



FALL NEWSLETTER

PERSPECTIVES

BRITTANY BATEMAN - MARKETING STRATEGIST AND DESIGNER

Our 2022-2023 Annual Report is now available!

This year's Annual Report is written by our staff and youth to share with you a variety of perspectives in the hopes that you will be inspired to help us on our mission to end youth homelessness. Together we break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and strive to change the narrative. Our photographs were taken by a resident youth, the stories we share are real, and the messages we have written to you come from our hearts.

In our continuing efforts to go green, this year's report is available to view online through an interactive flipbook or for download. Scan the QR code below to access the flipbook, or visit YWS.ON.CA to download your copy.

Thank you for taking the time to view our world from our authentic and unique perspectives.

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

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WELCOME TO #TEAMYWS

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

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Y4Y ARTICLE, "MY PERSPECTIVE"



WELCOME TO #TEAMYWS



We are thrilled to announce the newest member of our team, Wendy Curnew-Harris! Wendy joined our Stay in School (SIS) team this September as our new Stay In School Manager. The SIS program offers 20-bed long-term transitional housing for youth dedicated to completing their education.

"I am super excited to be here! After working at Arrabon House for 18 years and the sadness of its recent closing, I was looking for a place where you could feel passion. When I walked through the doors of YWS I was thrilled to feel that magic, where the youth are the centre of everything. The SIS program is where our future comes from. Having the privilege to be a small part of the lives of our young people makes my heart happy!"



Our on-site Mental Health Program was created in 2021 to provide our youth with a structural framework to establish a pathway of care and ongoing therapeutic support. Earlier this August, Ayesha Masud joined our team as the new YWS Mental Health Therapist.

"I feel really privileged to be in the role of Mental Health Therapist. I grew up in this neighbourhood, and my parents still live down the street, so this shelter and its youth hold a special place in my heart. Being able to work within my community, with especially racialized and marginalized youth, is incredibly fulfilling work. I am inspired every day by the clients I am lucky enough to work with; beyond resiliency, the joy, creativity, and intelligence of the youth I interact with daily is one of many reasons I love what I do."

HELIXHOUSE

Helix House also has a new staff member joining this season! Stacy Magic came on board this September to support the team as our new Helix House Case Manager at our Bathurst Street location. With Helix House youth going back to school, it's the perfect time for Stacy to come on board and support them through their educational journeys!

"Success to me is having a vocation that is like a hobby, so it doesn't feel like work. I truly believe I have found this affluence at YWS. Thank you all for this outstanding opportunity."

We would also like to welcome 2 new members to our Relief staff team!

Delali Aglagoh and Elisa Nelson have joined our frontline relief team. Elisa also works in the YWS kitchen on weekends to provide healthy meals and snacks for residents. Working front line is a very demanding job. Not only does the team assist youth with all their needs throughout the day, organizing chores, and making sure they are supported with school and work, but they are also the ones to greet our donors and volunteers at the front door. They keep the shelter maintained and organized to ensure the success and safety of all our residents. We are very grateful to have them on board to support our 53 resident youth as they stay with us in our Emergency Residential and Stay In School Programs.

#TeamYWS #EndingYouthHomelessness #OneYouthAtATime

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

If you've visited our Warrendale location recently, you may have noticed some big changes!

Thanks to our ongoing partnership with Arts Etobicoke, we were introduced to local artist, Renier, who completely transformed our iconic front steps to the shelter. With bright vibrant colours and abstract graffiti style, not only does his work reflect our ever-evolving brand, but also the vibrancy and creativity of our youth.

Thank you, Renier, for creating such a wonderful welcome for the youth who call YWS home.

Follow Renier on Instagram: [@reat1coa](https://www.instagram.com/reat1coa)



BACK TO SCHOOL

ANASTASIA KEMP, COORDINATOR, ADVOCACY & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Back to school is an exciting time for many students: new teachers, new friends, and exciting new classes. However, for the majority of our Stay in School (SIS) youth in grades 11 or 12, the decision to apply and attend post-secondary school can be a stressful one. When these feelings are combined with having experienced homelessness throughout their lives, attending post-secondary school can seem like a distant dream. Applying to programs, accepting offers, and then attending classes with hundreds of students are all overwhelming parts of the process for most YWS youth, which is why our SIS Case Managers work diligently to support them through these uncertainties.

For many YWS youth, the path to education is particularly challenging. Youth can experience heightened pressure to excel in their courses for fear of being perceived as "less than" when compared to their peers. Youth who are newcomers to Canada bring an entirely different set of challenges to the table that must be faced to pursue their educational dreams. We help support these youth in several ways, such as connecting them with volunteer tutors, working individually with them in our Life Skills program, maintaining healthy communications with our Mental Health Clinical Physician, and whenever possible, assisting them with obtaining bursaries and grants.

Through our wrap-around programming and support services, the YWS staff team works tirelessly to create a safe, welcoming space for our youth to thrive and continue with their educational pursuits. But we don't do it alone!



1 IN 3 YOUTH EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS GRADUATE
HIGH SCHOOL



VS. 9 IN 10 HOUSED YOUTH

GRADUATION RATES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH
IN CANADA ARE LESS THAN **30%**

GRADUATION RATES FOR STUDENTS
WITHIN OUR STAY IN SCHOOL PROGRAM AT
YWS ARE OVER **80%**



Thanks to our community supporters, donors, and volunteers, we are able to support our residents, and past residents, on their individual journeys to greatness. Whether that be through tutoring, donating clothing and supplies for class and school projects, or cooking meals to comfort and nourish it's all the seemingly small things that our community provides that have a long-lasting impact on the lives of so many.

If you are looking for ways to get involved and help support our youth through to their graduation, please feel free to reach out to our team to discuss the variety of opportunities available to the public. Education is a key that can unlock a world of possibilities for our youth. We thank you for supporting the futures of tomorrow.

Financial donations, media and sponsorship:

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Volunteer opportunities and donation scheduling:

Anastasia Kemp
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Educational outreach program and Youth and Philanthropy projects:

Mike Burnett
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WELCOMING OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

ERIN MORRISON - DIRECTOR

"PRINCIPAL" AT MORRISON COMMS

CAROLYN CULLEN - DIRECTOR

ENTREPRENEUR

BRYONY HALPIN - DIRECTOR

SENIOR POLICY ANALYST

KEN OTTO - DIRECTOR

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

NICOLE FINDLAY - DIRECTOR

DIRECTOR, SALES AND DELIVERY LOGISTICS PLANNING

THEO MOSS - ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT



MY PERSPECTIVE

JASMEET RANDHAWA OF THE YOUNG
PHILOSOPHERS SOCIETY

Children huddled in a cold, decaying, bunker-esque room, holding out a bowl as they line up for porridge, huddled in masses and thoroughly malnourished, dying of either scarlet fever, or tuberculosis—a Dickensian image that has defined the public perception of youth shelters since the Victorian age. One, that examined even with a middling critical sense, would surely fall apart— we as a society, have advanced well past the age of child labourers and the ravages of TB, yet it seems, our perceptions, still lag behind.

While the more rational among us would scoff at the assumption that Charles Dickens can still be trusted as an up-to-date portrayal of the current state of youth shelters and social services offered to minors, the pictures we often drudge up aren't much better.

Speaking to my personal perspective on the issues, I had a distinctly dystopian perspective on the services offered to youth in my community. How could I not— all the news seems to tell us, are the stories of falling youth education, the limits placed on those of lower socio-economic status, and the inability of our social services to keep up with the demand that is put on them.

To be frank, I really didn't have a concrete sense of what a real youth shelter would be like, most of us don't when it comes to things like this. We oftentimes hold loose notions and ideas, but not concrete inferences, and I say this as the founder of a youth network that actively raises the voices of disenfranchised youth. We can speak for the most part to the struggles youth face, but when asked about their actual conditions, most are absolutely clueless.

As a part of Young Philosophers Society, I was given the opportunity to see the great workplaces like these can accomplish in person, with a visit to Youth Without Shelter's youth home.

Before the visit, I was asked to write down a few notes on what I thought it would be like. Combing through my notepad now, it's amazing to see just how wrong oneself can be, blinded by both personal and pop-cultural stereotypes. We are often blind to how the real world can be better than anything we imagined.

Over and over again, the words hostile environment have been written in my notes. To past me, a purely logical conclusion. Children don't go to youth shelters by choice, often driven there by significant hardships that drive them to these places, and that certainly wouldn't inspire a loving community of people who want to be there. On top of that, modern media depicts many youths not wanting to enter there in the first place, and shelters in general are shown to be just as dangerous as living on the street. I've read reports about children's belongings fitting into trash bags, lugged from shelter to shelter, as even their places of refuge hold no warmth. Furthermore, shelters are often placed in communities that exhibit a lot of civil unrest, adding further to the dystopian narrative.

Gladly, I can report that this is not the reality at YWS.

When I walked in, I was greeted by a pleasant neighborhood, with a little road going towards the shelter home. A well-kept house, in good shape, with artwork adorning the stairs. As I walked in, I saw kids laughing in the sunlight outside, smiling at each other.

Ring the doorbell, and walking in, I did NOT see a messy living space littered with beds, or for that matter, any mess at all that would indicate a level of chaos. A pristine, clean entranceway, with a communal space for the kids, in which I could see some relaxing. The walls were adorned with murals and quotes, one of which caught my eye: an image of children of all different backgrounds holding hands, with the words, "We rise by lifting others" written above them. Immediately I knew, there was nothing hostile about it.

Anastasia Kemp, was the woman who led us through the place. I have to say, there was something transformative about the way in which she directed the tour. The first thing we saw was one of the therapy rooms- a room that Kemp mentioned would be changing soon, into a medical room. Littered on the floor were bags of things- things that belonged to children who had just come into the shelter, housed in trash bags, on the floor. This would be the only element of disarray I would see in the whole tour. To me, it represented a sense of transformation. I would later find out, that while they may arrive like this, the children leave with duffle bags and suitcases, giving me a sense of what this place gave to it's kids: not only a house, but a new life, in which they lived with dignity and a sense of belonging, in which they mattered, no matter what circumstances they may have come from. Just like that room will be soon transformed into some greater, so too are the children that walk through this place.

I do not presume to know what these children are going through, as I write this article, sitting in my own, personal air-conditioned room in the middle of suburbia, on a laptop that my parents bought for me, it would be arrogant to assume I could understand a fraction of their pain. But what I saw was a place that did at the very least, understand what needed to be done, what they could do, to give back the flower of opportunity to these kids, that they fully deserved.

They offer both emergency support programs, and a long-term support system in more ways than one. They take in about 56 kids at a time, committing them to a program in which the children receive the education and skills they need to succeed in the real world. It's not just a house, it's not just a place to sleep- they provide food, (and by food, I mean real home-cooked meals, not just canned foods), educational resources, help them find houses, clothes, and workshops for resume building and how to find a job. It's not just a shelter, in some sense it imitates aspects of the home, giving them the opportunity to learn the same skills that many learn from their parents. It's definitely not what I thought it would be- and thank the lord for that.

It also gave me pause, in a sense. Yes, the situation is much better than what I thought it would be, but it wasn't a wonderland (and that's not a riff on the shelter, truth of the matter is, the situation is such that I would not want any child to be in).

It made me consider walking through this place, talking to a woman, who spends her days organizing all of this for youth- finding materials for hot meals, organizing clothes donations, finding homes for them to move into- all stuff I take for granted. I don't have to worry where my next meal comes from, the mess in my closet shows that I have too many clothes to count, and I've never worried about having a roof over my head.

I remember the walk I had with Jaslyn, one of the first people I reached out to when I founded YPS. We both love politics and want to make a difference in our communities, but coming here showed us how blind we still were to many of the realities youth like us face. Bubble-wrapped in suburbia, we often fail to see both the joys that people work to bring to those who are disadvantaged, and the true extent of suffering that has the capability to manifest.

We reminisced on our sound-box of IB programme students, constantly worrying about grades or school, and we often don't recognize the privilege we have in getting to worry about something like that. For too many others our age, they have much bigger fish to fry.

All in all, I cherish the opportunity to see change in action around me that YWS gave us, and I hope that they are able to continue their mission. That Dickensian image I presented at the start, is not the one I think people should leave with. I'd much rather them see that mural that is proudly displayed on the YWS walls, of a community of children on the steps, bringing each other up, one after the other, no matter creed or colour.

Join a growing network of youth who are committed to ending youth homelessness by joining our Youth4Youth (Y4Y) program. We have a variety of options for schools, youth groups, clubs, sports teams, and individuals to volunteer with YWS and help raise awareness within our community about the issues surrounding youth homelessness.

To learn more, please contact **Anastasia** at 416-748-0110 ext. 39, akemp@yws.on.ca



GREATEST NEEDS FOR FALL



DONATIONS NEEDED

- Menstrual Pads
- Black Hair Care
- Lotion
- Body Wash
- Boxers and Briefs



Due to limited storage space and cleaning facilities, we are not able to accept used or gently used clothing or lightly used towels or bedsheets

CALL US FOR MORE INFORMATION

Food Donations:
Mike 416-748-0110 EXT.62 or
mburnett@yws.on.ca

Financial Donations:
Lisa 416-748-0110 EXT. 36 or
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GET IN TOUCH!

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