



A Retreat **for** Renewal

This summer, YSM will be providing summer camps for more than 50 women whose lives have been marked by hardship. These retreats allow deserving women to get out of the city and experience nature, taking time for self-reconciliation and restoration.

The camps will be led by Jan Rothenburger, a Community Outreach Pastor at YSM. Jan's camp-based outreach programs began in 1996, and now 20 years later Jan's work continues to challenge and inspire.

Each year, one of the outreach camps is dedicated to women who are new to faith or are still in the midst of struggles with street life. This getaway offers women the chance to connect on a deeper level, all while offering the simple pleasures and fun of a camp setting. Participants come from various backgrounds and range in age from 16 to 55.

"Camps have been important in showing women that there's more to life than the streets and jail, and all that goes with that lifestyle. This gives them a chance to obtain

peace, explore spirituality, contribute to camp community, build friendships and have a vacation they would normally never get to have."

"It's my hope that women who go to camp will return feeling refreshed, empowered and have a new lease and hope on their life. I also trust it will give them a sense they belong and are a part of a community where they can support one another in the city."

For those unable to attend an overnight getaway, Jan has also planned three day trips with a similar focus and intent.

"I've learned from these camps that everyone has a gift to bring. Some discover their purpose and they realize new things they would like to do and want to continue once home."

YSM's **HELPING HANDS**

Since 2014, Zlatko Gantchev has been volunteering as a mentor with our YSM Student Awards Program. This initiative matches up youth with professionals who encourage, support, and guide them to reach their full potential while on their post-secondary journey.

Zlatko discovered this mentoring opportunity through YSM's website. "Mentoring had always been on the back of my mind... so I thought if the need was there, why not give it a try." Shortly after, Zlatko was paired up with Dennie: a bright young man who was a part of our Connecting Youth to Work program and now is the recipient of a YSM Student Award.

Zlatko and Dennie were able to break the ice through a mutually shared love of food. "After getting into the rhythm of things, we talked often about my experiences from post-secondary. While approaching his first year at Humber I shared my personal academic struggles and the habits which helped me most." Despite the mentor-mentee relationship, Zlatko realized that he gained just as much out of the experience as Dennie – "the conversations we had helped me a lot... they were always meaningful and just a lot of fun." Many of our YSM mentors share similar types of stories. Despite completing his year-long commitment, Zlatko still stays in contact with Dennie as a friend and support.



Zlatko Gantchev

Consider becoming a YSM mentor – www.ysm.ca/act/volunteer

First **PERSON**



Deanna Streete

Deanna Streete is an Outreach Specialist and Drop-in Worker at our Evergreen Centre for Street Youth. She has worked at YSM for three years.

"As a drop-in worker, I find myself doing all sorts of tasks – serving meals, cleaning up, counselling, assisting youth with paperwork, and much, much more. On Thursdays I host a girl's outreach group. These smaller sessions allow me to interact with the girls on a more personal level. During this program I try to mix it up – one week we'll have life skills programming and the following week we'll try and do a fun activity, like crafts.

I have love for these youth, you can change their life just by being there for them. That's why we also engage in prison visits. It's a great way to let the youth know we care for them despite their present circumstances. Once released, they'll often come visit us to show their gratitude and ask about our services. In addition to this, we also conduct outreach work where we walk the streets of Toronto to meet at-risk youth and let them know about our programs. I love what I do, and I want to bestow upon these youth the same grace that was shown to me."

Creating the **CODERS OF TOMORROW**

YSM has officially launched their Introduction to Coding class at their TD Securities Computer Literacy Centre. The program engages children in grades 5-8 in a fun, stimulating learning environment where they build tech skills in coding on a variety of platforms.

Throughout the 6 week program, children have the opportunity to code games and design their own virtual world. By instilling technological literacy at a younger age this program exposes children to career paths and talents they might not have discovered as a consequence of growing up in poverty and without access to technology.

"This course is very exciting for us because it combines the curiosity of the students with the ever-growing world of internet coding. Damien [the class instructor] has done a wonderful job of introducing the children to coding in a way that is educational, fun and relational – the kids love learning to code with Damien and his staff from Microsoft!" – *Julian Williams, Coordinator of Computer Education.*

To support YSM programs, go to ysm.ca/donate.



Damien Mangar - Volunteer Instructor from Microsoft

YES, I'll make this a Spring of Possibilities!

Yes, I want to lend a hand, too!

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

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The **BACK PAGE**

The Opening of Eyes...

Slow summer days, vacations, sitting by campfires, leisurely strolls and good conversations. Water volleyball, board games, safe pranks, and falling over laughing into your cabin bed because you are that really-good kind of tired that comes at the end of a day of just being with friends. You are warm, you are known, you are accepted and you are safe.

It is in this context that we see people open their eyes to new possibilities for themselves because they begin to see themselves through our eyes.

Over the summer the life of YSM is full of these times of pausing and being. Looking ahead to the summer camps for children and adults alike brought to mind an excerpt of a poem by David Whyte – The Opening of Eyes.

"I knew then, as I had before life is no passing memory of what has been nor the remaining pages in a great book waiting to be read. It is the opening of eyes long closed. It is the vision of far off things seen for the silence they hold. It is the heart after years of secret conversing speaking out loud in the clear air...It is the man throwing away his shoes...and finding himself astonished..."

When Deanna is with "her girls" on Thursday nights, the activity is merely the distraction that leads to the opening of a young girls long closed eyes to a vision for herself that her heart would not let her dare to believe.

When Jan sits by the campfire with the women after the singing dies down the sounds evolve into hearts speaking their secrets aloud and clear into the air.

Healing, hoping, moving forward toward the fullest version of their life is the outcome of many small moments for each person. Thank you for your financial support, your prayers and for believing that it is time for so many to throw off their shoes and find themselves astonished.

Blessings,
Angie

Angie Draskovic, YSM President & CEO

Did you **know?**

- **Coldest Night of the Year** raised **over \$178,000** – Thanks for your support!
- **50 high school students** received **Student Awards**
- In 2015, our foodbank received **39,616 visits**

THANK YOU! Your support makes these things happen!

A New Look for **YSM.CA**

Within the next few weeks YSM will be unveiling their new website! Visit us at **www.ysm.ca** to check it out. Learn more about our strategy and vision, and how you can help to eliminate chronic poverty in Toronto within one generation.

SAVE THE DATE!



Tuesday, Sept 13th, 2016:

Register now for YSM's 19th Annual Golf Tournament

Glencairn Golf Club

golf.ysm.ca

Proceeds from the tournament go towards our Evergreen Centre for Street Youth and our Children's Computer Lab!



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M I S S I O N**

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