

# URBAN LIGHTS



## RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

We begin the New Year by reflecting on the many stories of progress that we have witnessed this past year. Together with your support, we have helped thousands of people from every walk of life rise out of poverty, offering a hand up, not a hand out. From homeless to housed, unemployed to working and unhealthy to healthy. We saw street youth, families in need and adults experiencing chronic poverty push themselves to grow – most exceeding their own expectations.

We believe that our RISE model, which seeks to respond, invite, support and engage community members and help them journey from surviving to thriving has helped us foster sustainable change in the lives of thousands in Toronto. It allows YSM to respond to immediate needs and helps improve personal well-being, which is necessary to create sustainable change and build independence.

It is early, but we are already seeing people make hundreds of positive moves forward in their lives through TIMES™, our unique measurement tool.

People like Paula, who at 15 found herself on the street. YSM welcomed her in and helped her secure housing, grow her skills and access the resources she needed to get to a place where she could create sustainable change and work towards independence.

***“YSM has been a thread in my life for the last 17 years. If not for the support and resources they provided, I do not know what would have happened to me. They helped me set goals to work towards and gave me direction for my future.” – Paula, former Evergreen youth***

Success stories like Paula’s would not be possible without all of our supporters and we appreciate each and every one of you. We would like to especially thank YSM’s leadership supporters, The Charis Foundation, the Patrick & Barbara Keenan Foundation and Allchurches Trust Ltd, who have made significant contributions in support of our RISE model of Care.



**Learn more about Paula’s story and see her perform in YSM’s new video at [ysm.ca/endthecycle](http://ysm.ca/endthecycle)**

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## YSM'S HELPING HANDS



Erin Wilde, Volunteer Nurse

➤ To learn more about volunteering, visit — [ysm.ca/volunteer](http://ysm.ca/volunteer)

Erin has been volunteering with YSM since 2015 and is highly involved in many aspects of the Health Centre programming, including our foot clinic.

*“Volunteering at YSM has given me the opportunity to use my nursing skills to provide medical care and support to youth who need it the most. I have cared for youth who have no shelter, who sleep on rooftops, in subways, and behind garbage receptacles. They come in with shoes full of holes, wet and torn and are often on their feet for hours with little rest.*

*If their ability to walk is affected, it may impact their ability to find shelter or food, keep a job or to take care of their children. Screening and treatment also has a large impact on general health. It can detect signs of medical issues, which staff are equipped to treat.*

*The foot clinic may also act as the youths’ first point of contact to the Health Centre where they can receive medical care for other ailments or to the other services offered at Evergreen.”*

***“Witnessing how one kind act can brighten their day makes volunteering with YSM worth it.”***

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## FIRST PERSON



Elaine Paz, Mental Health Services Coordinator

➤ To learn more about working with YSM and latest opportunities visit [ysm.ca/careers](http://ysm.ca/careers)

YSM constantly looks for ways to help community members better address barriers and manage crises. Elaine is leading the charge by creating a mental health training curriculum for YSM staff and actively recruiting qualified volunteer mental health professionals to help keep up with the increasing demand.

*“Our holistic approach includes addressing the traumas and challenges that may be preventing individuals from making long-lasting change. It’s not enough to get them housed or employed, as many have trauma that they need to work through.*

*Our team is able to help people work through their issues one step at a time and we recognize that success looks different for everyone - from managing depression to gaining employment and being able to let go of things that trigger destructive decisions, such as toxic relationships. We walk alongside resilient individuals on their journey to good health and make sure they experience love, dignity, respect and a sense of belonging along the way.*

*It isn’t easy or linear, as each individual’s journey is unique, but I am so honoured to serve them.”*



# A PLACE TO CALL HOME

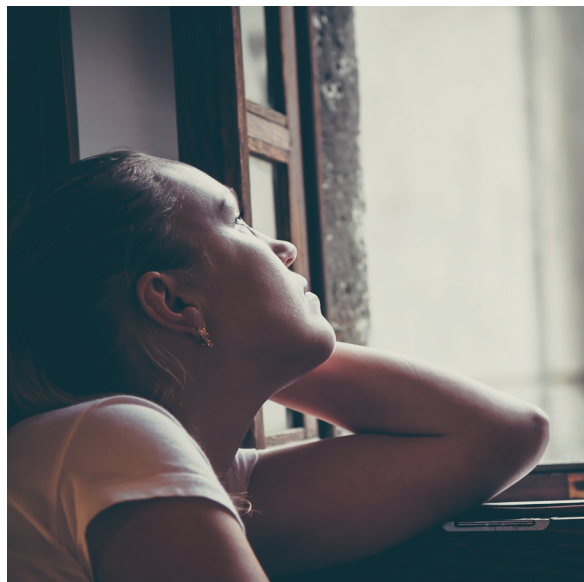
*Stable housing serves as the foundation for people's well-being and provides emotional stability and security.*

Many of the individuals that YSM serves, including families and street youth as young as 16 depend on Toronto's shelter system. They resort to unstable living conditions for many reasons, including fleeing domestic abuse, insufficient income and not knowing how to navigate through the system to obtain the necessary supports and resources. The wait-list for subsidized housing in Toronto is also over 10 years long.

YSM's housing workers offer support in accessing shelters, transitional and permanent housing, educate them on the available resources and also advocate on their behalf. They help people like Angelina\* find stable housing which builds emotional stability and security needed to sustain positive change.

**ANGELINA'S JOURNEY ...** Young, unemployed and living in a shelter, Angelina came to YSM's Evergreen Centre desperate to find stable housing. She had lost contact with her family, lacked community support and was struggling to make it on her own.

She participated in YSM's Starbucks Barista training program, obtaining a full time position after the program ended which helped her save for her rent deposit. Angelina then faced another challenge – landlords were hesitant to accept her applications because she was young and had only recently began building credit. YSM's housing staff advocated



on her behalf, helping her secure housing one month before her son was born.

Angelina is now stably housed and reconnecting with her family. She is focused on changing her life, raising her son and making plans to go back to school in the near future.

\*Name and photo have been changed to protect privacy



## YES, I WANT TO LEND A HAND!

18ULSPR

Please use my donation: ☐ Wherever the needs are greatest ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

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

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# THE BACK PAGE

## NEW LOOK, SAME YSM

For over 121 years, we have been working with Toronto's most vulnerable, but the reality is that there is a great deal more that needs to be done. There are far too many people struggling with poverty in Toronto, including an alarmingly high number of children and youth. We know that we can't keep doing things the same way we have always done them and expect a different outcome.

Over the last four years we have laboured alongside our colleagues and mapped out a distinctive path forward, which will help more people work their way up and out of poverty at a faster pace. This journey has led to what you see today. We have refreshed our look to reflect our plan to end chronic poverty. The time has come to be bold and courageous as we feel compelled to champion this urgent and important cause.

YSM is not changing direction – our values have and will remain the same. We will continue to approach each individual with dignity and respect and apply the

RISE full system of care that has shown success. Our plan includes the expansion of some of our current programs, strategic partnerships to develop effective and sustainable strategies and a unique measurement tool (TIMES™), which will help track the effectiveness of our programs and community member progress so that we can learn, evolve and respond in a way that truly helps tackle the issue of chronic poverty.

Our community loses so much when people like Paula and Angelina aren't able to share their gifts and abilities with us. So our New Year's resolution is simple, invite more people to join us in creating true community, so that together we can get serious about seeing less and less people living in poverty.

Thank you for being a part of this important work. We invite you to learn more about our plan and how you and your community can get involved, at [ysm.ca](http://ysm.ca).

Blessings,



Angie



## COMING IN 2018

- After a number of unforeseen delays, we are excited for the opening of our new Evergreen Centre on Spadina Avenue this Spring.
- Expanded mental health services
- Focus on new and strategic partnerships

## SAVE THE DATE



- Coldest Night of the Year - a fun, family- friendly walk in support of YSM.

Visit [cnoy.org/toronto](http://cnoy.org/toronto) to sign up or support a walker.