



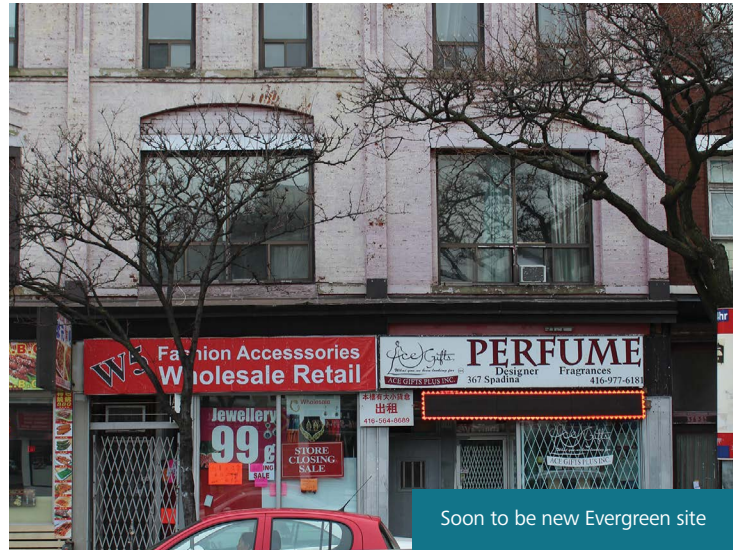
YONGE  
STREET  
MISSION

# URBAN LIGHTS

TRANSFORMING TORONTO SINCE 1896 VOLUME 18 / ISSUE 8 WINTER 2016



Evergreen location on Yonge St.



Soon to be new Evergreen site

## YSM'S Evergreen **to turn over new leaf**

Dignity. Comfort. More space. More services.

This is what The Yonge Street Mission's Evergreen Centre for Street Youth will mean to the youth who use its services.

"The youth, they're going to get a great environment," said Jesse Sudirgo, YSM's Manager of Street-Involved Services. "No more cramped rooms, no being squished in – they'll have dignity and space to make them feel more comfortable."

As announced in November 2015, the newly-renovated 24,000-square-foot site centre will open on Spadina Ave., south of College St. in Toronto by the end of 2017.

Jesse said YSM staff are also happy about having more space, describing one small office area crammed with eight staff members.

Staff are even more pleased by what this will mean for services. "The staff feel excited about the opportunities they have to make a lot of their dreams come to fruition," he said. "They want to be able to do more for the youth."

Examples of expanded services include workshops and medical care. There are more medical volunteers than can be currently accommodated. "We have people who want to volunteer – psychiatrists, podiatrists, chiropractors – but we have nowhere for them to work. That will change in the new space."

Jesse added that the youth at the Centre are happy with the new location. "Everyone is really positive about the accessibility of Kensington Market. It's the place they already hang out."

*The site for the new YSM Evergreen Centre is being renovated to incorporate smart, practical spaces, offering room for growth and dynamic spaces for expanding programming and services. Meetings are already underway to hear input from stakeholders – including youth, businesses, and community members – to decide how the site should look, feel and function.*

**Changing Lives. Building Communities. Transforming Toronto.**

# YSM's HELPING HANDS

Every Tuesday, Roy Fowler pays it forward to the seniors program at YSM.

It's a full day. He helps YSM drivers pick seniors up, then helps prep and serve lunch. He cleans up during the seniors' activities. Then he helps get them safely home.

Why? His mom, who belonged to the group for about 16 years, passed away in March.

"The main reason is to give thanks for all the help they gave my mom," Roy says. "My mom really loved the program. It gave her a chance to get out of the house once a week and it gave her activities to do."

Roy loves the volunteer experience.

"I just enjoy giving back and talking to the seniors. Some of them know me through my mom, I crack jokes and get them smiling and laughing."

He also understands the need. "My mom lived in a seniors building and I know for a fact that some of them never leave the apartment. It's sad."

In addition to the lunch, YSM's Senior Program activities include a sewing group, arts, creative activities, choir, computer literacy and ESL classes. Blood pressure and foot clinics, and exercise classes are also offered.

Roy is asked how he manages to help the busy kitchen staff who can find it challenging to find the time to organize volunteers. He deadpans: "I'm cute."

**To learn about more about volunteering, visit [www.ysm.ca/act/volunteer](http://www.ysm.ca/act/volunteer)**



Roy Fowler

## First PERSON



Anish Alex

*Anish Alex is a Community Capacity Builder. He leads a group for mostly immigrant men in St. James Town.*

I know where they're coming from – I'm a new immigrant. Settling your family, all the responsibility – you work day and night at multiple jobs and you're still not earning enough. Most of them are wounded and need a place to talk.

They are from many different cultures and countries. They have different coping strategies and that's really helpful. They teach each other. They share skills. The biggest piece is the moral support they give each other.

They wanted to depute on Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy, but they all had to work. So they made a three minute video. They told council they are tired of poverty.

They never thought in their lives that they could make a video. They did the story board, the camera work, they edited it.

This journey is about transformation. Sometimes they need resources, sometimes support. Sometimes just someone to walk alongside. The transformation sometimes takes months, years. But we believe in them because we know they can do it.

# Aiming higher **WITH THE TREE OF LIFE**

*Nearly three years ago, Natenael Nicodemus was introduced to YSM's Tree of Life After School Program when he joined a field trip to the Brickworks.*

At that time, he wasn't all that serious about school. But now, at age 14? "This place has changed me a lot," he says. "People come here to work and get better marks. I saw people doing that, and I learned."

Now in Grade 9, Natenael has "graduated" – Tree of Life serves children from Grades 1 through 8 – but he comes back to volunteer.

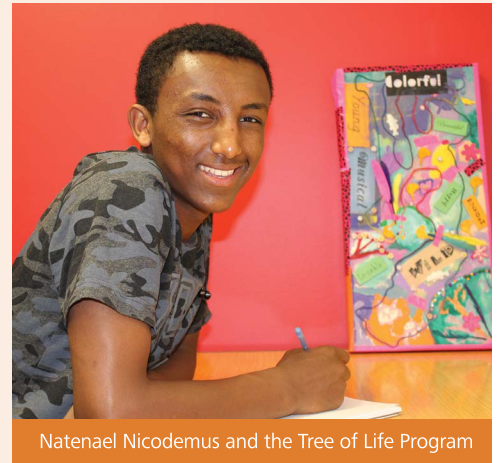
Like many of the students, he is proud to now earn high marks, especially in math. "I love math. It has its own language and it's pretty easy. It doesn't matter if you can't speak English, if you understand the concepts, you can do it."

The Tree of Life recently expanded to add 30 more children and hopes to expand to 45 more in 2017 and 60 by 2018.

"We aim to help Tree of Life students do better in school by building skills in many areas – literacy, numeracy, character development," says Julie MacLean, who runs the program. "They have a zest for life and learning. They want to succeed."

Natenael certainly does. "I want to go to one of the best universities and become an engineer."

**To support YSM programs, go to [ysm.ca/donate](http://ysm.ca/donate).**



Natenael Nicodemus and the Tree of Life Program

## **YES, I'll make this a Winter of Possibilities!**

**Yes, I want to lend a hand, too!**

Please use my donation:  Wherever the needs are greatest  Other

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

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Information on planned giving, bequests, gifts of securities  Arrange a tour  Annual Report 2014

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## The **BACK PAGE**

# Warmer Days

*I have to say that winter is not my favourite time of year. Sure, I can enjoy the beauty of a fresh snowfall sitting warm and cozy in front of a crackling fireplace listening to some gentle jazz in the background.*

But the day to day trudging through snow and slush as my body shivers against the cold leads me to believe more and more each year that these bones were made for a warmer climate. By mid-January, I am longing for warmer days.

When I was Natanael's age, I remember thinking very differently about winter. There was nothing more exciting than realizing a huge snowfall meant we had a "snow day"! The snowsuits and boots were on in the blink of an eye. The challenge of walking with giant steps through snow that went most of the way up our legs was nothing less than pure joy for my friends and me.

This image comes to mind as I think of the challenges the men of St. James Town and the youth who come to YSM's Evergreen Centre for Street Youth face every day. Each step toward their hopes and dreams requires a giant step to move one pace forward in deep snow, slowing their pace and requiring frequent stops to catch their breath.

And yet every story in this issue promises of "warmer" days: young Natanael now giving back as a volunteer at our Tree of Life program; Roy bringing joy and laughter to our Lively Seniors; the men of St. James Town creating a supportive community for one another and finding their voice; and the many excited voices of homeless youth speaking into the design of a new home for Evergreen that will foster their growth.

These are images of snowsuits, gleeful shouts, and winning a toboggan race. These are images made possible by your faithful support and we thank you.

Angie Draskovic, YSM President & CEO

**Happy Birthday to us – YSM is 120 this year!**

## Did you **know?**

This Christmas: **900 families attended the Toy Market**  
Last month: **more than 6,000 bags of clothes were collected during our Clothing Drive**

Last spring:

- YSM served **21,760 meals**
- **2,115 youth** received health care

Last year:

- **66,435 visits** to YSM's **community centre**
- More than **26,000 visits** to our **Food Bank**

THANK YOU! Your support makes these things happen!

## WALK OFF THE COLD!

Support YSM's annual **Coldest Night of the Year** fundraiser!

This non-competitive 2/5/10 km winter-walk fundraiser in downtown Toronto takes place on **Saturday, February 20th, 2016**. Participants experience a hint of the challenges faced by homeless people. To support a YSM walker, or to walk yourself, go to **[coldestnightoftheyear.org/toronto](http://coldestnightoftheyear.org/toronto)**



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