

# URBAN LIGHTS



YSM Housing team in Michael's "office". From left to right: Enoch, Kristin, Michael, Jessica, Stephanie (not pictured Jacinta and Olaide)

## CELEBRATING WITH GENESIS PLACE

30 years ago, YSM opened the doors of Genesis Place, a supportive 26-unit apartment complex. Families are created there, children grow up within its walls and residents face real life challenges with many able to succeed due to the supports they receive there.

For the past 10 years, Michael has been both a familiar face and pillar of the Genesis Place community.

Michael first got to know YSM through nine years of volunteering at YSM's Food Bank. During that time he faced loss of employment and ended up living in a shelter. In response, Michael sought support from our Housing department. Today, Michael works at YSM as Genesis Place's Security Officer, ensuring the safety of residents, staff and other community members.

Michael can often be found in what he refers to as his "office", a bench in front of Genesis Place, where he keeps an eye on things, greets community members and is available to support and assist those coming and going as needed.

One of his most significant memories happened right there on that bench: "I was sitting out there and two little kids came walking down the street by themselves, hand-in-hand. I was watching them but was afraid to approach them because they didn't know me. When a young lady, who also works at YSM, passed by I notified her about the kids. She went and helped them return to their parents who were next door in the YSM Davis Centre."

"I don't have to be out there on the bench, but it feels important. I greet the kids and parents coming to Daycare, I see staff and community members going by - it gives me a chance to have eyes on everything."

Serving people in their homes is not always easy, especially during the pandemic when many were confined to their homes, but Michael is able to draw on his lived experiences to manage any challenging situations that arise.

He has crafted his security role to serve as a welcoming face. He supplies his team with frequent gifts of Tim Horton's coffee, finds needed supplies for residents, gives freely to those around him and is known as 'Santa Claus' to all the kids - past and present - in the building, "I feel like a Santa Claus," he said, "It's just part of who I am."

The personal and professional support he's received from YSM has created a new path for Michael, "since coming to YSM my level of rage has almost completely disappeared. I'm surrounded by people and situations I wouldn't have had the good fortune to work with otherwise. I've really come to admire and respect the people here. So, when I do retire, I'm not just going to sit back - I want to volunteer and I want to volunteer here. I know what YSM does for people, and how genuine they are. I've been helped so much here."



*Learn more about our Housing Supports at*  
[ysm.ca/housing](https://ysm.ca/housing)

## MANAGING YSM'S HEALTH CENTRE EXPANSION



Andrew, Evergreen Health Centre Project Coordinator



*Learn more about our Evergreen Health Centre at [ysm.ca/health-care](https://ysm.ca/health-care)*

In 2018 YSM opened Phase 1 of our purpose-built Evergreen Centre for street-involved youth. Now we're excited to start Phase 2 and complete our Evergreen Health Centre expansion. The completed space will dramatically increase our range of services, reduce wait times, extend operating hours and provide vital medical equipment to enable us to better serve more youth.

After his "retirement" from his position as YSM's Manager of Property & Transportation, Andrew has taken on the role of managing the Health Centre expansion construction project. "I was at YSM when we finished Phase 1. After I retired, I really just liked the people, it's so admirable that so many dedicate their career and lives to help other people. I find it very humbling."

Andrew's new role involves liaising between Evergreen's Health Care staff, architect, engineers and contractors to bring the project to life and ensure all elements will be exactly as needed to best serve youth. "The Health Centre team know exactly what they want and that makes it really smooth going."

The project poses a unique challenge as it requires measures to ensure health and safety; each of the 11 clinical rooms will have their own sink equipped with sanitary systems, dedicated electrical system, HVAC system and air exhaust as per the Ontario Building Code.

"I love construction and it's a great opportunity to build a Health Centre. It's win-win; work with great people and know the end product will touch so many lives in the community that most need these services."

**GIVE 6IX** is a city-wide invitation for everyone to do 6 of anything to help neighbours experiencing poverty. Here is a sampling of amazing actions we've witnessed since launching **GIVE 6IX** to mark YSM's 125th anniversary . . .

**Volunteer Toronto** was an early adopter of **GIVE 6IX**, inviting their community and followers to join in volunteering for the betterment of our city. From joining the COVID-19 Response Team to thanking volunteers in your life, Volunteer Toronto provided an inspiring 6 ways to get involved. Learn more on their landing page at [info.volunteertoronto.ca/GIVE6IX](https://info.volunteertoronto.ca/GIVE6IX).

**Wes Hall**, from CBC's Dragons' Den, responded to a challenge from Ben Mulroney, co-anchor of Your Morning, and offered 6 one-on-one mentorship sessions to YSM community members. Wes also passed on the challenge and invited 6 of his contacts to meaningfully engage in **GIVE 6IX** themselves.

**Don Saynor**, aka Basic Dad online, of The Jack Russell Agency - a creative partner of YSM - gave **6IX** with his kids. Together they gathered ingredients for 6 spaghetti dinners and delivered them to YSM's Food Bank. Thanks to Don's family, 6 families in our community were able to enjoy a fun, healthy meal together.

**GIVE 6IX** even went international! **Connecting the Dots Foundation**, which focuses on supporting young leaders, started multiple **GIVE 6IX** actions in Nigeria. Their **6IX** included volunteering, giving out supplies at a local orphanage and supplying hygiene items to young women.

## OUR GROWING GIVE 6IX MOVEMENT



Connecting the Dots Foundation, Nigeria, participating in **GIVE 6IX**



*Follow #GIVE6IX to see more stories and find inspiration. Join us! Learn more about **GIVE 6IX** at [ysm.ca/GIVE6IX](https://ysm.ca/GIVE6IX).*



## GIVE 6IX: FINDING YOUR VOICE

“Was it even real? I talked to Ben Mulroney!” exclaimed Lilli, a YSM participant and one of six youth who had the opportunity to meet with and learn from Canadian broadcaster and celebrity Ben Mulroney.

Lilli discovered YSM while living in a shelter. Initially she came for food and health services, but upon hearing about the employment programs offered she was eager to start working towards her life goals.

Elevation in Opportunities Fund is a pre-employment training program that supports youth who self-identify with mental health challenges or a learning disability. The program helps youth prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment with the support of counselling, care management, and job coaching. The OF-Elevation Program is “one of the best employment services programs I’ve seen, they actually walk with you through everything,” said Lilli.

Enter Ben Mulroney! For YSM’s 125th Anniversary we’ve been inviting Toronto residents to **GIVE 6IX** of anything to make a difference in someone’s life. Upon being invited, Ben jumped onboard and offered a 60-minute session to 6 youth in YSM’s OF-Elevation.

Lilli was thrilled to be included, “Honestly, I was kind of in awe the whole time. I’m talking to this big-deal person and he made us feel really comfortable, almost like he was one of us. But you could tell that he was on a completely different level – so smooth, put together, efficient and also hilarious!”

A highlight for Lilli was when, “he said that being on stage, facing all the people out there, he’s like a mixture of being their vanilla ice cream and a metronome. And then his daughter, in the background, was like, ‘but people take offense to vanilla ice cream.’ It was the funniest thing ever!”



Ben Mulroney, co-anchor of Your Morning, announcing his **GIVE 6IX** on social media



“On a more like serious note, what I took from the session was that he uses his weaknesses and turns them into strengths. For me, I have these butterflies when I go out in front of people and it feels like something is coming over me and then I shut down - but Ben actually uses that feeling as his fuel. I never thought about it that way before.”

When Lilli asked Ben about the workflow of Your Morning, the show on which he serves as co-anchor, he shared how all the people behind the scenes help him out, “It was like a switch – whoa, I can ask for help! I often try to do everything myself. I can just go out there and ask for help and have support – a team that’s willing and dedicated to partner with you.”

Lilli is a rapper and singer who plans to share her music with the world, “One day I am going to be a successful musician and I want to gain the skills to face the world. I’m still struggling with talking to people in public spaces and via streaming. I have a passion for this dream because I’ve experienced a lot of hate for no reason. So I rap about it. It’s putting my real feelings and thoughts out there. Being yourself in all the forms you take; when you’re mad or level-headed, when you’re prideful or at your lowest. I want to put all these aspects into my music.”

Lilli is now living in her own place while continuing her learning at YSM. “I’d recommend YSM to anybody. I’ve never seen people so passionate and genuine about what they do. What [YSM] is doing is sensational, very inspiring and it’s actually helping people. It literally got me in a better place. I’m living proof this is a great program.”

*\*Photo changed to protect privacy.*



Learn more about **GIVE 6IX** at  
[ysm.ca/GIVE6IX](https://ysm.ca/GIVE6IX).

## THERE'S A PARTY GOIN' ON RIGHT HERE!

Ok, did the Kool and the Gang song just jump into your head? The lyrics continue . . . "a celebration to last throughout the year. There'll be some good times and some laughter too, we're gonna celebrate, gonna party with you!"

Well, pandemic times haven't had us talking a lot about celebrating, have they? For our 125th year serving in Toronto we had big plans for how we could all celebrate together . . . and then the pandemic made us shift.

This led to the launch of **GIVE 6IX** and a viral campaign that can engage all of us in helping people experiencing poverty with whatever we have to give from wherever we are. And people are! This issue is full of great stories of people giving their **6IX** even beyond our beloved "Six" - the city of Toronto - all the way to Nigeria!! Now that is worth celebrating.

One of our values at YSM is Celebration. In a nutshell, it states we have a lot to celebrate and so we do, often!

We invite you to celebrate with us the many stories of people in our community who are helping others and the simply beauty and joy that come from doing so.

Thank you for being such an important part of the **GIVE 6IX** movement toward the transformation of communities in Toronto by the people of Toronto. And if you haven't yet participated in **GIVE 6IX**, give it some thought and please join us! This is a party that you don't want to miss.

Blessings,

Angie



P.S. I couldn't choose just one **GIVE 6IX** action, so I'm doing THREE!

**6IX** Instagram Lives: What you can do to help!

**6IX** Shout Outs: Who's doing the great work!

**6IX** Hours spent with individuals experiencing poverty who want to work in the social sector.



## DID YOU KNOW?

■ YSM has a virtual tour available online. Explore our buildings and services through the new interactive experience at [ysm.ca/virtual-tour](https://ysm.ca/virtual-tour).

■ We're expecting 400 families to turn to our **Toy Market** come Christmas time. **You can help make this a special year** for the 850 children who will hopefully receive special holiday gifts through our market. It's more than an event, it's a loving community of belonging and care. Learn more about donating toys at [ysm.ca/toy-market](https://ysm.ca/toy-market).

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

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