

URBAN LIGHTS



KEEPING THE SPIRIT OF GIVING ALIVE

Earlier this year, Susan* made the courageous decision to flee from her abusive partner with her two young kids. The decision to keep her family safe meant leaving it all behind. She had to leave her job and as a result, lost her financial security. With nowhere else to go, she was forced to move her family into a shelter.

Through our partnership with Children's Aid Society Toronto, Susan was connected to YSM's Cornerstone division, where our staff work with families in need. Because of your support, YSM was able help Susan begin to rebuild her family's foundation, offering guidance during the custody battle with her abusive ex-partner, advocating on her behalf, accompanying her to court proceedings and providing other supports, such as counselling to her family.

Her ex-partner is refusing to pay child support and ongoing court hearings and inability to pay for daycare make it unrealistic for her to return to work so our care management team helped Susan get on social assistance to stabilize financially during this transition.

Susan finds it hard to provide basic necessities for her children. She didn't have enough money to pay for her

kids' school supplies and clothes this year, so she took out a loan. She doesn't know how she will pay for this, the court fees or transportation to get to and from each custody hearing, but your compassion and caring is making it possible for her to keep moving forward.

For now, she is using the little money she has left from each social assistance cheque to pay off her loan and hopes to begin saving for a rent deposit soon.

This holiday season, Susan's family will be just one of the families that will benefit from your generosity. Hundreds more like Susan will continue to receive support and won't feel forgotten at Christmas thanks to donations made to YSM, our Christmas Toy Market and food bank. The holiday cheer your compassion brings to families like Susan's allows them to celebrate the joys that the Christmas season brings, offering relief from their hard reality.

Thank you for keeping the spirit of giving alive during the holiday season and all year round.

*Name and photo have been changed to protect privacy

YSM'S HELPING HANDS



Anna Ferrone,
Evergreen Outreach Volunteer

Anna began volunteering with YSM's Evergreen Centre for Street Youth just over four years ago. She volunteers with our outreach team to help spread the word about the services and programming offered at YSM to street youth in Toronto.

“We drive or walk around the city to reach as many youth as possible. It is important that we take a proactive approach and go out to spread the word to as many homeless youth as possible instead of waiting for them to come to us.

Even if all we can do is offer some food or an ear to listen, I feel it is very important that we go out there and show them the love and dignity that they deserve. The most fulfilling part is seeing the youth we connected with walk through Evergreen's doors to access the services.

With winter around the corner, the outreach team is ramping up to provide street youth with necessities we sometimes take for granted – like food and warm clothes. If anyone has extra items such as winter hats, gloves and hygiene products they can donate, we would be very grateful to receive them. Every bit helps and something as simple as a pair of warm gloves could mean a new beginning for youth living on the streets of Toronto.”

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

FIRST PERSON



Michael Feurtado,
Housing Support Worker

With rent in Toronto at an all-time high and limited affordable housing, Michael and the housing team work together to break through barriers to come up with creative solutions to get families and individuals housed.

“My favorite part of the job is meeting the different individuals and hearing their stories. The most challenging part is trying to navigate around the different barriers and seeking alternate housing options, but I stay motivated by assisting the individuals that I work with and keeping faith that doors will open up for them to be housed.

Some of the ways that we combat the lack of affordable housing include looking for new and affordable rental developments being released by the city, calling listings to confirm availability and going out into the community to find landlords and developments we can build rental partnerships with. The wait for subsidized housing is over 10 years long, so we have also sought out people who have rental properties that suit the needs and budget of the community members we work with so that we can get people housed and off the streets sooner.

If anyone has available units that can help us get people housed sooner, or units that may become available in the future, please connect with us!”

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

HELPING A DAD GIVE HIS SON A CHRISTMAS

For many of us, the holiday season is a time to gather around the dinner table and break bread with our family and friends, but for many of those who YSM serves, this is a time when tight incomes become even more strained. Your support of our food bank helps ease some of the burden on families and individuals by providing access to food, which offers one less expense for them to have to worry about this holiday season.

Your compassion has helped Brent, a former radio announcer who was injured on a construction job site 10 years ago and left unable to work. Brent credits your year-round spirit of giving for allowing him to provide food for his son through YSM's food bank and for helping him give his son a Christmas, by supplying small gifts to put under the tree through YSM's Toy Market. The extra food received through our holiday food hamper also helps make this time of year feel special.

“YSM’s support over the holiday season and all year round helps me work with my limited funds – I don’t have much left over after I pay for the basic necessities like rent and utilities. Not having this support would greatly affect myself and my son. Thank you for helping me give him a Christmas!”

This December, YSM's food bank will book over 1,000 appointments, with the food reaching over 3,500 individuals - including children. The highest needs in our food bank are for non-perishables, as well gift-cards to purchase meat and fresh produce to suit our



Brent receiving fresh produce at YSM's food bank.

community's needs.

The gifts provided during the Christmas season not only mean more food for our community members and their families over the holidays, it also carries us over into the New Year when the need for food banks is just as great. Thank you for caring!

➤ To learn more about how you can support struggling families this Christmas visit ysm.ca/holidaycheer



YES, I WANT TO LEND A HAND!

18ULWIN

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.: _____

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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

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A TIME FOR THANKS

It is one of my favorite times of the year, filled with many celebrations and happy memories with family and friends. I love spreading holiday cheer, like thinking about what my family and friends might enjoy and gifting it to them. I love the season of Advent, the prayerfulness and preparation of my soul leading up to the celebration of Jesus' birth ... and yes, I start listening to Christmas songs non-stop as soon as the radio begins playing them.

This time of year is full of celebrations. In December, I celebrate the Christian Christmas (birth of Jesus), but depending on your beliefs, you could be celebrating Kwanzaa, Chanukah, or the tradition of Christmas (Santa Claus) rooted in the story of St. Nicholas in Europe. If your tradition or faith celebrates at a different time of year, you may still get caught up in the festivities.

In Canada, the dominant themes on the television and in the songs on the radio celebrate family, friends,

gratitude and caring for the marginalized. All themes rooted in one or more of the holidays that represent our diverse population.

In the midst of all this celebration, it is impossible not to be deeply aware of our privilege. This season that brings many of us joy is also a season that brings a sense of loss, mourning, stress, anxiety and grief for many in our community. Every day the media reminds them of what they don't have as they endure a much harsher reality. For Brent and Susan, like so many of our community members, this is a reality they didn't choose, brought on by injury and tragedy.

As in years past, my wish is that the spirit of generosity will be preserved throughout the whole year. At YSM, we are so very thankful for you. We celebrate you and thank you for seeing the need and responding with great generosity. It is only together that we can ensure that all members of our community are celebrated and supported now and throughout the year.

Blessings to you and your loved ones this holiday season,



Angie



DID YOU KNOW?

■ YSM is expected to provide gifts and toys for over 2,000 kids and youth through our annual Christmas Toy Market – learn more at ysm.ca/holidaycheer

■ YSM's food bank will provide for over 3,500 people - including children, this holiday season.

■ Mark your calendars! *Coldest Night of the Year* is back on February 23, 2019. Join us at our annual family friendly walk to support street youth and families without stable homes.

■ You can help make this Christmas a memorable one for someone struggling with poverty – visit ysm.ca/holidaycheer to learn how.

Thank you! Your support makes these things possible.