

URBAN LIGHTS



MUCH MORE THAN A MEAL

Daniel’s* perseverance and talent have seen him through a lot in his life. And it’s those gifts which have carried him through the past year, in helping him get back on his feet and create a plan to reach his goals.

Due to COVID, Daniel was jobless, food insecure and without kitchen equipment to prepare hot meals. Struggling, he reached out to his uncle who suggested YSM’s Evergreen for accessing food.

Hesitant to venture to a new place, Daniel did some research. His main concern was qualifying for meals. Liam, the receptionist at our Evergreen Centre, assured him anyone 25 years or younger could receive meals, no strings attached.

Liam was the first person Daniel saw when he entered Evergreen and received a warm “I’m glad you came!” to welcome him. Daniel’s tension disappeared with that instant connection.

“I’m a chef,” commented Daniel, “and the food offered was really good quality.” When Daniel had to isolate due to COVID, Evergreen staff would regularly deliver food to his home nearby. “They are providing dignity to people who can’t provide for themselves.”

It wasn’t just the food that kept Daniel coming back, it was the connections he was making among the Evergreen community and staff. Liam set up doctors’ appointments and guided him to Employment Services where Daniel

met Arilaidy, an Employment Counsellor. Arilaidy helped Daniel design his resumé, understand shifts in the job market, secure Smart Serve training and called to check in on him every other day while he was in isolation.

Daniel recalls one of his favourite memories with Cheryl, Evergreen’s Drop-In Coordinator. They were looking for clothes for an upcoming job interview. Cheryl eagerly engaged in telling him what would suit him best - like friends shopping together. She also gave him a coat, toothbrush, socks and other essentials. “I felt showered with love,” reflected Daniel.

With YSM’s encouragement, Daniel is continuing his education to become a Kitchen Manager, and also plans to start counselling with YSM’s Mental Health team. He told staff, “It’s time in my life to give power to my own voice,” and remarked how YSM has been making such steps forward possible.

To donors, Daniel says, “I don’t know how you heard of YSM, but thank you for supporting it. It’s a different experience, completely different. It’s the one you want. You see it in any youth who come in. They look comfortable, they hate leaving. There are very friendly people around that wave at you, but don’t force you to be cheery. They waved every time I came and I thought it was weird, but nice. The moment I wanted to smile back they were there for it.”

 *Learn more about our Evergreen Centre for Street-involved Youth at ysm.ca/evergreen*

*Name and photo changed to protect privacy

NOT ALONE



[Learn more about our Mental Health Counselling services at \[ysm.ca/mental-health\]\(https://ysm.ca/mental-health\)](#)

**Name and photo changed to protect privacy*

"I love learning new things!" said Moreen*, who's in the process of learning both French and Spanish. She goes on to talk about her passion for volunteering, specifically serving meals or lending a hand in distributing groceries among community members. Moreen's enthusiasm is contagious and, with the assistance of YSM's Mental Health Counselling services, she looks forward to achieving her educational and personal goals.

Growing up in Regent Park, Moreen was familiar with YSM. As an adult, when she needed support with her mental health, Moreen returned for counselling. "COVID has affected me mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually and financially. YSM helped me navigate through COVID by providing counselling services.

"I've overcome many obstacles as a result of my counselling. I feel empowered with the decisions I make day-to-day and for my future. I never took mental health seriously until now. Getting professional input, talking to someone has made me realize I'm not alone. Everyone has a story to tell. Without YSM, I feel I would continue on the same path - not making wise choices for myself, family, work, school and other things. Counselling has widened my perspective and increased my appreciation of myself."

Moreen plans to complete her Business Certificate and work abroad helping people. She'd like to travel to as many places as possible before settling down with a family. "YSM is a beautiful organization that provides many services to the community. It's a great privilege to have them in my neighbourhood."

"I was sitting in a field in India," said Eric, remembering the moment when Brother Christas reminded him to spend the same amount of effort helping his neighbours in Toronto as he'd already done in leprosy centres abroad. "I helped establish two missions, in Haiti and India, and they reminded me to do more in my own city."

Eric first learned about YSM's Evergreen Centre through his work at KPMG and soon became good friends with Rick Tobias, our former CEO. In his 50s, Eric decided to take a deep dive into mission work, selling his possessions and committing full time to help struggling neighbours in our city. Rick and Eric spent many hours working and sharing lunches together with Eric's colleagues and corporate contacts.

Since his realization, Eric's been investing his time, talent and treasure in the work of YSM - and doesn't intend to have that end with his passing. "The way I look at the world, we're all God's children," Eric explains. "We go through life with resources and, to me, they're from God to live by. When we pass on we need to give back significantly for work in His name and to care for people. My heart has always been with YSM."

Eric has committed to make a legacy gift in support of YSM's work via a bequest in his will. By doing so, Eric will ensure the values he's demonstrated so consistently in his life will live on, even after his passing. We're so grateful for the many inspiring ways Eric has partnered with us to advance YSM's vital work.

MISSION OF A LIFETIME



Eric, long time YSM friend & donor

[Learn more about making a Legacy Gift at \[ysm.ca/ways-to-give\]\(https://ysm.ca/ways-to-give\)](#)

PURPOSE FILLED PARENTHOOD



Marie* loves her child and wants to give them the best possible life. This desire fills her with purpose and hope as she works to meet the needs of her small family and navigate the daily challenges she faces.

Marie arrived in Canada alone at the young age of 17 to pursue an education and career as a Personal Support Worker (PSW). After a failed relationship, however, Marie found herself living on the streets of her new city.

For two whole weeks, Marie spent nights on park benches trying to get enough sleep to continue working her full-time job. Someone in the community noticed her struggle and directed her to a local shelter where she lived for the next two years while continuing to work as a PSW and save money. During her time in the shelter, a new relationship blossomed and Marie became pregnant. Sadly, after living together for a short while, Marie left the relationship when it became unhealthy for her child.

As a young mother who once again found herself alone, Marie returned to the shelter for help. There she learned about YSM's Evergreen Centre and the services it provides for young parents.

Not only did Evergreen offer childcare for parents with children up to the age of four, their Nursery also connected her to YSM programs which could help stabilize her family. At our baby food bank and closet she received clothing, formula, baby food, diapers, wipes and toys. Importantly, Marie was also able to access barrier-free health and dental care.

Finally, Marie feels a sense of community. Though she still faces barriers, she finds it easier to face them knowing she has the support of Evergreen staff to help her achieve her goals as a working mother.

Today Marie is making plans for the future, securing the services she needs and looking forward to a career that will allow her to give back to the community – a community she feels has given so much to her family. Optimistic about the future, Marie hopes to have a place of her own, stable child care and, most importantly, to provide a happy, healthy environment for her child.

**Name and image changed to protect privacy*

 **Learn more about our Evergreen Health Centre at ysm.ca/health-care**

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: HEALTH CENTRE

Physical and mental health are essential for neighbours struggling with poverty to fully realize their goals and potential. Our Evergreen Health Centre provides vital, low-barrier health services to more than 2,700 youth each year. YSM has prioritized health and dental services as a vital part of our wrap-around model of care, which begins by removing the physical barriers community members may be facing which prevent them from making progress in other areas of their life.

YSM is seeking Dentist, Chiropractor and Physiotherapist volunteers to offer their services in our Evergreen Health Centre. To learn more about this opportunity, please visit ysm.ca/volunteer.

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

My grandmother used to say, “Sometimes that light at the end of the tunnel is a train coming!” God rest her soul, she sure was a character. In her own way she was pointing out a truth: sometimes life can be very difficult and what seems like bright light at the end of the tunnel can sometimes bring a new challenge instead.

YSM has been walking alongside community members for 125 years now, community members who know what challenge looks like. Many are the epitome of resilience, ingenuity and persistence to find what is required to care for themselves and their family members. They are overcoming barriers like job loss, lack of housing, mental health challenges, broken promises and relationships.

I think of Marie and the incredible courage it takes to come to a new country at a very young age filled with hope and energy, only to experience multiple setbacks - living on the streets and in a shelter while working and saving money, finding love, losing love, and being back in a shelter. And yet, having the resilience to seek and receive help from our team at YSM’s Evergreen Centre to start all over again.

Marie’s hopes are what we all hope for. A safe home, a healthy family, and meaningful work. She wants to give back to her community and make an impact. The only difference between Marie, you and me is the point from which she started and how that has impacted both her options and her decisions.

Because you share our belief in the tremendous value and capacity of all people, no matter how many times a person experiences a setback, the light at the end of the tunnel for Marie, and the many other neighbours YSM is able to serve, is a brighter future.

Heading out of this pandemic there are now even more who have met with a train, and we’re so very grateful that you are with us in helping each one stand back up again to create their brighter future.

Blessings,

Angie



GIVE 6IX AND HELP YOUR NEIGHBOURS

For YSM’s 125th anniversary we’re inviting the city of Toronto to give, however you wish, wherever you are so – together – we can all help change the lives of those struggling with poverty . . .

- **Give 6 boxes of diapers** so young parents can focus on their kids without the worry of securing hard to afford necessities.
- **Give \$6 a month** so community members like Moreen can find the support they need to thrive.
- **Give 6 job interviews** to youth looking for meaningful employment.
- **Tell 6 friends or family members** about the charities included in your legacy planning to create direct and long lasting impact on the causes important to you and, perhaps, inspire them to do the same.

The possibilities are endless!

Regardless of whether you give through YSM or on your own, please share your **GIVE 6IX** experience on social media using #GIVE6IX. **It’s our hope to create a movement of neighbours helping neighbours and spreading the word to inspire others.**

So, what’s your 6IX? Get inspired and learn more at ysm.ca/GIVE6IX.

Thank you! Your support makes all of YSM’s important programs possible.

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