

YSM launches partnership for better learning



Shortly after we launched our robust adult program *Bridges* in the fall of 2016, our team began developing an education program and identified the need for a literacy partner who could help community members overcome this critical barrier. In response we launched a pilot project in partnership with Dixon Hall in spring 2017.

Community members were initially hesitant, but thanks to the support and encouragement of YSM staff, fear and hesitation quickly grew into determination. YSM worked with five adults who were hoping to improve their literacy levels and walked alongside them – assisting with initial assessments and accompanying them to Dixon Hall. Four of the five participants successfully completed the pilot project, with two continuing on with Dixon Hall for additional courses

and another moving on to take advanced courses. Given the success of the pilot, YSM is now working with Dixon Hall as part of our education plan that will help connect community members with meaningful employment.

The level of literacy varies greatly with community members so we determined that multiple partners were needed. As a result, YSM is now partnering with the Toronto Public Library, who has provided us with an *Adult Literacy Deposit Collection*; materials that support adult learning and meet the diverse interests and needs of adult learners. They also assisted with training YSM volunteers who will be providing one-on-one tutoring to adults who wish to increase their literacy levels.

To support YSM programs, go to ysm.ca/donate or ysm.ca/act/volunteer for latest volunteer opportunities.

YSM's HELPING HANDS

Jean Thomas Delespierre

Jean Thomas has been volunteering with YSM's Educational Supports program, providing free one-on-one tutoring to our community youth for the past year. Our volunteer tutors work with youth and adults to improve their marks, specifically those with multi-level barriers to success in the academic field. These individuals come from low-income households, with very little family support due to barriers in language and education and consequently have fewer opportunities to find one-on-one support to learn at their own pace and learning style. The one-on-one tutoring has proven to significantly increase the students' likelihood to graduate from high-school, while helping them successfully transition to post-secondary school. The program would not be possible without our dedicated volunteer tutors.

"Having immigrated to Canada a few years ago, I feel fortunate to be in this country. I started tutoring at YSM because I wanted to give back to the community I now call home and saw that there was a need to help students reach their academic potential. Each student has their own rhythm and I am constantly adapting to their learning styles. Seeing the students improve their grades and build confidence is my favourite part of volunteering. I believe that collaboration between organizations and individuals means that we can achieve more together and reach a common goal faster."

To learn about more about becoming a volunteer tutor, visit ysm.ca/act/volunteer



Jean Thomas Delespierre, volunteer tutor

FIRST PERSON



Jessica Fennessey, Donor Services Coordinator

Jessica Fennessey

Jessica Fennessey was this year's recipient of YSM's Bob & Jane Graham Award, awarded to an employee who demonstrates a superior capacity to engage volunteers. Jessica has trained and overseen dozens of volunteers during their time with us, caring for their needs, taking the time to address their questions and celebrating their successes. She strives to create a friendly and inspiring work environment for volunteers and makes them feel like they are part of the YSM family on a daily basis.

"Working at YSM has been a great learning opportunity for me, both personally and professionally. My job requires me to process donations and my favourite part of the job is that I get to work with great volunteers who donate their time, which allows us to operate to our max potential. Without the care and commitment of our volunteers, much of the work that we do would not be possible. Collaboration between staff and volunteers is also very important because we all come from different backgrounds and bring something different to the table. Collectively, we have a wealth of knowledge that can be put to use for the greater good."

YSM launches pop-up shop with local women's organization

On July 25, Show[case] – a unique space within our Double Take Thrift Store where customers can find antique items and upscale clothing cleared some space for a fun collaboration with Regent Park's Creative Women's Collective, a subset of the Women's Development Network (WDN).

YSM's Community Development team provided guidance for the group of women and our Double Take Store Manager mentored them, providing insight into the world of retail and helping them with the creative process, merchandising and marketing.

Their creations, which consist of hand-made jewelry, knitwear, sewn items and specialty foods will be available for sale at Double Take until **January 2017**.



About the Women's Development Network

WDN is a community initiative supported by YSM. The organization provides peer support, skills development and social enterprise opportunities for women from low income families in Regent Park, Moss Park and surrounding areas. Its mission is to promote the full participation of women in social and economic life, while providing a strong network of diverse opportunities for women to build confidence and a sense of well-being within the community.

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YES, I want to lend a hand!

17ULFALL

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The **BACK PAGE**

Collaboration is a buzzword of our time, which means working together to accomplish something. It acknowledges that people are working together toward a shared outcome and esteems all parties involved, an absolute necessity for good collaborations to flourish.

In a society that is wired for individualism, organizational identity and competition for funding, YSM has been working hard to support and foster collaborations that intentionally esteem the contributions of everyone involved so that two critically important things happen – people feel safe to collaborate knowing that what they bring will be valued and known and secondly, we can move people out of poverty by fully exercising all the resources collectively available to us.

This issue of *Urban Lights* highlights the collaborative initiatives of YSM and Dixon Hall, the women in our community through the Women's Development Network, and one of the many contributions of our volunteers – making up 3,700 members of the YSM family and whose regular contributions play a key role in helping run our programs every day.

Our hearts continue to break as we walk with people who struggle daily with poverty. Even though we have reason to be encouraged by the great progress around us, we strive to bring shalom peace – safety, wholeness, integrity, and harmony – into all interactions with our partners, so that together we can create a community that values and includes all.

Thank you for believing in our investments in collaboration and community development, these critical investments are now multiplying the scope of impact in people's lives.

Blessings,


Angie

Charitable Registration Account # BN119306181RR0001

Did you **know?**

- YSM was involved in planning and providing all volunteers for **Party in the Park** (Regent Park) this past summer.
- **Prosper Lab**, an extension of our *Bridges* program has launched – learn more about it at www.theprosperlab.com
- **O.V.O.L. celebrates one year anniversary** – their impact includes 6 workshops with youth, 1 with a local school, over 100 youth engaged and over 150 hours invested in one-on-one training
- **Jubilee Designs**, YSM's social enterprise initiative for street youth is now on the web – their story and creations are available at www.jubileedesigns.ca

THANK YOU! Your support makes these things happen!



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