

GREATER VANCOUVER
YOUTH UNLIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT

2018-2019

Stories of
courage and
transformation





14,950+ YOUTH IN CONTACT WITH YOUTH UNLIMITED

THAT'S THOUSANDS OF YOUTH WHO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO:

- Build a long-lasting connection with one or more caring youth workers
- Feel safe, accepted, seen and supported by both peers and healthy adults
- Tangibly feel the love of God through caring relationships
- Discover their potential

MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR



—
“God’s love compels us to go and feed, clothe, visit, care for, provide belonging and empower the vulnerable among us”

My father passed away in February. He fought for many years, but cancer is a crushing opponent. As I reflect on this past year at Youth Unlimited and on my family life, I keep coming back to thoughts of my dad and his legacy. My dad started framing houses as a teenager and ended his career at age 75 with Habitat for Humanity, building homes (places of belonging) for under-resourced families. His mantra, “everyone deserves a home,” kept him going right to the very end.

My dad received awards from the Canadian government, worked with President Jimmy Carter in cities around the world and received high praise from 99% of the people he worked with, but what gave him the greatest joy was handing over the house keys to a young family who never thought they could own a home.

I’ve learned a lot from my dad, like how to frame a house, how to raise a family, how to deal with difficult people, how to positively influence the culture of an organization and much more, but what I’ve learned most was this:

LOVE ACTS!

I am reminded of a parable Jesus told where he said:

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after

me, I was in prison and you came to visit me....Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

We have seen it all this past year and, cried tears of joy and pain as we walked alongside vulnerable youth. We are constantly reminded again and again just how lonely and isolated this generation is, (it is unprecedented) but God’s love compels us to go and feed, clothe, visit, care for, provide belonging and empower the vulnerable among us. This **LOVE IN ACTION** approach to life is contagious—so contagious that we are even seeing it in the youth we care so deeply about, amazing young people like 18-year-old Helena featured in this Annual Report.

Thank you for putting your love into action as you continue to journey with us at Youth Unlimited. This is part of your legacy.

With deep gratitude,

Mark Koop
Executive Director

YOUTH UNLIMITED IN 2018/19

CELEBRATING YOUR IMPACT



111

Youth in leadership
development programs



28,269

Meals served



676

Youth in discipleship
programs



200+

Volunteers



880

Camp workers
trained through
Lifeteams



09

Innovative youth
drop-in centres



60

Frontline
youth workers



14,950

Youth in contact
with YU

ABOUT US

Youth Unlimited is a faith-based organization that meets vulnerable youth where they are at in communities across Greater Vancouver. We're about genuine relationships, without judgement, with a goal to love like Jesus loved. We listen and have the conversations youth want and need to have. We are serious about helping. We foster strategic partnerships to collectively care for the youth in our communities.

MAKING ACCESS TO OUTDOOR ADVENTURE, POSSIBLE

This winter, 176 youth were sponsored to join Youth Unlimited's Mountain Life's winter program, allowing many youth to ski or snowboard for the very first time!

"One youth told me that he had been practicing on the small 'hill' in his local park," says a volunteer. "But since being able to attend three Mountain Life trips he's now building jumps with the group and 'throwing fearless shapes mid-air.'"

Graham Goertzen, Mountain Life program director, has been providing outdoor experiences to youth for nearly two decades and has seen the impact it has on youth with limited means.

"Taking young people out of the city and into the mountains is invaluable," he explains. "Sometimes it takes a bit of coaxing to get them there but once they come, magic happens. Breathing fresh air, being immersed in God's creation, and disconnecting from technology allows their young brains to relax and make healthy connections. They need this—and it works! It's fun to see that happen."

On January 18, a friend of Mountain Life organized a Mount Seymour fundraiser called "Afford to Board." Gear and funds were donated so YU kids would be suited up to ride. Through the event, 40 new and used snowboards as well as a van-full of helmets, jackets and boots were provided.

A massive thank you to our generous youth sponsors and to Mount Seymour for making lift passes accessible!



"Breathing fresh air, being immersed in God's creation... they need this."



"C-21 is a space that gives them a sense of belonging and freedom."

EXPRESSION AND ACCEPTANCE ARE ESSENTIAL FOR FLOURISHING

Terri was 14 years old when she started coming to Youth Unlimited's Friday night drop-in centre in Abbotsford, called C-21. While today she is positively satisfied with who she is and how she represents herself, at the time her unique beauty was not always appreciated. Sometimes bullied at school and even in youth group, Terri contrasts that pain with the indescribable warmth and acceptance she felt when she came to C-21.

"Everyone there was their own person," she says. "The people at the drop-in accepted everyone. When I would come, no one would look at me and say, 'what's wrong with her?'"

YU's Maria Dyck was one of the youth workers Terri first connected with. One thing that made Terri feel safe was Maria's respect of Terri's personal life. "Maria never approached me just asking questions, she just eased into it," she said. Maria was trust-worthy and invitational, and as the trust grew, so did the relationship.

Terri, now 20, is a familiar and positive face at the drop-in where she and her partner Mark have been volunteering this past year. Because Terri and other youth workers work hard to foster authenticity and making space for differences, even when it's uncomfortable, vulnerable youth say C-21 is a space that gives them a sense of belonging and freedom.

"I think the youth connect to me more because I am different," says Terri. "And if they see that I can just be myself, then they can too."

COURAGE, RESILIENCE AND COMPASSION:

Helena's journey to freedom starts with a pair of shoes



On many given days this summer, 18-year-old Helena May could be found handing out water to those in the homeless community in Mission. When she learned of the community's desperate need for clean water, having spent some tough nights on the street herself, she felt compelled to help. Completely of her own initiative, Helena recruited her sister, bought the water and they handed it out—all with a smile, of course. "I love these people," she says. "I love all of our community."

Helena had been struggling with challenging living situations for several years before Youth Unlimited's Mission Youth House (MY House) intervened. Her dramatic life-path change started with a pair of K-Swiss shoes.

"I don't know where I'd be without this place. It was here when I needed something to eat and needed a safe person to talk to. I'm very grateful for MY House."

She was attending an alternative school in Mission and her shoes were in shambles. The school counsellor took notice and recommended that Helena ask YU youth worker Scott Guitard for a new pair of shoes. The Vans Shoes store in Guildford generously keeps YU supplied with footwear that helps the feet of at-risk teens stand out for good reasons—not embarrassing ones. Helena was thrilled with the shoes and her new found connection to MY House.

THE EARLY YEARS

When she was growing up, Helena and her sister ended up in the custody of her grandma. Those years were extremely hard for her. She was delighted when, at age seven, her dad was released from prison and she and her sister were reunited with their parents, creating many happy memories.

"We did a lot of activities together," she says. "I got to do regular kid stuff like play softball, go fishing, and take dance classes." While life seemed to stabilize for a few years, storms were brewing.

WANDERING

At age 12, things started to shift and Helena began hanging out at a local “party house” with older teens who were also coping with their own struggles.

“They’d be drunk by 8:00am” says Helena. “The girls influenced me to drink more. I knew it was wrong, but I looked up to those girls.”

Most days before school she’d be at the house consuming whatever was there. The girls coaxed Helena to dress more adult and be involved in adult activities. She felt uneasy about it all, but found herself slipping in deeper without a way out.

STREET-INVOLVED

By 16, she was dealing drugs, convinced she had no other options for work. Lost in a fog of mental health concerns and addiction, and enduring fights with her mom that became violent, she left home.

“I felt like I had nowhere to go and like my family didn’t want me,” she says, “so I was hanging out on the streets. I wasn’t proud of my addiction and I felt like the streets were where I belonged.” Helena fought to break the cycle and went to detox, but at the time she couldn’t maintain sobriety with all the unhealthy influences surrounding her.

LIGHT BREAKS THROUGH

After missing most of her grade nine year, Helena was placed at Fraserview Learning Centre School and “that was the best thing that could have happened,” she says.



Helena in the office at MY House she uses to run meetings and support groups

“I was hanging out on the streets. I wasn’t proud of my addiction, so I felt like the streets were where I belonged.”

It was there that Helena met Scott who provided her not just with shoes, but also with encouragement and a much-needed introduction to MY House, a critical resource for homeless and street-involved youth.

“She’s always been outgoing and friendly,” says Scott, who helps run My House, “but there was a lot of unhealthiness in her life. I was thrilled to see her making healthier choices and becoming part of our community.”

Helena began to frequent the facility. Whether to get food, a shower, medical advice or to see friends, MY House was where Helena felt safe. YU youth workers became a constant in her life, and they, along with other caring workers helped provide a continuum of care giving Helena the strength she needed to make changes.



Back Row: YU staff members Calvin Williams, Scott Guitard, Barry McLeod

A VERY BRIGHT FUTURE

Today, Helena is clean, sober and living with her grandmother. This resilient, confident young woman’s future is so bright. Recently she was working with FLOH, a youth-led, adult-supported job helping those affected by the foster care system, running the dialogue sessions out of MY House’s basement. Over the summer, she was the MY House summer intern, organizing events and being a beacon of hope to those struggling like she once was.

“I don’t know where I’d be without this place,” Helena beams. “It was here when I needed something to eat and needed a safe person to talk to. I’m very grateful for MY House.”

BUILDING COMPASSION THROUGH DIVERSITY

Last year, Chris Bachand, 25, was working at a construction site when Ben*, a 17-year old worker, asked to borrow his phone. Chris overheard him calling various people, and through those calls sensed that Ben had nowhere to stay the night. "You know, why don't you stay with me for the weekend until you can figure something out?" suggested Chris.

What he presumed would be a weekend of support turned into an eight-month stay. Chris talked with Ben almost every day, encouraging him to graduate high school and start working towards a career.

While many people would have been hesitant to open their home to a vulnerable youth, Chris was familiar with situations like Ben's. When he himself was a youth, Chris was involved in Youth Unlimited programs where he witnessed the consistent support that youth workers provided to teens like Ben—including opening up their homes.

While he was not an at-risk youth himself, through YU Chris got to spend time with peers from a wide variety of backgrounds, while being mentored and taught leadership and patience.

"Something that I took away from my experience with Youth Unlimited was that I really learned what compassion means," says Chris.

YU programs are designed to be low-barrier for at-risk and vulnerable youth, but everyone is warmly welcomed. Diversity within communities fosters growth and nurtures compassionate relationships. For Chris, it helped him become a courageous and generous adult, attuned to the needs of others.

* Not his real name



"I really learned what compassion means."



"Together, we are building a community of safety, hope and stability for these kids"

A DREAM COME TRUE: CREATIVE LIFE GETS ITS OWN STUDIO

Youth Unlimited's Creative Life art program gives youth an opportunity to explore and express themselves while discovering the assets they already possess within themselves. It is nurtured within community where youth can contribute meaningfully and have their voices heard and valued.

"Together, we are building a community of safety, hope and stability for these kids," says youth worker Lyndsay Kinghorn.

While the ministry was established five years ago, 2019 has brought paramount changes, taking the program to the next level. Creative Life forged a partnership with the Beaumont Studios which allowed them to secure permanent studio space and increase the number of programs and workshops offered to youth. The Mount Pleasant location is situated just outside of the Downtown Eastside, where most of the outreach work is done, helping kids break out of isolation and survival mode.

"At Creative Life and all of YU, we are all growing together and learning from each other," says program director Charlotte Browning. "We are trying to enter into the new season with openness in remodeling what we do."

The new physical space brings an inspiring amount of potential to Creative Life. There is a wealth of artists with studio space in the building with whom they hope to involve in the arts mentorship program. The vision is to add a social enterprise component, allowing youth to use their skills to make money; as well as a purposefully-built kitchen for a culinary arts element and the enhancement of group meals.

As the physical space grows, more students can join and experience internal growth. As one participant shares, "I think things in my character have changed. I have seen myself grow in encouragement, not only towards myself but to other people."

WE ARE LISTENING

As a youth worker, it can be exhausting to daily pour out your life and energy to youth who don't appear to hear or care what you have to share with them. Brody was one such youth. He was a joker—the disruptive but lovable class clown. Never appeared to listen. A dynamic duo with his best friend Ben, the pair would constantly detract attention away from anything else and on to them. At the time a Mission youth worker, Dave Wiebe tried to help Brody.

“Dave was the one who had the most impact during my time with Youth Unlimited” says Brody. “He would get pretty fed up with me because I'd just be goofing around with my friend; yet he was always patient, and persevered. He said he never thought I was listening - but I always was. It just didn't look like it.”

In grade 11, Brody was expelled from school and consequently lost his quarterback position on the Mission Niners team. He went down the path of alcohol and drug use as a way of coping with the pain, but in his darkest moments he remembered what he had learned about God, and felt him there.

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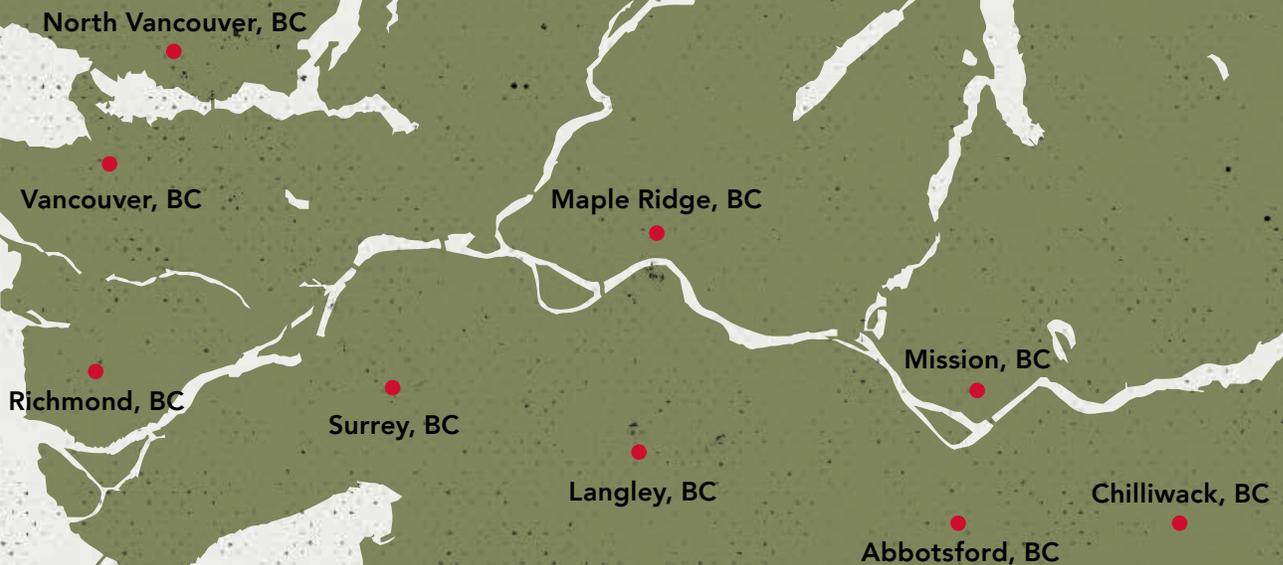
“At age 20, I became fed up with what I was doing, and I remember crying in my room one night and calling out to God for help”. A week or two later, Brody met Florence. “We brought each other closer to God,” he explains. “Before we connected, neither of us were attending church or part of the community; yet as our relationship grew, our relationships with the Lord grew also.” The two married soon-after meeting.

To read all of Brody's story check out the next Connections newsletter in February 2020.



Brody and his wife, Florence

WHERE YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE



THE YOUTH WORKER'S VAN: A LIFE-CHANGING TOOL

While en route to Manitoba for a skate camp, Mike Willms, a youth worker for Youth Unlimited in Surrey, asked a youth if he'd been on any trips out of the province. The youth responded, "Yeah! I've been to Gibsons!"

Little did he know that not only was there a lot more to explore than he originally thought, but this trip would become a fond memory of adolescence. "These vans give youth life experience that they don't forget," says Mike. "We've taken kids up to Whistler for the day and they say it's one of the best days in their lives."

Because poverty is widespread in the inner city, most young people there have been affected in some way, either directly or indirectly. These are the youth who spend time with Mike, through skateboard, ski, and snowboard clubs and through the alternative schools. Mike facilitates fun and shows love to youth who many people assume will become a negative statistic.

"Giving them experiences beyond their current confines is extremely dignifying," explains Mike. "It expands their world and helps them grow and relate to others."

"Giving them experiences beyond their current small confines is extremely dignifying"

In addition to financial challenges, many of Mike's youth experience relational poverty—difficult, weak, or non-existent relationships. Mike explains that relational poverty is a key reason why the youth can't attend certain programs or participate in specific activities:

"Many of these kids are missing or have lost a parent and are cared for either by a single parent or the government, often through foster care. These youth are not experiencing rich relationships—the government doesn't make a very good family." As a result, many youth become isolated when their guardians are unable to, or uninterested in, driving them anywhere, making public transit their only option. This cost is a barrier for some teens.

Youth Unlimited youth workers and their van act as a bridge, connecting youth with resources and essential fun activities. On average, YU vans host about 2,500 youth per year, carting kids and gear alike to all kinds of surf, snow, skate, camp and sport activities.

"Giving a young person new experiences in new places creates a sense of pride and self-respect, while creating positive memories," explains Mike. "We want marginalized youth to have at least some of the same opportunities as their classmates."

"We've taken kids up to Whistler for the day and they say it's one of the best days of their life"

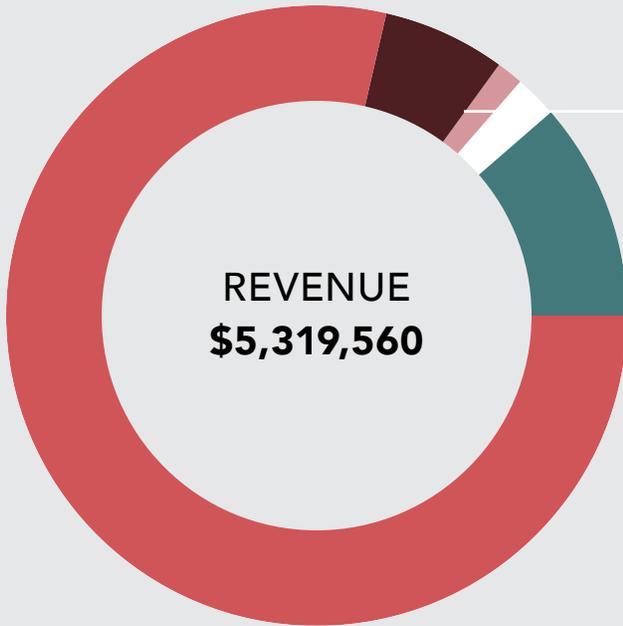
Trips don't have to be far to make an impact: Mike brings his skateboard club to local spots like the UBC skatepark, helping them think outside their own limited context. When youth do get the opportunity to go on multi-day trips to destinations such as Seattle, Portland, or Tofino, Mike says it "broadens their understanding of the world and opens their eyes to wonder." Practically, the eyes of some of Mike's recent grads were opened to employment opportunities as a result of these trips.

Youth Unlimited is so grateful to those who have partnered to make our van purchases possible. We can't do this work without you!



One of many skateboarding trips the van affords

2018/19 FINANCIALS



●	Donation Income:	\$4,192,446
●	Program Revenue:	\$334,446
●	Grants:	\$76,142
●	Gift In Kind:	\$121,214
●	Other:	\$595,560

●	Programs:	\$4,357,266
●	Administration:	\$558,000
●	Fundraising & Donor Relations:	\$134,734



"You make me feel safe, Every need I had, you filled it without me asking, before I even knew I needed it."

- North Shore Youth

"Because of you guys I get a second chance at life, which I never thought I would say since i've been let down so many times."

- Mission Youth

"I can't thank you enough for empowering our team to go out and sit with these young people. We have hope because God is good. And because many people - like you - care deeply for holistic health in young lives."

- Surrey Youth Worker

2018/19 AWARDS + MILESTONES!

- Lifeteams celebrated 20 years of youth worker training
- Richmond worker Toto Mak was awarded the U-ROC Award for helping youth build developmental assets
- Ten Youth Unlimited North Shore youth won awards including five for the City of Vancouver's Youth Award, four CityFEST youth for Outstanding Squad for enhancement of their community and one won the Rise Up Award for facing personal growth despite adversity
- The 29th Annual Youth Unlimited Golf Tournament was a success raising nearly \$90,000
- Coast Capital donated \$6,000 towards life skill enhancement activities and mentorship
- First West donated \$10,000 towards our hot breakfast programs
- Partners provided a desperately needed 15-passenger van to continue Surrey youth programs in critical areas.



PARTNER WITH YOU

There are many ways you can help Youth Unlimited in reaching and connecting with vulnerable youth across the Greater Vancouver area.

DONATE

We are extremely efficient with our use of funding, and a little bit can go a long way. Please consider supporting us financially.

VOLUNTEER

Many of our programs depend on volunteer support. Connect with us about getting involved!

PRAY

We desperately need your prayers, so please pray for us! Contact us to sign up for our monthly prayer letter.

CONNECT WITH US

SOCIAL MEDIA

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NEWSLETTER

Sign up for our newsletter by visiting youthunlimited.com

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"So many youth have said to me "Without you reaching out constantly, I wouldn't have anyone." That's why I get up in the morning. That's why I carry on. God never gives up on us, and so I don't ever give up on these youth"

- Abbotsford Youth Worker