

URBAN LIGHTS



THE POWER OF YOUR SUPPORT

This past year, your support has been instrumental in helping street youth stabilize and build stronger futures. By deciding that no one should have to live with poverty, you have helped them start the New Year with **HOPE**.

Thanks to your compassion, we were able to open the doors of our new YSM Evergreen Centre for Street Youth where vulnerable youth can access programs and support that help them move off the streets and towards a brighter, independent future.

The need continues to be great and you are providing youth with a warm and safe alternative to the streets, a place where they can begin their journey to change. Youth like *Tiffany, who stepped into the new YSM Evergreen Nursery earlier this year after her social worker told her about our services. Our staff was able to sit with Tiffany and quickly learned that she was living in a nearby shelter with her 6 month old son. We were able to provide much needed baby formula and winter essentials for both mom and son.

Tiffany is getting to know the staff and is encouraged by their support. She has been visiting more frequently

and recently joined us for a warm meal and to access our health centre.

While 2018 proved to be a tough year for Tiffany, your generous support is giving her hope that she will be able to regain control of her life and find a job that will help her provide a better future for her young son.

Due to the significant and unforeseen construction issues which impacted our budget, including the discovery that there was no foundation or structural wall during the construction phase, we are opening in phases starting with the first and second floor.

We are actively seeking to raise the additional funds and will open the remaining floors once fully funded. The additional floors will allow for full expansion of programming and will also house partnership offices and programs to expand our ability to help street youth progress in their lives.

 **To learn more about YSM programming or the impact of your support visit ysm.ca**

*Name and photo have been changed to protect privacy

YSM'S HELPING HANDS



Pascal Savarino
Volunteer Photographer

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

Camera in hand, Pascal has captured many images of our community members with dignity, telling their stories of hope and resilience.

“Photography lets you communicate stories through images. As a newcomer to Canada, I knew this would be an excellent opportunity to do some good in the community and to tell a compelling story through pictures.

My favourite moment so far has been taking part in the Christmas Toy Market and seeing the faces of proud parents choosing gifts for their children. I love capturing little moments and small gestures that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Through this experience, I’ve learned first-hand how impactful YSM is to the community. It’s not just about helping those in need, but also about providing people with necessary tools to reintegrate into the job force or improve their skills. It’s a place where people can learn, grow and express themselves through art and activities.

I encourage anyone who has a little free time to lend a helping hand to YSM even if just for a short period. It will prove to be a rewarding experience.”

FIRST PERSON



Arleen Gomez
Bridges Coordinator/
Care Manager and Pastoral Care

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

Arleen’s heart for struggling neighbours and her previous role at YSM’s Davis Centre front desk led her to her current role providing care for adults in YSM’s Bridges program and YSM’s Church at the Mission.

“At the welcome desk, I had the privilege of getting to know many community members which led to a desire to work with them in a deeper way. My favourite part about this job is witnessing people progress. It’s a journey and it’s an honour to walk with our adult community members. You hear and see stories filled with pain, the reality of what many live with, but there is hope in that pain and that’s what I want to help bring in people’s lives...hope.

We need mentors, workshop facilitators and dinner volunteers, as well as items to help reach education and employment goals, such as laptops, backpacks, interview clothing or steel-toe boots. Donating or volunteering with YSM is about coming together to believe in a vision, believing that we can end the cycle of poverty in Toronto.”

Bridges offers adults struggling with poverty the opportunity to take courses, build community, create learning plans and access referrals towards housing, employment and counselling. Bridges, as with all YSM programming, is fuelled by the belief that all people have dignity, value and purpose.

NEVER TOO LATE TO START LEARNING

Through our work with adults who have grown up with poverty, we have found that one of the major hurdles to a better future is their literacy. We recently created a drop in style program called *The Learning Hub* to help.

Diane, our Adult Education and Employment Specialist believes that being able to read is the first step to independence, so she places great importance on creating a positive and engaging atmosphere. "Positive experiences in learning are key to keeping people motivated. Our staff and volunteer tutors create an encouraging and fun environment where we are able to work with adults, meeting each person where they are. We go at their pace and keep them accountable to their goals."

Working on these skills has helped them work toward regaining control over their lives and feel a sense of independence, giving them hope for a brighter future.

*Marlon, a former Evergreen Youth was working on turning his life around when he first came to The Learning Hub. He had begun attending a local college, but his learning disability made it challenging for him to keep up with his course load. Feeling discouraged, staff and tutors helped bridge the gap, working with him at his pace and encouraging him to meet his goals. Just this past December, he got his first A and is now working with the tutors to study for a major exam.

Marlon is more determined than ever to get a good



mark and make it through the program, thanks to you!

Your compassion has helped adults like Marlon find the support they need to work towards their independence. We know that we are only as strong as the community around us so we thank you for your continued support. It means that we will be able to continue encouraging, motivating and assisting many more in 2019 as we continue our work toward ending the cycle of poverty.



To learn more about how you can support YSM programming visit ysm.ca

*Name and photo have been changed to protect privacy



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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

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

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www.ysm.ca/donate

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WORK IN PROGRESS

Have you ever tried to acquire a new skill? Like a language, playing an instrument, or even painting? I have tried all three and my latest passion is painting. My favourite is painting landscapes. And as I stumble along in my learning, I have realized that a great landscape has many stages until it is finally complete.

It can look quite strange before the images really begin to take the form that the artist is trying to create and it's only in the final stages that the masterpiece begins to become evident. While my painting is a work in progress, there are times when I walk away discouraged thinking that it will never take the form I have for it in my imagination.

When somebody like Tiffany or Marlon walk into a YSM location, we are meeting someone who is discouraged or even broken. They already have many strokes on the canvas of their life that depict previous challenges and trauma.

At YSM, our staff look at each person and see the finished masterpiece that they are meant to be and step by step, help them to see it too.

YSM staff like Arlene or our YSM Evergreen team help people process and heal from the dark brush strokes and to begin to place fresh strokes of beautiful vistas and joyful scenes on their canvas. And as they do, fuelled by your support and the gentle, patient caring of our staff, we see Marlon get his first A and progress toward his career goal. We see Tiffany begin to find her way forward as she learns how to become a parent and to provide for her child.

Listening, seeing, believing and encouraging ... moment by moment and day by day, we see mini miracles and unbelievable transformations happen in the lives of people at YSM and we celebrate each person's emerging masterpiece.

We are so grateful for your support in this work and hope that these glimpses into the joy of our everyday work have been an encouragement to you.

Blessings,



Angie



YOUR 2018 SUPPORT IN ACTION ...

■ 29,800+ visits to CORNERSTONE, which supports families in need

■ 36,800+ visits to YSM's EVERGREEN, which supports street youth

■ 40,000+ visits to BRIDGES, which supports adults experiencing chronic poverty

■ 26,600+ visits to our Food Bank this past year to help neighbours meet their basic needs.

Thank you! Your support makes this and much more possible.