

URBAN LIGHTS



Marie holding two books in which her stories have been published by YSM

HOPE AND HEALING, BECAUSE OF YOU!

Recently, Marie* witnessed an act of discrimination against her friend. Shocked by the situation, she froze and was unable to come to their defence. Marie had a hard time getting past what she saw and felt guilty about not being able to help. Wanting to work through the distress and make sense of what happened, she pulled out a pen and began writing

A few years ago, she would have bottled up her frustrations and isolated herself or worse, taken it out on someone else. *Because of your support, we're able to provide a creative writing class to community members like Marie, a tool to help them heal.*

The drop-in class, which is available through the Bridges adult program, also helps community members improve their vocabulary and writing, gives them a chance to put their experiences into words and challenges them to develop their problem solving skills in a creative way. Marie credits the class and instructors with helping her express herself in new ways and find her voice.

Many have also found a supportive community and a safe space where they can work through their traumas

without fear of judgment. The creative writing volunteer instructor uses her own passion for writing to encourage others to use it to help them heal.

"Writing together is therapeutic for all of us. It promotes bonding and a stronger sense of community. Writing also draws us out of our comfort zones, challenging us to connect with our innermost thoughts while expressing our voices in meaningful ways" – Darlene, YSM staff and creative writing volunteer instructor

As summer approaches, Marie is looking forward to writing more stories. "Summer brings so much inspiration and ideas for good stories. It is in the faces you see at the park, in the flowers you see in people's gardens and the adventures I have with my friends. But most of all, it brings hope."

Thank you! Your support helps community members like Marie heal.



To learn more about YSM programs and see the impact of your support visit ysm.ca

*Name and photo have been changed to protect privacy

YSM'S HELPING HANDS



Rui Miguel Martins,
Volunteer Community Research Assistant

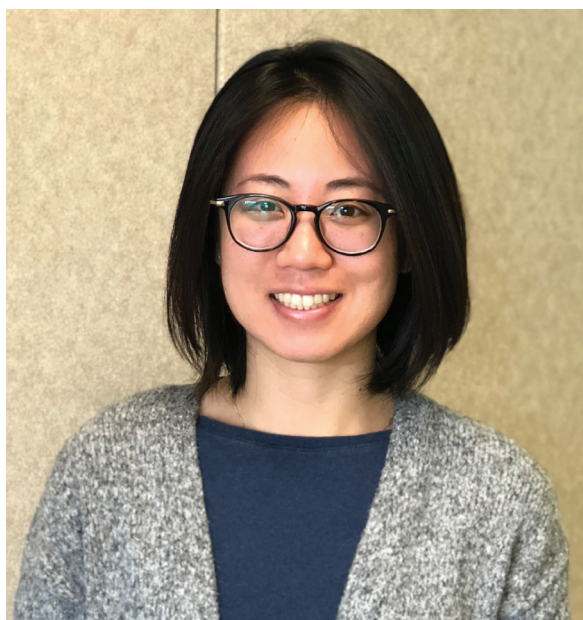
Rui may not be the typical front line volunteer, but over the past three years he has worked behind the scenes with YSM, using his professional skills to help disseminate research reports, scholarly articles and literature reviews related to the services YSM offers and people it serves. These are broken down into *Research Bulletins*, which help keep YSM's staff educated and informed so that we can continue to offer the best services possible to community members and better understand patterns of poverty. The *Research Bulletins* will be available on ysm.ca/learn in the upcoming months.

"Through my time volunteering, I have developed a sound understanding of a lot of social issues and it has helped me in many aspects of my life. I have volunteered for Make A Change Canada, Earth Day Canada and Volunteer Toronto in the past and in addition to the obvious, it makes me feel good and like I am helping make a difference. Volunteering has also helped me grow as a person and as a professional - the experience and skills that I have learned are invaluable."

I believe that by making this information more accessible people will see that those who are stuck in the cycle of poverty are much more than their circumstances and that poverty is a complex issue made up of many factors."

 To learn more about volunteering, visit — ysm.ca/volunteer

FIRST PERSON



Hyelee Jo, Care Management Specialist

Hyelee's volunteer experience at a refugee centre in Toronto and overseas in India and East Asia developed her understanding of poverty and her desire to bring new hope to people in need. Currently, she works in our Cornerstone program helping families in need, because we recognize that family is the rock of people's foundation.

"The families I work with are involved with child welfare services, such as the Children's Aid Society and come from a variety of situations. They refer newcomers, refugees, families trying avoid child apprehension or families who are working towards having their child(ren) returned."

Recently, a family who had come to us broken and desperate for guidance, graduated out of our care. In the last year, they moved out of a shelter and into stable housing, the mom secured a full time job, they found a sense of community, developed a support network and achieved a higher level of overall well-being."

Transformations like these are possible because donors put their trust in us and enable us to walk alongside families who need us the most. Thanks to those who believe in YSM, we are able to help families in need find strength to follow through with their goals and desires, helping them get to a place that may never have seemed possible."

 To learn more about working with YSM and latest opportunities visit ysm.ca/careers

HELPING NEWCOMERS MOVE FORWARD

Your support in action

Mo* was first connected with YSM's Evergreen Next Step program through his Ontario Works case manager. He was a young newcomer to Canada, struggling to find his way. The stresses that come with moving to a new country had taken a toll on his family and he lacked a support system to help him work toward his goal of getting off of social assistance and building a career.

Because of your support, Mo received employment training, help identifying his skills and interests and created his first resume. He had lost his legal documents shortly after he moved, a major obstacle holding him back from legally working in Canada, but staff were able to guide him in getting his documents sorted so he could apply for a Social Insurance Number. The feeling of defeat started to fade away.

With a newly found confidence and tools to move toward his goal, Mo completed our program, participated in a Tech Program and landed his first Canadian job. Recently, Mo reached out to staff to share the good news that he had secured a summer job and plans to use the money he earns to attend college in the spring.

Thank you! These things can only happen with your support.



Program participant (left) working on his resume with Glen, YSM staff (right)

"I look at my life and I am so grateful I had Next Step and the support of great staff who acted as mentors and are still there to support me if I start to lose my way."

- Mo, Next Step program participant

YSM's Evergreen Next Step program is for youth receiving Ontario Works benefits and the entry point for motivated youth wanting to pursue their employment goals. Youth gain employability skills, life skills and confidence through the five week program and are matched with job opportunities. It also serves as an opportunity to connect them with other services that can help sustain the change they are working toward, such as housing supports, medical services and counselling.

*Name and photo have been changed to protect privacy

18ULSUM

YES, I WANT TO LEND A HAND!

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

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

Credit Card: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Credit Card #: _____ Expiry: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ Apt.: _____

City: _____ Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

I would like: ☐ Information on planned giving, bequests, gifts of securities ☐ Arrange a tour ☐ Annual Report

Yonge Street Mission
306 Gerrard St. East
Toronto, ON M5A 2G7

Phone — 416 929 9614
Toll Free — 1 800 416 5111
Email — info@ysm.ca

You can also make a secure online
donation by credit card —
www.ysm.ca/donate

THE BACK PAGE

SEEING POSSIBILITY

Earlier this spring I gazed at a new and unfamiliar garden, considering how to prepare it for summer. Like most gardens, it had been cleaned up last fall, and so all that remained in it were the perennials, bushes and trees.

Because this garden was unfamiliar, I first had to figure out what the perennials were so that I could know if they were planted in the right light, when they would bloom, what colour they would be and if so, what hue? This is the creative process of gardening and it all starts with looking at barren dirt punctuated by the seemingly dead remains of plants and sticks that were once colourful creations.

If I look closely enough at the dead remains and sticks I can see the potential of each plant. If I take the time to get to know the plant and its colour, I can create the perfect conditions for it to thrive within the garden. But, if I walk right past it in a hurry, I'll only see dead remains and sticks.

In our community, we are like gardeners, only in this case what we pause, linger, see, and cultivate is so much more valuable than flowers.

Because of you and your support, we see the vibrant gifts and talents that people, who in the present might not look like they have much to offer, possess. Creative stories like *Marie's* that cause our hearts to soar.

Mo, the family who regained stability and *Marie* represent a whole community who have learned to dig deep, understand their challenges and their gifts, learn, grow and ultimately give back to the community that they are a part of. This is all because you chose to ensure that we could stand beside them and help them see possibility in the face of adversity, healing in the place of pain and advancement in the face of roadblocks.

Thank you for not rushing by and for seeing possibility and beauty where it matters most, in the lives of people.

Blessings,



Angie



DID YOU KNOW?

■ You helped provide over 24,000 nutritious meals this Easter season

■ YSM will be expanding its services into the region of York South Weston, which houses four of the City's 31 Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.

■ YSM's 8th annual *Coldest Night of the Year* walk raised over \$185,000

■ 82% of people served through YSM's Employment Centre are employed, in training or education. Read more about your impact in our annual report at ysm.ca/accountability

Thank you! Your support makes these things possible.