

Urban Lights

YONGE STREET MISSION – HOPE IN THE CITY SINCE 1896



By Kathleen Magladry

MENTORING: Invest in the Future and Transform Lives

YSM Student Award recipients pictured here are all paired with volunteer mentors

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“Working as a youth mentor was inspiring! I received as much as I gave and when you are volunteering your time, that makes the whole experience fantastic,” said Phyllis, one of the volunteers in the Evergreen Arts Mentoring Program last summer. Individual and small group mentoring is growing by leaps and bounds at YSM. By next year we expect to have 250 individuals involved in mentoring initiatives, including youth from Evergreen, from our Community Centre youth group and from our Student Awards program.

“For some young people, a mentor is the first person in their life who really listens,” says Mentoring Facilitator Angie Hocking. “The simple task of journeying with someone is incredibly powerful. A mentor can provide a light in someone’s world when they need it most.”

“My mentor is helping me map out my short-term and long-term goals. Because of him I believe everything will be alright,”
said a youth facing the challenges of first-year university.

Mentoring has expanded to include adults as well. In the Women & Family program, women not only have mentors through the Building a Better Life group, but go on to become mentors to a subsequent group. It is part of the community development approach at YSM. More and more we will draw on mentors from within the surrounding community, where so much strength already exists. Mentoring is one way to harness this strength and provide positive and sustainable leadership opportunities for members of the communities we serve.



>> Gracelynn and Sarah

Gracelynn, pictured here with Angie, came to Evergreen over a year ago, newly arrived from Vancouver. She appreciated the friendly and supportive staff who helped her with job search and interviews. About the time she decided to take an intensive eight-month course to be a medical receptionist, she agreed to meet her mentor Sarah for the first time.

"Sarah was positive, easy to talk to and honestly answered any question I asked. She really helped me adjust to living in Toronto. I can totally talk to her about anything," Gracelynn says.

"Before I came to Toronto, I had started at least six different college or university programs. The first one I ever stuck with and completed was this one – while Sarah has been my mentor. I think there might be a connection!"

Sarah says, "My hope is that Gracelynn has been able to get the support and encouragement she needs through our mentoring relationship. It has been such a pleasure getting to know her, and she has really challenged me too."

"I didn't know what to expect coming into mentoring but it has stretched and humbled me greatly. I really believe that if you've been given much, then much is expected of you, and this program is such a unique and personal way to serve and share."



>> Kim and Deb

Kim is a long-time resident of Regent Park who came to YSM a year ago seeking connections and became an enthusiastic participant in the New Hope Fellowship programs. Last summer she signed up for our first-ever women's support group. Eight women, ages 19 – 60, meet weekly with two volunteer coaches, Deb and Tiffany.

"We set goals and share them with the group," says Kim. "Within one month I was successful with my two goals: cut way down on smoking and get a volunteer job. I'm going to help out at a hospital gift shop!"

"I look forward to setting more goals," Kim continues. "It's a rewarding feeling when you meet your goals and get positive reinforcement from other people."

"What I like about the group is that the women are positive, and we give each other lots of encouragement. It helps bring out the shy people. Now some of us are friends outside the group and we meet for coffee."

Deb, one of the coaches, adds, "We have a strict code of confidentiality and safety within our group and we discuss issues that I personally don't believe I could share elsewhere. I feel honoured to be entrusted to volunteer as part of a special group of women. Personally, I have received so much more than I can ever hope to give back to so many awe-inspiring individuals."



>> Kabi and Tony

Kabi is a second-year recipient of a YSM Student Award and a Business Management student at Ryerson University. He was a valedictorian at our computer lab graduation two years ago, and both his parents are volunteers at the Mission.

"Tony and I meet up at least once a month," says Kabi. We have a solid relationship and he is always guiding me in the right direction. The mentoring program is great because it really opens your eyes to possibilities in the future."

"It has been a privilege to get to know Kabi over the past year. He has probably helped me more than I advised him," reports Tony. "He made a marvellous transition from high school to university, with the important support of the Student Awards program. I have complete confidence he will graduate and one day be a very successful entrepreneur!"

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MENTORING is a perfect example of YSM core values in action: demonstrating love for your neighbour, valuing the dignity of each person, advocating for justice, celebrating the privilege of serving, promoting peace and wholeness in relationships – and all the while exhibiting amazing creativity!

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- **Become a mentor:** transformative experience, training provided, minimum one-year commitment
- **Visit a mentoring program:** people with professional experience are needed to lead workshops and share their expertise
- **Join the Toronto Mentoring Network:** professionals working with community mentoring programs can support each other and share best practices.

For more information, contact Angie Hocking, Mentoring Facilitator at ahocking@ysm.ca.

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Coldest Night of the Year Can your group "walk the talk"?

Join YSM in the walk for the homeless on Feb. 25, 2012.
Contact Rebecca Chan at
rchan@ysm.ca or visit
www.coldestnightoftheyear.org.

Make a Christmas gift IN MEMORY

or in honour of a friend or colleague. Check the Donate Now page at www.ysm.ca for a letter you can download for your honouree.



Lend a HELPING hand

SHARE THE JOY OF THE SEASON!

We could not do it without you. Your compassionate Yuletide generosity touches so many lives.

"My daughter is 18 months old and I've had a tough year," said Tara, a single mother. "It's a comfort to know we'll be able to celebrate Christmas!"

Without the food and toy drives that donor groups faithfully hold for people in need, Tara and her little one might have gone without. Disabled and socially isolated adults, refugees, seniors, homeless youth and families trapped in poverty's cycle all benefit from your helping hand.

It's during the teen years that the awareness of poverty's reality sets in. "My parents try hard but they can't afford movie tickets or cool new clothes," said 15-year-old Meena. "Last year I received a Christmas gift card from the Mission. It was amazing! There was something I'd always wanted in the Eaton Centre and I could finally get it. That meant so much to me!"

A small but cherished gift is a beacon of hope for a young person growing up with poverty. Your donation of gift cards will indeed share the joy of the season. Please refer to the Christmas Wish List at www.ysm.ca for suggestions. Thank you!

YES, I'll share the joy of the season!



Please use my donation: Wherever the needs are greatest Other

Amount Enclosed \$ _____ Cheque (*payable to Yonge Street Mission*)

Credit Card: VISA MasterCard American Express

Card #: _____ Expiry: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ Apt.: _____

City: _____ Prov.: _____ Postal Code: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____

Please send me:

- Information on planned giving, bequests, gifts of securities I would like to arrange a tour
 Prayer for the City weekly prayer guide with my Urban Lights Information on In Memory and Milestone gifts

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E-mail: donorservices@ysm.ca Web site: www.ysm.ca

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

A Week at the Mission

• **A prayer request:** “I would like for the demons that haunt me to go away for today, for tonight. Please pray for me.”

• **A story from Double Take:** A man came into our store and gave the cashier \$7. He explained that a year ago he had stolen a sweater. He said he knew it was wrong, wanted to pay for it and added that he thought we were doing good work. Before the cashier could reply, he had left the store.

• **A donor’s note:** “My wife and I appreciate the newsletter. Personally I was a “Cabbagetown boy” in the ’30s, ’40s, and early ’50s, and benefitted greatly from organizations like YSM.”

• **A lament from a Food Bank volunteer:** “I wish we could give out more milk for the children but there just isn’t enough.”

• **A comment after dinner:** “Thank you for asking my permission to take my photo. I am homeless and I don’t want my family to find out – that is why I said no. But I appreciate that you respect my dignity and my privacy.”

• **A Gift in Memory:** People give to the Mission for a variety of reasons. One donor sent a bank draft and enclosed a note to tell us that her gift was in memory of her 5-year-old grey cat that had died recently. “I loved her very much and miss her greatly,” she wrote. “Thank you for allowing me to remember her this way.”

• **A grateful mother:** “My son took part in the new youth leadership program this year. The office in St. James Town turned out to be a place where the youth really want to be. Great work! Please keep this program going for the next batch of youth growing up in St. James Town.”



“Look what I made!”

Children in the YSM preschool program explore art, improve language and social skills, enjoy games and music, and arrive in Kindergarten ready for success.



Food is a basic need!

Donated food is loaded off the YSM van, down the stairs and on to the Food Bank shelves. Every week about 800 people in the YSM catchment area receive a three-day supply of groceries.



Jail Is Not Life: “Criminal activity has been a big part of my life while being homeless on the streets of Toronto. Evergreen has been a big influence in keeping me out of trouble.” This photo and caption were on display at Doors Open Toronto.



Thanks to all who generously donated to our Back-to-school Drive!

SPECIAL NEEDS:

- **Upright Commercial Freezer:** to store donated food for our Food Bank and meals, new or used (good condition) commercial grade unit; \$3,400.
- **10 Storage Cubbies:** with hooks, for the preschool program; \$150.
- **Flat Panel Monitors:** for graduates of the Introductory computer class.

Contact Anne Keyes at 416-929-9614 ext. 4247 or akeyes@ysm.ca. Your support of special needs is greatly appreciated!



FACES OF YSM

By Catherine Mulrone

Bindu John: A Natural Leader



Bindu John's mother could see the difference in her daughter when she came to visit. "My mother was amazed at how long it took me to walk to the store because so many people stopped to chat," Bindu laughs. "I have lots of friends now."

Bindu's expansive community network and busy schedule are signs of the success of the St. James Town Women's Council, established in September 2010. Bindu served as the council's first chair.

The council helps women – many new to Canada – meet others, showcase talents and learn skills, building confidence and employment connections. St. James Town is YSM's first satellite location.

Born in India, Bindu arrived in Toronto from Dubai about three years ago. She and her husband felt Canada would offer their son and daughter a better future. They now also have a daughter, born here.

Like so many neighbourhood women, Bindu knows what it feels like to be a newcomer with plenty of talent and experience but possessing few connections.

That understanding, coupled with an impressive resume which includes experiences as a financial controller and human resources administrator, helped prepare her for the job of council chair.

But Bindu's personality also makes her a natural leader, says Agnes Thomas, YSM's Community Development Consultant in St. James Town.

"She's an inspiration because she's so busy but still finds time to serve," says Agnes. "She treats people equally and brings a real sense of peace to what she does. She's very talented but she's very modest."

Council activities range from the serious – a tour of an employment centre or talks on nutrition and parenting, for example – to the social. A breakfast club for moms is very popular, allowing women to get together at the council office after the school bell rings to share a meal and chat.

Bindu plans to return to the paid workforce once her daughter begins school. Given her recent volunteer experience, she is thinking about a career in social services.

"Women can achieve so much if we come together and support each other," she says.



Get Involved:

Volunteer

Downtown Towers Clothing Drive
Groups needed to receive clothing donations, various shifts, January 23 – 27, 2012.

Please contact Wendy at 416-929-9614 ext. 4278 or wrobbins@ysm.ca. For other volunteer opportunities, check www.ysm.ca.

Christmas Cards for Inmates

Thank you to all who sent cards last year for Pastor Jan to distribute to women she visits in prison. Your beautiful cards and messages of hope surprised and touched women in the maximum security unit at Vanier. "I can't believe a stranger cares about me!" cried one woman, adding that she would cherish her card and the prayers that went with it.

Send your cards to Jan Rothenburger at 306 Gerrard St. E. by Nov. 30, and Jan will personally deliver them.

United Way Donations

Did you know? Although Yonge Street Mission is not a United Way agency, you can designate gifts through employee deduction by writing 'Yonge Street Mission' on the pledge form. A heartfelt thank you to all donors who support YSM in this way!

Thanks, Kids!

Your beautiful and thoughtful drawings brightened the day for everyone at our Thanksgiving meals. Awesome work! Check www.ysm.ca for the winner of our Kids' Fun Page contest!



Living without Drugs

Evergreen helps youth overcome addictions

“When a young person admits she has a drug problem, she needs help today, not tomorrow.”

– By Kathleen Magladry

“I spent over 30 years abusing drugs and alcohol myself,” says Fred Ellerington, who now works as the Addictions Counsellor at Evergreen. “I reached the point where I had to decide if I would live or die. I knew I needed professional help and I entered the residential treatment program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.”

Fred’s personal struggles with substance abuse make him uniquely qualified to help street youth, up to 90% of whom admit to using drugs.

“When a young person approaches me for help, I always start by describing what happened in my life. I could not have overcome my addictions on my own. I had to learn to listen to professionals.”

After three years spent working on his own well-being, Fred trained to become an addictions counsellor. In August 2010 he helped YSM launch an addiction recovery program at Evergreen.

We now offer a structured 16-week program where youth are supported one-on-one as they follow their personalized action plan and goals. In the first year, 45 youth pursued this model, and countless others received informal counselling.

As part of Evergreen’s holistic approach, young people receive help with health issues, housing, education and employment at the same time as addictions counselling.

“We are meeting a huge need. There are few treatment options for youth in Toronto. Young offenders who are mandated by the court to get treatment for substance abuse are often referred to us, for example, and have a high success rate in our program,” explains Fred.

In year two of the addictions program, our goal is to hire and train two graduates of the structured program who have remained clean and sober for at least six months to help guide other youth. As Fred will attest, anyone who has “been there” is in a good position to relate to their peers struggling with addiction.

In just over a year, the program has had some remarkable success stories.

Lindsay* has been coming to Evergreen for seven years. Her alcohol and crystal meth use, combined with the sexual trauma she has endured, would make it very easy for her to fall back on drug use when things become difficult. But by the end of the 16-week program, Lindsay was clean, maintaining daily contact with Fred and registered in an employment training program. She has realized that she is not currently capable of being in a relationship, and is happy being single.

“I finally get it,” she says. “I can live without drugs, and life is great.”

**Names changed for privacy*

Thank you to Paloma Foundation for generous donations to this new program. We are seeking a major donor, with interest in combatting substance abuse in young people, to come on board with financial support in years two and three.

Volunteer Corner - CBS Outdoor

This group of amazing friends has shared the joy of the Christmas season with the Mission’s Seniors since 2000. “Wow, has it been that long?” says Heather Sainsbury of CBS Outdoor.

“We identified seniors as a potentially neglected group at Christmas and wanted to reach out, so our employees decided to collect gifts for the seniors at YSM.”

Every year CBS volunteers have visited in December to pack and wrap the large gift boxes that all of our seniors receive, and then help deliver the festive gifts.

“Our good friends at CBS Outdoor bring special joy to lonely seniors,” says Adult Program Coordinator Janice Rainey. “We are so grateful for this wonderful volunteer relationship!”



Thanks to Los Silverados

It was another great day on the greens at the 14th annual Los Silverados Golf Tournament, held Sept. 20th at Glencairn Golf Club in Milton. The course, the competition, the food and the fun were all top-notch, and the event raised over \$90,000. Many thanks to Scott Cameron, Mary Fote and the golf committee, as well as all Los Silverados and guests who came out to show their support for YSM.



Get ready...golfers put spirit in their swings and raise funds for Children and Youth Programs

Social Justice Giant Mourned

Yonge Street Mission mourns the passing of Gerald Vandezande, who died July 16, 2011. A gentleman of deep faith, Gerald worked tirelessly for social justice and was awarded the Order of Canada in 2001. He was a valued YSM Corporation Member for five years.

Bright Lights Celebration

Our 5th annual gala on October 27 raised funds for Student Awards, helping 40 students this academic year as they pursued post-secondary education.



First year award recipients receive a laptop donated by Dell Canada

“YSM has given me new opportunities, and now the ball is on my side,” said Michael, who is studying Commerce at Ryerson University and hopes to become a chartered accountant. For photos and details of the Celtic-themed evening, visit www.brightlightsevent.com.

Lights Camera Action!

Fifteen youth participated in a six-week workshop this summer, learning how to develop a script, perform in front of a camera and produce a short film. Their movies will be showcased at the Regent Park Film Festival in November.

Many youth enjoyed special opportunities to attend fitness classes, overnight camp and Canada’s Wonderland, and one group volunteered to sort food and clothing donations.



We ❤️ summer programming!



How does your garden grow?

Last summer our day-care rooftop playground added a garden. The children watered, watched their flowers bloom and harvested a healthy crop of cucumbers and squash.

Luckily, there was still room for the climbing apparatus, sandbox and water play area, a must in the hot July weather!



Thanks for Giving

Turkey dinners with all the trimmings were enjoyed by many at YSM over the Thanksgiving season. Thank you to all who supported the Thanksgiving meal appeal!

Our Donors are so 'TWEET'!
Join us on Twitter at [YSM_TO](https://twitter.com/YSM_TO).



NRandCO Nathalie-Roze & Co.

Save 10% off any purchase (new or sale merch), when you donate dry/canned goods to our [@YSM_TO](https://twitter.com/YSM_TO) food drive ~ thru to Sunday!



THE BACK PAGE

By Dr. Rick Tobias, YSM President & CEO

What we crave most at Christmas

Christmas at Yonge Street Mission is a frenzy of high spirits and good will. Our Mission friends supply food and gifts and resources to enable our many community groups to celebrate. Our staff enthusiastically help thousands of people briefly step out of the ordinary.

Joy is genuine. Excitement reverberates throughout the Mission. And the noise level is through the roof.

But peace on earth? In the neighbourhood? In people's lives and hearts? In the summer edition of Urban Lights my colleague Karen Bach wrote about making our city a place of peace. That's our deep desire – yet peace is elusive.

Peace is often broken through open conflict. One year, on the first day of our Christmas Market, the first two women to arrive got into a fight jockeying for position. Separating them took a minute; stopping the name calling took longer. If people believe they must aggressively compete for survival, living peaceably is a struggle.

But people are also unsettled, grieving and angry. They have no peace and are stalled in their lives because they want the people they believe have wronged them to meet them half way. "If only my father would say he's sorry... If only my daughter would take my call ... If only... If only..." Yet most are disappointed. Bridges have been burned, and ruptured relationships often cannot be rebuilt.

Cultural stresses also strain the peace. Our events and programs are open to all. That very welcome creates tension for people who

want to be true to their own faith. Many newcomers to Canada want to be part of their new community and the cultural life of Canada. So one woman requests extra gifts for her neighbour, whose children now will be part of the Canadian holiday. There will be no mention of YSM or Christmas, because to the husband, engaging YSM is disloyal and dishonouring.

And I ache for our staff. Often, for them, this season is neither holy nor restorative. They seldom have opportunity to connect personally with family and friends – including their friends in our community. Christmas is a perfect storm of urgent need and activity. Like sailors bailing water, YSM staff live the ethic of service and generosity until they are overwhelmed. Peace is the seventh and last of YSM's new list of core values. "Peace: We seek harmony with God, wholeness in relationships, and health for our city."

Slightly different from the other six values – love, creativity, integrity, dignity, justice and gratitude – peace is the outcome we crave. "Want peace? Work for justice" one bumper sticker proclaimed. Amen to that.

Day in and day out we bind lots of wounds, like a MASH unit on hyper-drive. But that's not peace. So what must 'peace-makers' do?

We help neighbours become a community. We help people reconcile themselves to their past and to never hearing "I'm sorry." We put at ease people who want to be part of our community and get help for their families, and yet be true to their heritage. And we try to treat staff as something other than consumable resources. None of it is perfect. But it is more than binding wounds.

Those are the benchmarks of the peace we seek. The gift you give to YSM is a gift to everyone we meet, and we thank you, profoundly, for the gift of fragile, elusive, beautiful peace.



"They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace." – JEREMIAH 6:14
