



Our Case for Support

Join the plan to end chronic poverty
in Toronto in this generation

YSM
YONGE STREET MISSION

“Poverty is a constant state of insecurity.

Poverty is choosing between food and electricity.

Poverty is staying in dangerous situations, because you’re not sure how you’ll keep a roof over your head otherwise.

Poverty is losing your teeth, because you can’t afford routine care.

Poverty is moving in the middle of the night - from an apartment, when you can’t afford your rent - from a living room, when things get weird.

Poverty is exhaustion, in every way.

Poverty is often hard work that doesn’t lift you up to living wages.

And, yes, poverty is being hungry.”

Shaunta Grimes, Community Member¹

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Serving in a Pandemic

It was March 2020 and Yonge Street Mission (YSM) was facing a crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic was all we heard about in the media and from our industry peers and partners. Before we knew what would follow, YSM's leadership team formed an Emergency Response Committee - *just in case*. Little did we know, only a couple of weeks later, our city - and in fact the world - would go into pandemic lock down.

The months that followed were remarkable. After two days of planning and redesigning our programs in light of physical distancing protocols, YSM opened what would essentially become the city's largest food bank operation in downtown Toronto east. The line ups began immediately outside our Evergreen Centre for Street-Involved Youth on Spadina Avenue, and outside our Food Bank in Regent Park. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people faced food insecurity, job losses and rising fear of what was coming. The number of people in need of urgent care was staggering, and growing weekly.

As a local development agency creating pathways out of poverty for people to move from surviving to thriving, YSM was suddenly facing a new reality: our focus had almost entirely pivoted to provide basic relief services. After a few months of operating in this way, it

was clear we couldn't shift gears entirely; our programmatic work had to continue. In fact, it became more important than ever.

From distributing pre-packaged bags of groceries, curbside take away meals, hygiene and survival products, we began providing virtual mental health counselling, urgent medical help, online children's and adult computer classes, virtual care management, employment and housing services, among other virtual services. This has now become our new reality.

Today, YSM continues to provide emergency COVID relief interventions while also providing the same level of support and programs we always have, providing a pathway out of poverty for those we serve.

We invite you to join us in helping our city's most vulnerable neighbours survive and recover from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and continue their progress in overcoming barriers to stability and independence.

A Torontonians working full time at minimum wage has **\$7.83** per day to spend on everything they need after they pay their rent and transit.

- Daily Bread, Who's Hungry Report Khey Findings, Nov 1, 2019.

By August 2020, food bank visits in Toronto had increased by a staggering **51%**. The surge in food bank use that has come in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic is not expected to ease as the economy reopens. If current usage trends continue, we project there will be close to **1.4 million visits to food banks in Toronto in 2021**. Food banks are preparing to meet this heightened need for years to come.

-Daily Bread Who's Hungry Report 2020, March - October 2020.

Ontario's unemployment rate has trended downwards since the last recession, reaching **5.2%** in January 2020, before rising due to COVID-19. As of September 2020, the unemployment rate is **9.5%**.

- Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, September 2020.

In September 2020 we conducted a YSM Food Bank user survey over a two week period. With 425 Community member participants (43% of Food Bank users) we identified:

- 43% of respondents had not used a food bank pre-COVID
- 46% of respondents lost their job or work hours due to COVID
- Of the up to 46% who lost their job, for 54% it was a permanent loss
- 81% of respondents reduced personal spending on food due to COVID
- 91% of respondents foresee using a food bank over the next 3 months



Our Vision

At YSM, we recognize each and every one of the 500,000 people experiencing poverty in Toronto has immense value. As a local development agency, all our resources and energy are focused on responding to immediate needs, while also helping community members move from surviving to thriving. We believe if we combine our collective resources and wisdom, together we can achieve our vision of ending chronic poverty in Toronto in a generation.

Snapshot of a year at YSM

With over 100 supports and services designed to move people from surviving to thriving, YSM serves on average 10,000-12,000 neighbours each year.



Each year YSM's services help thousands of individuals and families through our annual programming.



8,556 students enrolled in computer classes attended by children, youth and adults.



29,343 individual visits to family services.



23,641 hot, nutritious meals served at Evergreen.



29,917 visits to YSM's Food Bank in Regent Park.



5,700 appointments at the Evergreen Health Centre.



1,147 counselling sessions provided.



3000 hours of life-skills training.

125 Years of Changing Lives



2021 will mark YSM's 125th anniversary of serving in the city of Toronto. From our humble beginnings to the present day, we have existed to bring justice to the poor and marginalized and provide dignity and support to those in greatest need. YSM has served through global pandemics, world wars, financial depression and we will continue to serve so long as there are people in this city who need us.

But why are our services still needed? In 125 years we have seen the face of poverty change in Toronto many times, and the programs and services YSM offers have adapted and changed in response. And today, as we continue the work of those who came before us, we ask ourselves some burning questions. If our walls could talk, what would they tell us?

We believe all people have immense value and promise, so why is there multi-generational poverty in a city as resource and talent rich as Toronto? Why are thousands of our neighbours still experiencing food insecurity in this day and age? Why is there such income disparity, systemic barriers and seemingly insurmountable challenges bringing people through YSM's doors each year, despite their best efforts? What changes are required to alter the future for people experiencing poverty today?

Our 125 year history makes YSM uniquely positioned to address these questions, to face these challenges and to use our knowledge of - and belief in - the people we serve and strive to bring about significant change. What started as a relief agency in 1896 has evolved into a local development agency addressing the systemic and individual barriers facing individuals and families in our community to rise out of poverty. **Our goal is to end the cycle of multi-generational poverty that affects the lives of thousands of people living in Toronto today.**

To achieve this goal, we shifted our focus in 2016. Our programs and services are now centered on three distinct populations groups:

1. Families in crisis through the Cornerstone Program.
2. Street-involved youth through YSM's Evergreen Centre.
3. Adults experiencing chronic, multi-generational poverty through the Bridges Program.

We designed a model of care we call RISE, and created a measurement and evaluation system we call TIMES™, two tools that are now revolutionizing our social service work to bring people to stability and sustainable independence. Today, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, our work is ever more important, to continue our critical life-changing and city-building ministry.

YSM | **125**
YONGE STREET MISSION
125 YEARS OF CHANGING LIVES



The RISE Model

RISE is a thoughtful, customized, people-centred approach to care. With interventions delivered at the right time, street-involved youth, families in need, and adults experiencing chronic poverty feel supported in their journey and can move forward with a solid plan to build a better future, one in which they're engaged in their community with a strong sense of value and purpose.

RISE is an acronym to describe our unique approach to caring for the whole person as they engage with YSM's supports and services. It's a holistic wrap-around model of care that includes:



RESPOND

YSM provides no-cost, low barrier access to urgent support services, including meals, groceries / emergency food supplies, seasonal clothing, hygiene kits, walk-in counselling, emergency mental health interventions, and emergency housing supports, all in a welcoming and inclusive environment.



INVITE

Aimed at gently introducing individuals to deeper engagement in our programs and services, through relationship building and trust, YSM offers workshops and programs on mental health, addiction and anger management, financial literacy, goal setting, self-esteem, collaboration and teamwork, establishing boundaries, and more.



SUPPORT

When ready, wrap-around care management is available for individuals and families longing to overcome the barriers keeping them in crisis, through individualized goal setting, creating a learning plan, introduction of a mentor, specific "hard skills" training to achieve goals, employment readiness, and more.



ENGAGE

Once stabilized, we invite community members to step back into their communities and areas of influence by entering the workforce, securing stable housing, volunteering in the community and becoming community influencers, leaders and mentors for others with similar backgrounds and experiences.



TIMES™

Transformation Information Measurement and Evaluation System

Our vision of ending chronic poverty is linked to the RISE model of care and the measurement, analysis and reporting tool we call TIMES™.

Designed and implemented by YSM in 2017 as our way of tracking how an individual is progressing along their RISE journey, TIMES™ provides real time data to YSM Care Managers and frontline staff as they work closely with individuals. TIMES™ helps staff guide community members by carefully selecting goals that move them along a progression of wellness and healing. Where there may be a sense of hopelessness when considering their future, TIMES™ uses a series of coordinated and relevant incremental steps that effectively proves one’s ability to set and achieve goals that begin to move them forward in their lives.

TIMES™ tracks progress against wellness indicators such as economic stability, shelter, safety, health, nutrition and mental health. It also measures the development of soft

skills such as family stability, relationships, a sense of power, one’s values and self-awareness. Through TIMES™ data, we have discovered these soft skills are the foundational building blocks one requires in order to master the other life skills necessary to rise out of poverty.

The system uses a five-point scale through which care managers assess one’s current status against objective measures. Then, together they create life goals and a plan to guide their path forward. By revisiting TIMES quarterly, they are able to see progress (or regression) against their goals and modify plans as necessary. Over time, community members and their care managers can objectively measure progress and create ever-adapting strategies and plans that are realistic, empowering, and achievable.

The following illustration highlights 4 of the 18 wellness indicators and the five points of progress that guide the work and plans that move a community member from surviving to thriving.

Employment Status

- ▶ No or informal work
- ▶ Temporary, informal or precarious work
- ▶ Unsustainable, precarious work
- ▶ Sustainable but not decent work
- ▶ Sustainable, decent work

Safety

- ▶ Living in an unsafe environment
- ▶ Access to safe environment some of the time
- ▶ Access to safe environment most of the time
- ▶ Living in a safe environment
- ▶ Maintaining a safe environment

Self Awareness

- ▶ Demonstrates poor self awareness
- ▶ Open for dialogue related to self awareness
- ▶ Self-aware, but not taking action
- ▶ Takes action related to self awareness
- ▶ Makes life decisions based on self awareness

Relationships

- ▶ Isolated
- ▶ Minimal involvement in a trusting relationship
- ▶ Directly engages with others/building relationships
- ▶ Multiple healthy relationships developed
- ▶ Involved in multiple healthy relationships/networks

Measuring Impact: Sean's Story

As a street-involved youth estranged from his family, Sean* was lonely and looking for connections. Many of the friends with whom he had forged relationships had criminal records and were living the “downtown life”, as he calls it. They would stop by YSM Evergreen for a free meal then head out, with little to occupy their time. Back then Sean wasn’t interested in change, he just wanted to feel part of a group, he wanted to feel cared for.

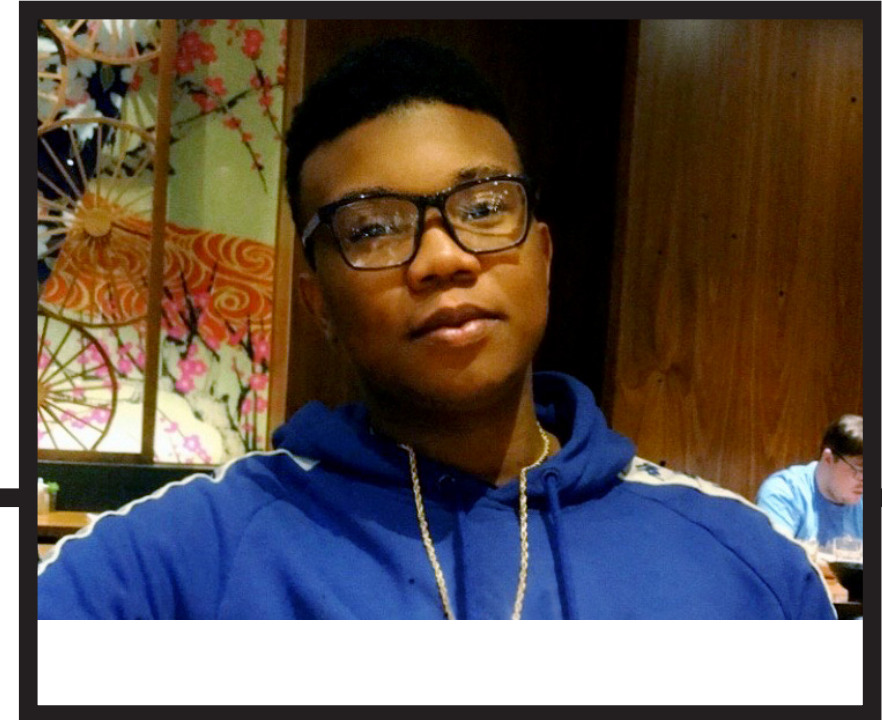
Sean soon ended up in prison, serving 13 months behind bars. After his release, Sean returned to YSM Evergreen, but this time he was motivated by a different purpose. “I had life and career goals and I knew if I wanted to work on them, I’d have to not be with bad company anymore,” says Sean.

Instead, he got involved with YSM’s Helping Offenders on Probation Excel (HOPE) program, which focuses on rehabilitating youth through dignity and respect. Through HOPE, Sean found the support he needed to make the changes he envisions for his life. Motivated to learn new skills, and with the help of YSM staff, Sean

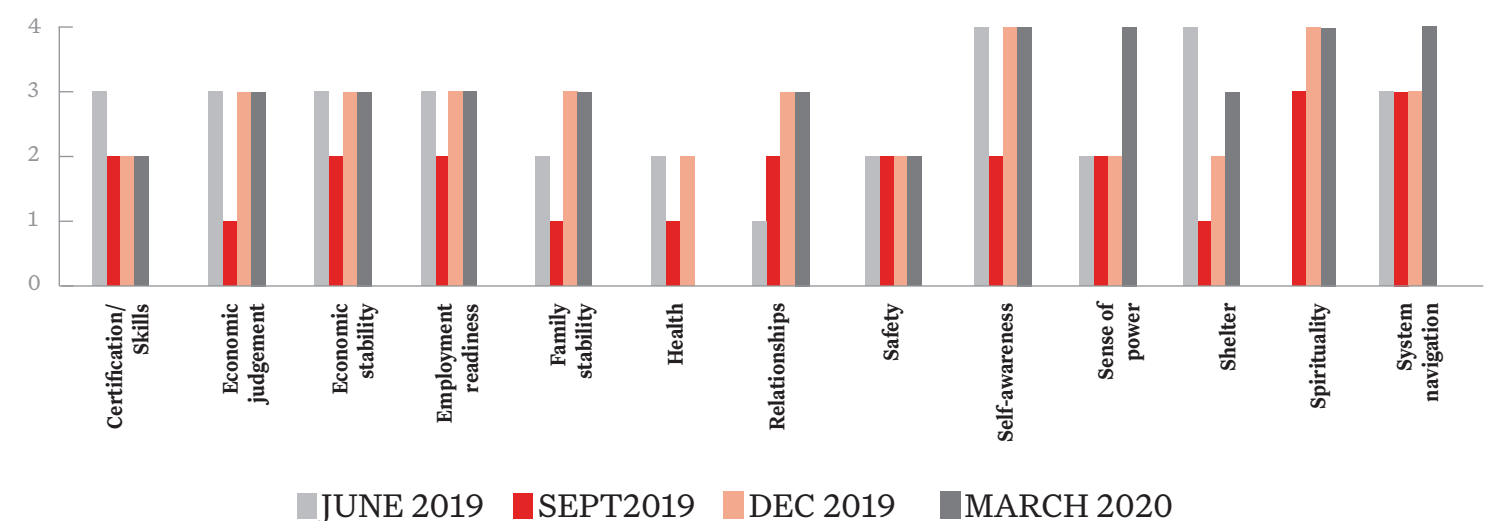
joined a cooking class in Evergreen’s kitchen, engaged in anger management workshops and enrolled in a tutoring program at the local community centre to strengthen his learning skills. Sean is also working hard to repair his relationship with his mother and takes care to choose his new friends wisely.

“At Evergreen Centre, everyone who walks through the door is welcome and for me that makes it a good place. I can come in and talk to the drop-in staff anytime about things that are bothering me. It helps me stay on track.”

Today Sean is filled with hope and plans for the future, thanks to Evergreen and the hard work they’re helping him to do.



Sean's TIMES Chart: a fluid progression of his progress over time



Name has been change to protect identity*

Measuring Impact: Greg's Story

Greg was heartbroken when, at birth, his son was taken into protective custody. Alone and unsupported, Greg tried his best to get his son back. “It didn’t look like I had a chance,” says Greg, “I knew I would have to work hard to beat the stereotype that comes with being a young Black father. I didn’t have anyone in my corner to help. I sincerely wanted to have custody of my boy, but the odds were stacked against me.”

While only 9% of Toronto’s population self-identify as Black, a disproportionate number of the children and youth in the care of Children’s Aid Society of Toronto (CAS of Toronto) identify as Black.

Greg worked with CAS of Toronto but struggled to feel heard and supported, “I could see things needed to change.”

Thankfully, Greg’s CAS of Toronto worker introduced him to YSM and the Cornerstone Partnership, which is a collaboration between CAS of Toronto and YSM, aimed at working to strengthen, stabilize and restore families.

“That’s when everything changed for me,” says Greg.

“I met the [Cornerstone] team who started accompanying me to visits with my son where we could get to know one another and start building a bond.

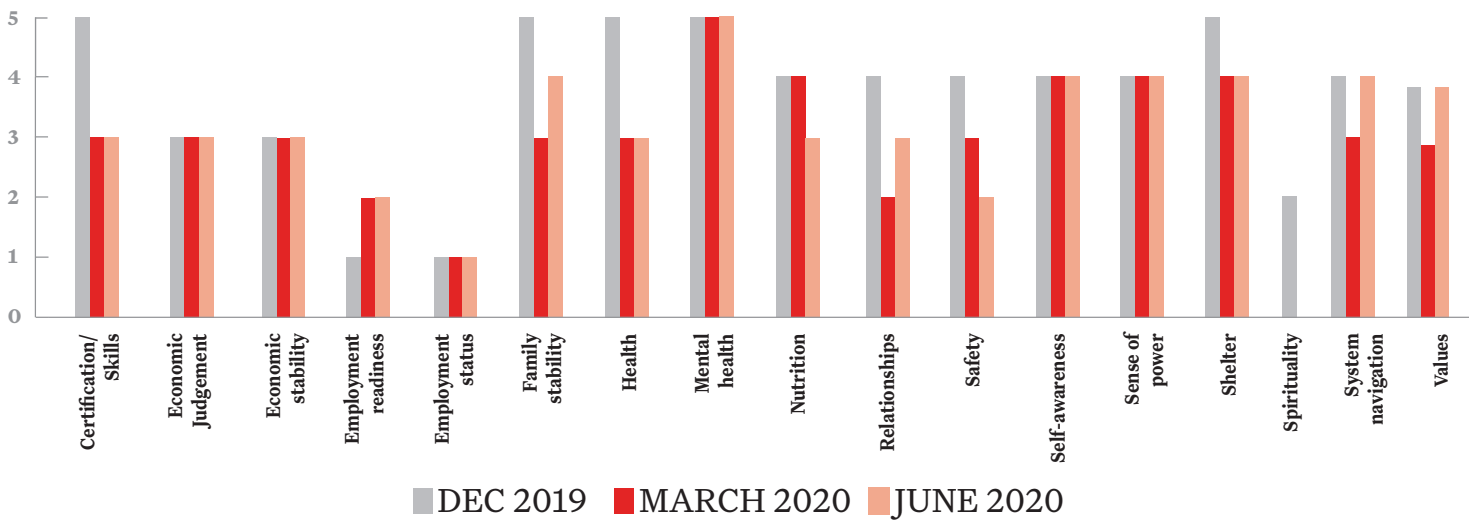
“YSM introduced me to a lot of great programs, helped me out with food through their Food Bank, parenting workshops and the Man 2 Man discussion group, which I still attend. Now I know a lot of people I can turn to. They even helped me get furniture for my place, and Christmas and birthday presents for my son.

“I’m part of the YSM community, and I have a team of people in my corner. I’m currently on a wait list to get a mentor family. My son needs good role models and YSM is going to help me get that too.”

When asked how the partnership has affected his life as a Black father, Greg replied, “Honestly, it feels great. I didn’t have a father myself, I was stuck in the system for quite some time.

“I thought at one point I was going to lose my son. And through the partnership of CAS and YSM, they made it happen where my son came back. Trust me, when they’re in bed sleeping and you’re just watching them, you get that warm heart feeling, it feels good.”

Greg's TIMES chart: a snapshot of growth over time



Measuring Impact: Wilma's Story

After struggling with chronic health issues, including periods of hospitalization, and significant family relationship struggles, Wilma found herself living in Toronto's shelter system during 2019. Staff in the shelter suggested she investigate the Regent Park area to see what social services were available, which led her to venture to YSM's Davis Centre.

There she met kind people and took advantage of a number of YSM's available services – enjoying drop-in dinners, attending Church at the Mission, connecting with a member of YSM's pastoral team, and participating in mental health counselling and employment services.

Through these interactions, Wilma became paired with a member of YSM's Mental Health Counselling team who encouraged Wilma to participate in courses to help her address the challenges she faced.

In working with Wilma, her counsellor talked to her about her goals and learned Wilma aimed to return to work as a home healthcare aide, and to find a place to live.

After having been told at two other centres it was unlikely she could return to work due to her age,

Wilma was pleasantly surprised when, at YSM, she was supported in applying for and getting a job interview that lead her back into the workforce in November 2019.

Between counselling and return to part-time work, things started to look up for Wilma. However, it wasn't long until March, when our city locked down due to COVID, a closure which shut down Wilma's work opportunities.

The situation was a setback for Wilma, but still positive things were happening: in May Wilma moved into her own apartment. While the accommodation isn't perfect, she has her own place, where she and her cherished dog, Jack, keep safe during the pandemic.

Also, YSM was recently in touch with Wilma to let her know about YSM's latest Coping with Stress workshop, in which Wilma is now participating. Offered weekly for six weeks, participants complete work between sessions, to help them process key learnings.

While Wilma doesn't see her counsellor regularly anymore, she still feels a unique appreciation for her: "They helped me so much – to feel confident in myself; to recognize the things I can

control and those I can't. She gave me a lot of information on coping strategies. I felt like she was the only one who cared."

her with family issues, and believes she's finally in a position to advocate for herself and handle whatever situations crop up.

While Wilma misses the chance to drop by YSM for meals, she's able to fight isolation by walking with Jack, with whom she enjoys regular visits to Cedarbrae Park. Additionally, she marvels how, because of YSM, she is far better able to cope

Wilma's TIMES chart: transformation through her time with YSM

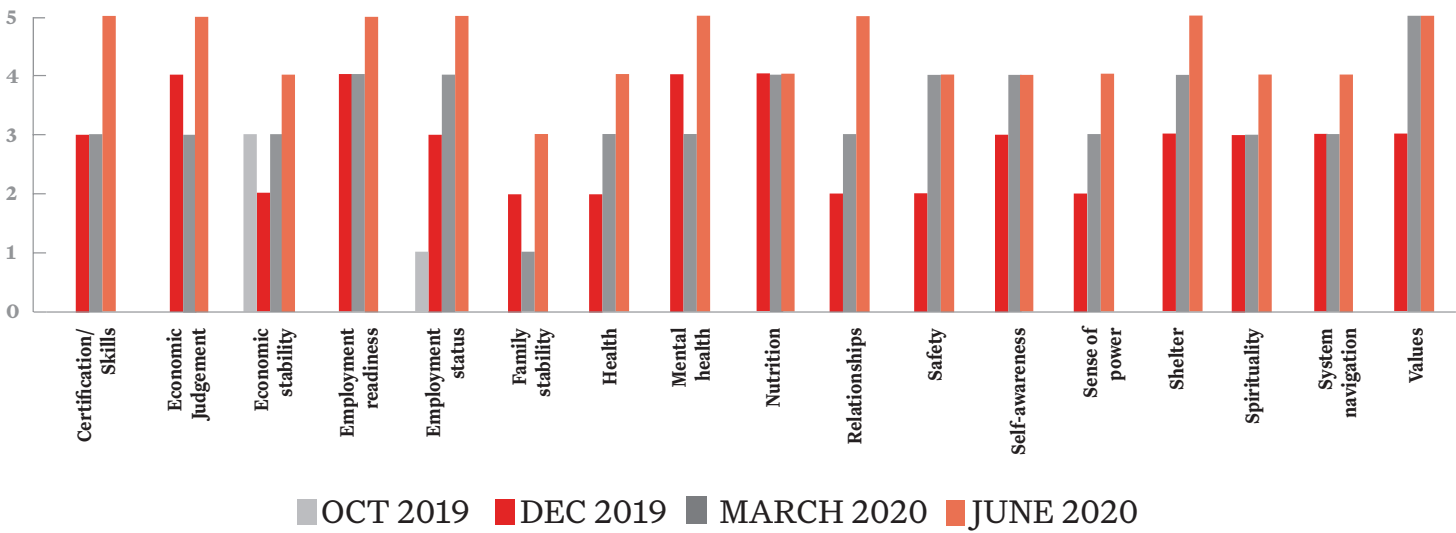


Photo changed to protect identity.

An Investment in Changing Lives

Each year, philanthropic investments allow YSM staff - composed of child and youth workers, mental health clinicians, social workers, medical professionals, mentors, counsellors and support workers - to positively influence the lives of those who walk through our doors. Each diverse member of the YSM team provides their expertise in the RISE interventions that are helping individuals and families make notable strides on their journey out of poverty.

An investment in the RISE Model of Care fuels the positive outcomes that our community members attain each year; community members realize more goals, strengthen their relationships, grow in their self awareness and agency, and ultimately become vital members of their community.

The need for YSM's wrap-around services increased during the COVID-19 pandemic with employment, housing advocacy and life skills training taking priority, in addition to increased food and mental health supports. From March to August 2020:

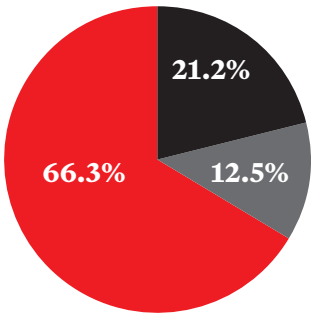
- 256 employment program participants engaged YSM's employment services
- Over 100 participants found employment
- 13 employment participants pursued education during the pandemic
- 140 Computer Literacy Centre participants were engaged in virtual learning
- 69 participants graduated from initiatives of our Computer Literacy Centre



RISE BUDGET

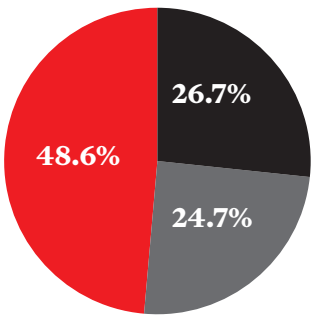
RESPOND

\$1.7 million



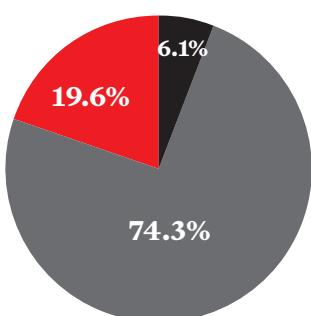
INVITE

\$1.5 million



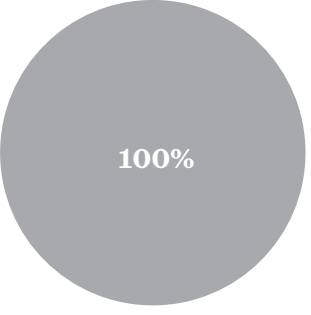
SUPPORT

\$4.9 million



ENGAGE

\$500K



An investment in an individual’s journey out of poverty can take on many forms. Your support today will enable motivated members of our community to make the necessary changes and embark on the hard work it takes to break the cycle of poverty and plan for a future different from their past.

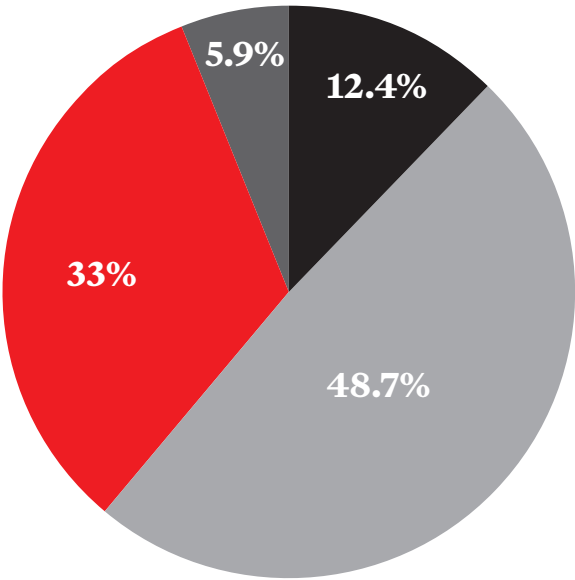
With the uncertainties of 2021 we are anticipating an increase in the number of people in need of our services. Your generous support today will help us create the opportunities that will help them through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

- Evergreen Services for Street-Involved Youth
- Cornerstone Family Services
- Bridges Program (Adults Experiencing Chronic Poverty)
- Community Development

TOTAL BY PROGRAM AREA

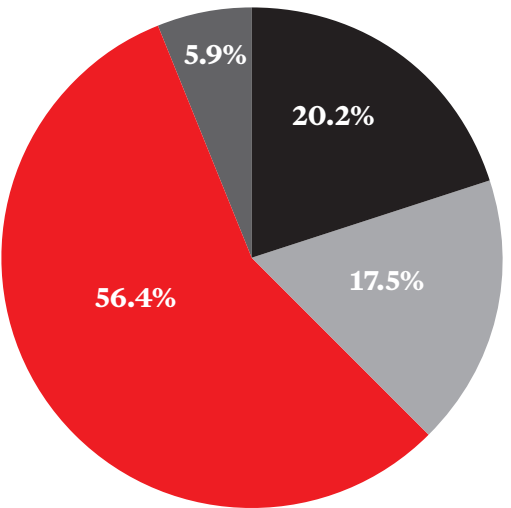
\$ 8.8 million

- Community Development
- Evergreen Services
- Cornerstone Family Services
- Bridges Program



RISE MODEL OF CARE

\$8.8 million



- Respond
- Invite
- Support
- Engage

While government grants or subsidies fund programs offered through “Support” (such as our full-service daycare center), private donations fuel the life-changing outcomes that are made possible through YSM’s RISE model of care. While each aspect of the RISE model is vital, our data has shown that “Respond” and “Invite” make the most significant impact on one’s journey out of poverty, paving the way for more sustainable success in “Support” and “Engage” outcomes.

Each leg of the journey is key, so we invite you to consider which area of intervention resonates deepest with you.



Thank you for your consideration

Core to what we do, and intentionally woven into all of our all programming, is the overarching goal to provide a pathway for the most vulnerable in our city to break down barriers, heal from trauma and see hope for their future. This is our wrap-around, innovative approach as we journey with community members and support them as they make positive moves in their lives, while also addressing systemic issues at the community level.

During this challenging and uncertain time, our goal to end chronic poverty in our city has not changed. While we are working to meet the urgent and immediate needs of the individuals we are serving during the COVID-19 pandemic, our resolve to positively impact the trajectory of our community members' lives has never been stronger.

We invite you to join us in addressing inequity and injustice in our communities by investing in YSM's life changing work today.

Join Us!

Help us end chronic poverty with **the Promise of a Pledge**

Help us change lives by **Fundraising**

Help us strengthen our community with a **Monthly Donation**

Help us transform Toronto with a one time **Personal or Corporate Gift**

Honour a loved one with a **Tribute or In Honour Gift**

Leave a Legacy: Plan your gift today

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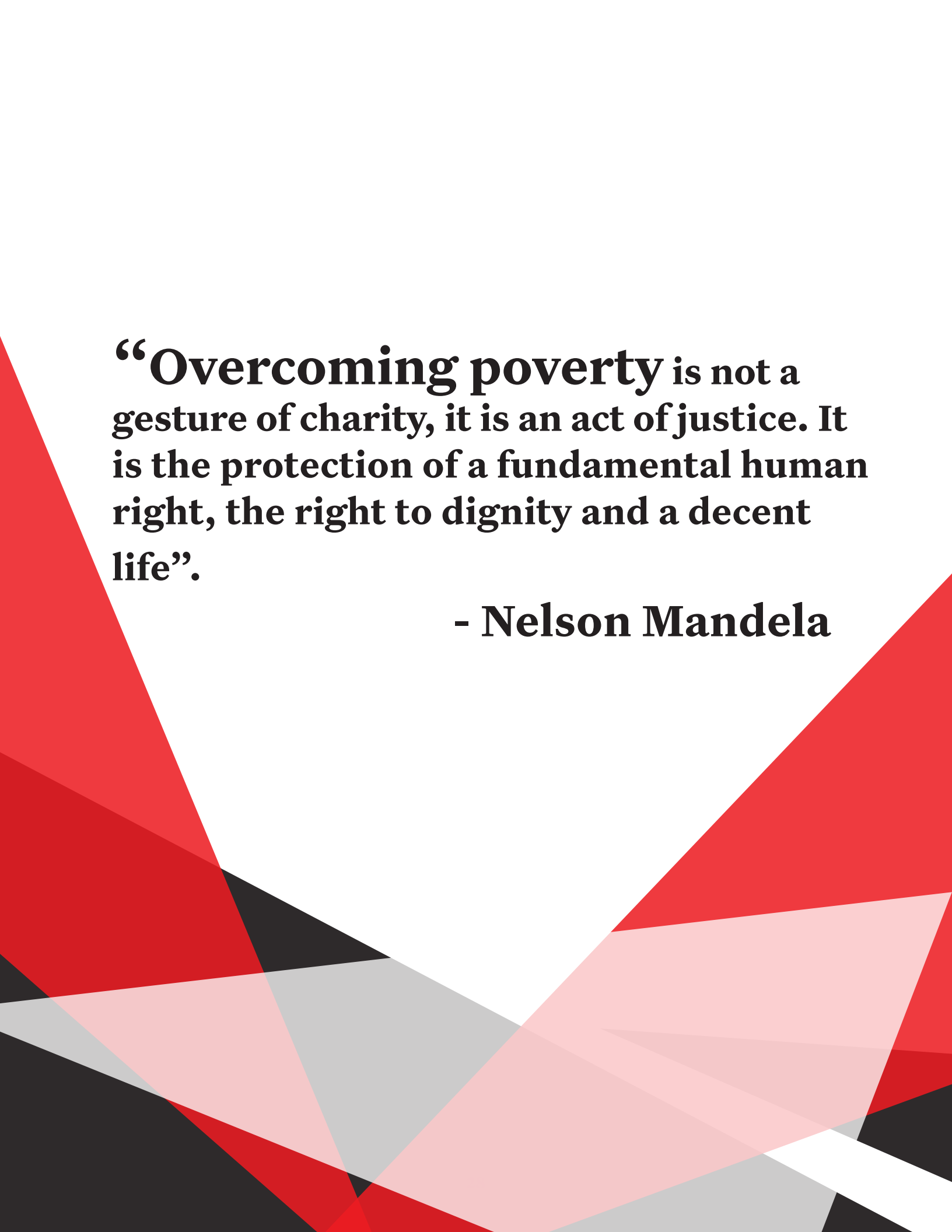
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“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity, it is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life”.

- Nelson Mandela