Shield Canada for donating the new equipment.

Thanks to the generous donors who supported our Infrastructure Stimulus Fund projects, the Community Centre now has newly renovated program space. A wonderful multi-purpose room on the second floor accommodates meetings of community members, seniors' art classes, one-on-one counseling and children's activities.

We are still accepting donations towards the numerous projects funded 50% by the federal government. Remember, the government will match your gift until October 31.

How You Helped

Your online donations and pre-authorized givings have never meant so much! During the June postal disruptions, YSM revenue plunged 40% below budget.

Heartfelt thanks to all who made a special effort (even delivering cheques in person) to support people in need during this challenging summer. Your continued support will help balance the books by September 30, the end of our fiscal year. Thank you!

Welcome Andrew; Farewell Karen!

Andrew Williams has joined YSM as Mission Program Officer, replacing the Rev. Dr. Karen Bach, who retired this summer.

Coming to the Mission from the corporate world, most recently as Marketing Director at KPMG, Andrew is thrilled to be part of the team.



"I'm so excited by this opportunity to serve on the charity side, in such a vibrant and visionary organization."

Andrew is on the board of Tyndale University and was a former member of the YSM board – giving him a unique perspective in his new role.

"Karen made the transition very smooth," says CEO Rick Tobias. "We will miss her gracious presence immensely. But I know Andrew will be a wonderful asset to YSM."

Celebration for Genesis Place

Join Yonge Street Mission at the annual Cabbagetown Festival on Saturday, September 10. This year we celebrate 20 years of supportive housing at Genesis Place. You are invited to our open house: tour GP's housing facilities and let us entertain you in our common space with live music and food.

The day's fun starts early with the festival parade at 9:30. Come to see the Mission's Silverados motorcycle group ride by. Gerrard Street will be closed in front of GP and the Community Centre for our traditional children's fun fair, YSM displays and food stall. See you there!



Photo: J. Cowie

'TWEET DON'T EAT'

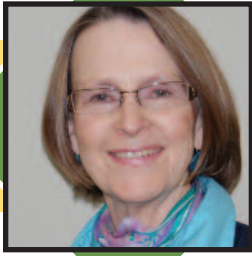


Join us on Twitter at YSM_TO.



"When I found out what camp was like, I was really happy."

Thank you for supporting YSM camps with your special gifts. Over 600 campers enjoyed this precious summer experience.



THE BACK PAGE

By Karen Bach, Mission Program Officer

Screaming, Screeching, Sirens and Shots

As you read this, I am many kilometres away in my new home by a quiet lake enjoying the tranquility of nature. There are no screaming neighbours, no screeching brakes, no sirens, no gunshots breaking the idyllic silence of my retirement. It is a place of peace.

Yet, as you read this, the members of our YSM community will accept screaming neighbours, screeching brakes, sirens and even gunshots as a normal part of everyday life. Perhaps this is to be expected in a densely populated urban setting.

However, for some people in the community, these sounds can strike terror into their hearts. Does the sound of screaming neighbours mean that their friend is being beaten again? Do screeching brakes mean that their child has been run down? Do the sounds of sirens mean another drug bust in the apartment next door, or that police will knock down the door in search of their son? Does the sound of gunshots mean that another bright young man from the community has been murdered over something as simple as a pair of shoes, or for being in the wrong place at the wrong time? In this environment, there is no peace.

It's difficult in the busyness of a large city to find peace. When so many people live so closely together, peace is a rare commodity. Yet peace is an essential element of a healthy life. If we are to be fully human and alive, we need to enjoy a

time of peace and quiet to recharge and renew. For people who have money, that is not an issue. They are able to escape into the quiet of their homes, or to cottages by the lake. However, for people living with poverty, finding peaceful places isn't quite so easy. They are constantly bombarded by sounds and activities all around them that prevent them from experiencing peace.

*Peace is more than simply
the absence of war.*

*Peace is the
presence of justice
and the absence
of fear.*

Ursula Franklin, Feminist,
Educator, Quaker, and Physicist

Staff at Yonge Street Mission know that it is hard to find peace amidst tension and turmoil. That's why 'peace' is one of our core values. That's why we work so hard to bring peace into the lives of the people with whom we journey. Whether it is during nap time in the daycare, or prayer time among the St. James Town women's group, or quiet one-on-one chats with youth at Evergreen, or being by the lake at camp for a few days with street-involved women, we work hard to bring moments of

peace into the lives of the people of our community.

We do this because we know that a time of peace can give people the resources necessary to approach life more positively; that a few moments of peace can enable them to be more objective about their situation; that peace can bring healing. We do this to help make our community and our city a place of peace.

Peace to you,

Sadly, we bid farewell to Karen this summer as she embraces a new life in retirement. We will miss her deeply.

Many blessings on you, Karen.

'May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace.'

*From my heart to yours –
Rick*

*Dr. Rick Tobias,
President & CEO*