

FALL 2023

## FOOD INSECURITY - A GROWING CONCERN IN OUR CITY

An increasing number of community members have need to visit Yonge Street Mission's Food Bank because of growing food insecurity.

That fact is not surprising given the current economy. Most neighbours in need are dealing with unaffordable housing, un- or under-employment and insufficient social assistance. Global inflation has also increased the prices of food and most goods, adding to the pressure on community members, as well as on the resources of YSM's Food Bank.

All the mentioned factors contribute to rising visits to our Food Bank: **YSM plans to serve 4,098 households, representing 9,969 individuals, during the coming Christmas season, from October 9 through December 26.**

We offer neighbours in need access to nutritious foods and basic household supplies, and offer services in ways that reaffirm each visitor's worth and dignity. YSM's Food Services, encompassing our Food Bank as well as meal programs at our Evergreen Centre for Street-Involved Youth and Bridges Community Support Services, help provide relief, a sense of belonging and let community members in need know we care about them, and are available to support them, whatever their needs.

### The value of your support

Let me tell you about a YSM community member, Peyton\*, who grew up in a challenging home. When she was young, her parents struggled with addiction to tobacco and alcohol, often leaving young



Record numbers of Toronto neighbours are now relying on food banks like YSM's, to sustain themselves and their families.

Peyton\* and her siblings to manage for themselves – at times there was little or nothing for them to eat, as their parents spent funds earmarked for ensuring their children's welfare on cigarettes and alcohol.

One day a neighbour shared how YSM had helped him and his family when they couldn't afford groceries, and that is when young Peyton\* realized she could seek help at YSM, and receive healthy and balanced foods to sustain herself and her siblings.

To Peyton\*, YSM was far more than just a Food Bank. As she shared, *"the staff who attended to me were kind, non-judgmental, and they made me feel loved and valued."* Through her Food Bank use, Peyton\* also learned about other YSM programs, which added significantly to the support her family received.

That long-past, kind and fullsome support extended to Peyton\* and her

siblings during their childhood are why today she gives back by volunteering at YSM, as an important and hands-on opportunity to help others. As she explained, *"I want to help other struggling children the way YSM helped me and my siblings. That support made a world of difference to us."*

We are in difficult times, ones which present YSM with a clear opportunity to be of critical service and support to growing numbers of Toronto neighbours in need. Know none of our work would occur without you kindly journeying with us as a valued **TO.gether Team** supporter – your kind and compassionate giving makes a vital difference to those we serve.

**Should you have any questions or needs as a TO.gether Team donor, feel free to reach out to Akudo by email to: [aanyanwu@ysm.ca](mailto:aanyanwu@ysm.ca) or call (437) 255-5452.**

# UPDATE: OUR REDEVELOPED EVERGREEN HEALTH AND DENTAL CENTRE

Street-involved youth have unique barriers to maintaining their health, which is why the doors at our Evergreen Health and Dental Centre are open, so we can attend to physical and oral health via many health-related services including physicals; eye exams; chiropractic, podiatry, psychiatry and physiotherapy services; dental hygiene care; oral surgeries and more.

Our Health Centre offers low-barrier care, meaning youth who may not have government identification or an OHIP card can still be seen and receive attention. We are able to operate in this way thanks to over 80 dedicated volunteer healthcare professionals and practitioners, who donate their time to serve youth in need at the centre.

Like all of YSM's care and programming for vulnerable youth, health and dental services are delivered in a relationship-based environment, focused on building trust and rapport, to fully support youth who seek our services. We go beyond just physical needs by incorporating acceptance, connection, and belonging across all facets of our interactions with street-involved youth, to establish much-needed trust and safety. Our wrap-around model of care helps traumatized youth overcome significant barriers, to become equipped to step into adulthood and contribute to society.

As a generous **TO.gether Team** donor, you may have kindly donated to help build and equip YSM's brand new, purpose-built health centre to expand our health care capacity to more than **four times** its prior size! With collective contributions towards the project, we will soon:

- Dramatically **increase the range of services** offered to street-involved youth, including doubling our dental care capacity.
- Provide **greater accessibility** to vital mental health services as we reduce wait times and extend our operating hours.
- Purchase **vital medical equipment** including medical examination tables, dental treatment chairs, sterilizing equipment and an automated external defibrillator.

**Stay tuned for news of the official opening of the redeveloped and expanded Evergreen Health and Dental Centre happening this fall!**

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Street-involved youth face:

- Increased risk of respiratory tract infections, viruses, diseases and suffering with chronic medical conditions (*Homeless Hub, 2011*)
- A life expectancy 30 years lower than the national average (*Toronto Public Health, 2018*)
- A greater likelihood of hospital admissions for mental illness (*Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013*)



Over 80 healthcare volunteers deliver supportive care to youth seeking Health Centre services.

## Snapshot: 2022 Evergreen Health & Dental Centre usage

**4,811**

Visits to  
Evergreen Health  
and Dental Centre

**585**

Dental services  
provided

**482**

Psychiatric / clinical  
counselling hours for  
youth

**133**

Young families got  
baby support and  
essential supplies at  
the nursery