

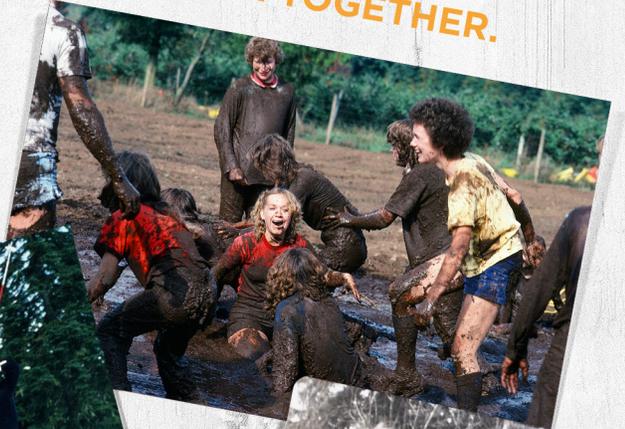
GREATER VANCOUVER  
YOUTH UNLIMITED

# ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020

---

FORWARD. TOGETHER.



CELEBRATING 75  
YEARS OF LOVING  
AND SERVING YOUTH



**Youth  
Unlimited™**

YFC GREATER VANCOUVER

# ESTIMATED YOUTH IN CONTACT WITH YU FOR THE PAST 75 YEARS

1945 - 1950	20,000
1951 - 1960	50,000
1961 - 1970	54,000
1971 - 1980	20,000
1981 - 1990	20,000
1991 - 2000	45,000
2001 - 2010	75,000
2011 - 2020	135,000

APPROXIMATELY **419,000+**  
YOUTH IN CONTACT WITH  
YU SINCE 1945.

**PRIOR TO THE 1960s, THAT'S 70,000 YOUTH WHO HEARD AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE AND BUILD CONNECTIONS. AFTER THE 1950s, THAT'S 349,000 YOUTH WHO HAVE:**

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

# MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR



—  
**“Through relationship, we are able to identify the beauty in each young person and help them see it too.”**

I love the Planet Earth documentaries. I am captivated by the stunning panoramas of our vast and incredibly diverse ecosystems and all the creatures who live within them, plus David Attenborough’s voice is just too soothing.

I am frequently blown away at how animals learn to adapt to their environments, developing mechanisms to protect themselves from predators and harsh conditions. Take Wood Frogs, for example. During the height of winter, the Wood Frog survives the freezing winter temperatures by producing its own anti-freeze to limit the size of crystals that can form. Their bodies become completely frozen and their hearts and brains are put into a form of stasis with no activity. In the spring, they thaw and come back to life. AMAZING!

Wood Frogs needed to adapt to stay alive.

Our human experience is no different. We are constantly adapting to the world around us for our own survival and flourishing. It’s how we’re wired and keeps us from being frozen in time.

This year, YFC and Youth Unlimited chapters are celebrating 75 years of youth outreach. The world has changed dramatically since

1945. And it’s moving fast! (Can you believe that just 15 years ago, everyone was using flip phones and trying to figure out how to text?) In the 40’s, 50’s and 60’s, huge youth rallies were the focus of helping youth hear the good news of God’s love. Today, the good news comes alive in the long-term, transformative relationships we develop with young people and their families. Through relationship, we are able to identify the beauty (God colours) in each young person and help them see it too.

*“Let me tell you why you’re here... you’re here to be light, bringing out the God colours in the world.” - Matthew 5:13-16*  
(The Message)

Thank you for your prayers and investment in our youth and our staff who serve them. With your help, we have been able to make the difference for hundreds of thousands of youth over these 75 years.

On behalf of all involved since 1945,

**Mark Koop**  
Executive Director

# YOUTH UNLIMITED IN 2019/20

## CELEBRATING YOUR IMPACT



**596**

Actively mentored  
youth



**3,762**

Family-style meals



**2,084**

Discipleship hours



**36,809**

Meals served



**136**

Youth in leadership  
development programs



**80**

Community  
partnerships



**358**

Volunteers



**35,619**

Volunteer hours



**18,382**

Youth in contact  
with YU



**53**

Youth workers



## 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.

## A COMMUNITY-NEEDS BASED APPROACH TO YOUTH WORK

Seventeen years ago, Danny Ferguson borrowed a mobile drop-in center, parked it in an elementary school parking lot and Langley Youth Unlimited's first official event began. Five elementary-aged kids showed up the first night, and the next Friday there were 75.

Prior to launching, Danny had spent nine months researching the community's needs by holding conversations with mayors, city councilors, service agencies and businesses.

"We asked where there were gaps of service and what we at YU could help fill," Danny says. "One response really landed for me: Langley is a community of communities. With no central hub to congregate and few transit options, Langley's youth end up in hidden and invisible spaces." A Friday night drop-in for youth appeared to be essential.

"All the programs we run are in response to a need," says Danny. "We want to work with the kids who are falling through the cracks and do so by taking a wholistic approach. If they're hungry we want to provide food. If they need a job, we'll help them with their resume and interview skills. I don't want to maintain programs, I want to maintain relationships."

The Langley team has run everything from art programs to skateboard competitions, leadership programs to Youth Alpha. They've hosted open mic nights, job training programs and even started a youth magazine.

For the comic book club, "we would buy the books on Amazon, drop it off at kids' houses and read them online together," says Langley's Jon Pue. "Some incredibly meaningful conversations emerged from that."

Earlier this year, Danny passed the torch of Area Director to Jon. "Other than the pandemic, it was probably the best transition you could hope for," says Jon. Danny is now GVVU's Community Engagement Coordinator, taking his research-based community approach giftings to the rest of GVVU.

**"All the programs we run are in response to a need".**

## STEPPING FROM THE BIG SCREEN TO A SMALL STAGE YIELDS A BIG IMPACT

After six years as a professional film and TV actor, Ryan Scramstad took a pause to attend YWAM Australia, a six-month discipleship training school. The experience completely changed his life's trajectory, as he felt called to pursue performing arts in a missional context. Previously, he'd worked on shows like *Man in The High Castle*, *Aftermath*, and the recent *Predator* movie, but as he returned to Vancouver, "I had no idea what was coming next," he says. "All I knew was I was not going back to acting in the same way. I dropped my agent, stopped auditioning and waited."

In mid-2019, the pieces of Ryan's future started to fall into place. He had already worked with youth and marginalized groups, so when the Artistic Director job for the Jesters program materialized, Ryan knew it was his calling.

"The creativity kids are born with can get hidden over time as their insecurities build up," he says. "It's so important to give them a safe space to explore creative impulses."

[Continue story on page 8...](#)



# 75 YEARS OF LOVING YOUTH

## THE BEGINNING

It was 1945. Nearly one million Canadian soldiers were returning home from war, many settling in urban centers, which were markedly different than their small-town upbringing. Many soldiers, just teenagers when they left, found re-entry extremely difficult. Their sense of belonging was lost, and leaders in some cities wondered how to support this young generation. It was in this context that Youth For Christ (later known as Youth Unlimited), was born.

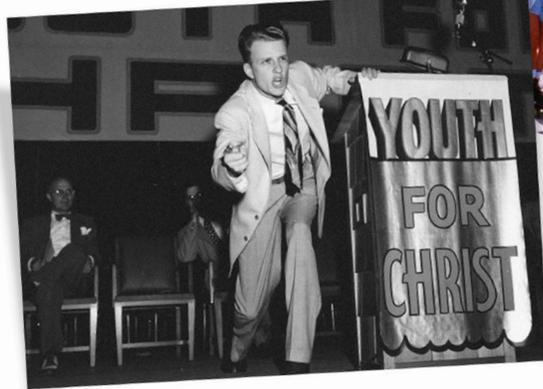
YFC did not emerge from central coordination or extensive plans. Rather, it sprouted in cities all across North America. In 1945, Pastor Torrey Johnson was elected chairman of YFC by a committee in Chicago. Inundated with requests, he hired the first full-time YFC staff member, Billy Graham. They traveled throughout North America, speaking to hundreds of thousands of people.

From 1945 through the mid-1950s, YFC grew rapidly and spun off several other organizations including World Vision, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Greater Europe Mission

---

**“We’re motivated by our faith. We want to help love people where they’re at and help restore them back into their community.”**

- Danny Ferguson, Langley youth worker for 17 years



Bottom: Billy Graham speaking passionately at a YFC rally in the 1940s

and Gospel Film. During that time, the famous YFC rallies took place where thousands—sometimes tens of thousands of youth, young adults, and middle-aged people would turn out on Saturday nights to hear preachers, movie stars, and musicians. One Chicago gathering drew over 70,000.

## YFC COMES TO VANCOUVER

Rallies were also important in Vancouver and the Fraser Valley. Thousands of young people would participate. “My dad was in the YFC traveling quartet,” recalls Barry McLeod, a youth worker for 39 years. “They recorded and were on the radio—which was a really big deal for their time.”

From the mid-1950s, YFC refined its focus to teenagers. In the mid-60s, it was clear that teens were changing and that YFC also needed to change their programs to meet the need. Rallies morphed to smaller groups and connected experiences like youth groups, camping, high school Bible clubs, regional and national talent contests and overseas trips.

## THE 70s AND 80s

In the 70s and 80s, YFC focused their programs to support teens on school campuses. Programs were organized into two main streams: Campus Life and Youth Guidance.

Campus Life connected with high school students through after-school events like BBQs, sports, group games and more. "Our reputation there was really positive," says 33-year veteran youth worker, Eric Ens. "We went on class field trips and coached many sports teams. We started a volleyball program called Air Attack." Air Attack is now the largest volleyball club in BC.

Youth Guidance, however, prioritized non-school oriented kids, those likely with difficult home-lives or who were economically disadvantaged. "Every Wednesday morning was the youth time in the courts," says Cecil Rast, Surrey Area Director and 30-year YU veteran. "Some kids would ask me to support them because they had no one to go with them," he recalls.

## YOUTH UNLIMITED IS BORN

In the 1990s, it became clear that kids attending school weren't always better off than those that weren't. The division was no longer useful, so the groups consolidated and became one name: Youth Unlimited (YU). This referred to the multi-faceted programs of Greater Vancouver YFC.

In that era, large youth events re-emerged as "Superallies." "A couple thousand kids would come out," says Eric. "We played games, hosted bands and had speakers give a message to the kids."

Today, in 2020, Youth Unlimited has over 70 staff working in Vancouver, North Shore, Richmond, Surrey, Maple Ridge, Mission, Langley, Abbotsford and Chilliwack, reaching 15,000-20,000 youth each year. Youth Unlimited continues to host an endless range of gatherings from drop-in centres to one-on-one mentorship, to over 40 different types of programs. We also have some specialized work overseas.

**"We are still just as passionate as we were then. It's still about bringing the hope of Jesus and leading kids to the abundant life."**

- Gloria Reimer, staff member for 32 years

## NIMBLE PROGRAMS BUT ROOTED PURPOSE

In 2020, YU pivoted again, learning how to support youth during a global pandemic. "These adaptable youth workers didn't miss a beat," says Executive Director, Mark Koop. "They've been flexing to meet the evolving needs of youth for 75 years. It's in their DNA." Each time, however, YU's purpose remains the same. "We're about the same thing now as we were then," says Cecil. "We serve the whole person to relationally engage vulnerable youth."

Our veteran youth workers have personally observed the impact of the mission. Eric's now adult "youth" can be found serving all over the community. Cecil's adult "youth" regularly reach out for pastoral guidance or to express gratitude—Cecil has officiated about 110 weddings of former youth. Barry continues to pioneer life-changing support for homeless youth.

Beyond the programs, these sometimes pseudo fathers and mothers are there for the late night phone calls, hospital visits, desperate prayer requests, and for the milestone celebrations. And Youth Unlimited will be there for the next 75.



## Stories From Youth Unlimited

### *Jesters Theatre Story continued...*

In addition to Ryan's impressive acting resume and heart for youth, the Jesters team was also thrilled to have a man join the formerly all-female staff. Many of the theatre boys were starving for affirming male attention and a positive male role model.

Ryan recalls connecting with Jeremy\*, who, at the time was suspended from school and not doing well. As Ryan intentionally connected with him, the walls began to crumble. Jeremy went from disengaged and disinterested, to cheering on his feet for others, and even encouraging one young girl who was afraid to go on stage.

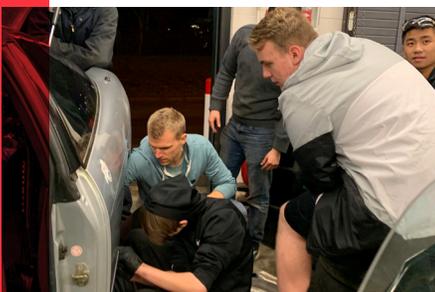
"Jeremy committed his life to God and got baptized at his church," says Ryan. "He now wants to pursue romantic relationships that are healthy – this was not a thing before." Jeremy is just one of many youth Ryan has witnessed awakening to their potential and finding healing.

"Theatre has often been a safe place for outcasts and misfits," says Ryan. "I think that's what makes it fit well as a YU program. We want it to be a safe, positive space where kids feel valued, and we want to do it in a Christ-centered way."

*\*Not his real name*



**"It's so important to give them a safe space to explore creative impulses."**



## THE MECHANICS OF MENTORSHIP: YOUNG GUNS GARAGE

Nick\* had a passion for tinkering with anything with a motor. Not knowing exactly what he was doing or where to turn, he discovered the Young Guns Garage, a specialized YU program in Surrey. Once connected to YU, Nick dived straight into multiple projects; for him, it was a home away from home.

Program creator, outreach worker, and former mechanic, Chad Gelderman, was there every step of the way. "He takes his own time to research and figure out how it all works," says Chad, "to the point where now he knows a lot more about these projects than we do." Chad recently accompanied Nick to purchase his first-ever vehicle - an '83 Suzuki motorcycle, currently being made road-ready through the program.

Nick is just one of many youth supported and mentored at the Garage. Created through a partnership with Guildford Park Secondary, Young Guns partnered with the school as an afterschool automotive club, where the school's generosity provided the much-needed space to grow and strengthen the program to meet the demand. As COVID-19 paused most school operations, Young Guns moved to their own garage, located in Surrey, working with youth from local schools.

The youth that YU serves often experience a myriad of obstacles to obtaining good grades, which can be a barrier for future schooling and employment. A mechanic prior to coming to YU, Chad knows that for some youth, this is an area in which many of these youth can succeed, if only given the chance. "The Garage provides youth with a non-traditional learning environment and employable skills that will benefit them both now and in the future," says Chad.

As Chad mentors Nick, Nick now helps others learn. "He's finding his voice in the shop community," says Chad. "We're building from the ground up. We see the youth just loving it here, and every day there are little wins."

*\*Not his real name*

## NEW BOOK: SAM ROWLAND ON THE EDGE OF INCREDIBLE

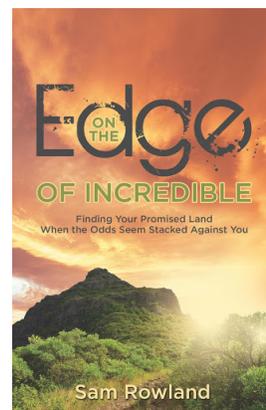
Thirty-two years ago, Eric Ens, a friendly young youth worker asked musician Sam Rowland to open for some Youth for Christ events. The events thrived and a beautiful partnership was born, of which we still reap the benefits today. As Sam has grown in his ministry, he has released music, been a public speaker, traveled internationally, and written two books. The first book, *Ten People*, distributed over 100,000 copies worldwide. His highly-anticipated second book, *On the Edge of Incredible*, will be released later this year.

Sam is deeply invested in helping others. Whether he's describing his own journey to faith as a teenager, detailing his adventures with YU in schools and prisons in 25 countries, or sharing his life revelations in this new COVID world, one thing is obvious: Sam has a story to tell. This story comes to life in *On the Edge of Incredible*.

From the beginning of the book, Sam argues that no matter who you are, where you come from, or how broken you feel, you are on the verge of something incredible. He explains how this is found by taking a step in faith, instead of fear.

Sam is not hesitant when it comes to what he hopes the book communicates. "Jesus is all about bringing forgiveness and freedom to the deepest parts of your soul," he says. "God will use the broken parts of your life to give hope to other people." With a deep dive into his own vulnerability, Sam gives readers the courage to dive into theirs.

At the end of the day, Sam wants readers to know one thing above all. "I just love ya and I'm cheering for ya," he says. From one read of *On the Edge of Incredible*, it's clear just how true that is.



**“God will use the broken parts of your life to give hope to other people.”**

### STRUGGLES FACED BY YU YOUTH:

**52%** Struggle with anxiety

**44%** Victims of bullying

**15%** Don't think home is a safe place

**43%** Experience loneliness and isolation

**19%** Have been in or are currently in foster care

**12%** Have attempted suicide

**41%** Battle phone addiction

**31%** Struggle with a mental illness



## LIFETEAMS: 20 YEARS OF TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WORLD-CHANGERS



In 2007, 18-year-old Lifeteams student, Carmen, was walking a young girl home during her youth work practicum when they started chatting. The girl mentioned she had missed a lot of school. “Why?” asked Carmen. “I was in the hospital,” she said. Carmen asked why again. “I tried to commit suicide.” The young girl was 12.

“I was absolutely rattled by that,” says Carmen. “I fell to my knees on the grass when I got back to the Lifehouse. “‘She’s 12’, I thought. ‘How can she be so young to have no hope?’ That’s when I dedicated to my life to helping those who have no hope.”

Carmen is one of Lifeteams’ 200 alumni making a difference in the community. After Lifeteams, she spent eight years as a YU youth worker in Langley, pioneered a new YU affiliate chapter in Kelowna, and five months ago, she became the Executive Director of Kelowna Gospel Mission.

At its core, Lifeteams is a year-long training and mentorship program to a small group of young urban missionaries, specializing in community-based youth

work. With its first cohort in 2000, Lifeteams now proudly celebrates 20 years of service and studies.

If you were to visit the Lifeteams School in Abbotsford at any given time, you would find seven to ten young adults learning the ins and outs of compassionate youth work, taking hiking trips into some of BC’s remote regions, and living in the ethos of what Lifeteams is all about - community and relationship.

“Lifeteams was absolutely foundational for me, both as a person and in my career,” says Carmen, who in the last four years adopted two teenagers with her husband. “The skills it taught me I use to this day. They’ve produced the most high quality youth workers who aren’t just helping people, they are doing so ethically and in a way that makes sense. We are so well-supported, even years after we’d finished the program.”

Iona Snair, associate director of the school, fondly remembers the foundation Lifeteams was built upon. From the start, it was almost as if a path to Lifeteams was laid out before Iona, and her

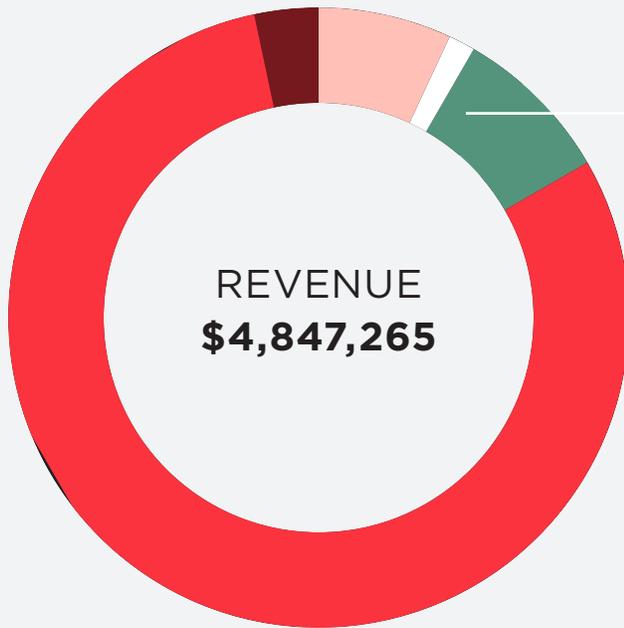
husband, Rob, Lifeteams director. From their initial YU meeting about creating a holistic youth worker’s education program, to their first temporary housing in a rundown motel, to eventually being told, “You can move into the house on the hill, free of charge.” Seventeen years later they’re still there.

Lifeteams alumni are trained and poised to bring change throughout the world. These hundreds of program alumni work in a variety of fields, from youth workers to business leaders to public servants. For Iona, the impact is clear: Lifeteams was created “to connect the people of God to vulnerable young people in a way that will transform both—and that’s what we do.”



Carmen Rempel, Kelowna Gospel Mission Executive Director & Lifeteams alumna

# 2019/2020 FINANCIALS



●	Donation Income:	\$3,885,132
●	Program Revenue:	\$164,904
●	Grants:	\$337,063
●	Gift In Kind:	\$70,965
●	Other:	\$393,201

●	Programs:	\$4,280,255
●	Administration:	\$534,320
●	Fundraising & Donor Relations	\$43,524



“MY House is a place of hope and love. It’s a safe haven to have someone to talk to and not feel alone. A lovely place to warm up your body and soul.”

- Mission Youth

“You didn’t just teach me volleyball. I look at all my major accomplishments and you truly shaped most. I can only imagine the number of lives you have touched. We were so fortunate to have you.”

- Richmond Youth

“Young Families took the place of what my family should have been. I have people that check in on me, that care. I always know that they are going to be there like a real family.”

- Surrey Youth

# MAJOR MILESTONE FOR 2020

On March 2, 2020 GVVU joined YFC/YU Canada in launching its new brand—an updated logo and visual identity that fits with our youth work and unifies the 31 chapters across Canada.

The bold brand mark speaks to the relationships youth have built around them through Youth Unlimited. The solid shape creates an upward motion, expressing our desire to see youth experience upward mobility and God's transformative love.

Youth Unlimited and YFC chapters collectively across Canada make us the largest youth organization in Canada.



**READ THE FULL ANNUAL REPORT ONLINE** - See our historic photo gallery and read more celebrated stories.

[youthunlimited.com/annual-report-2020](https://youthunlimited.com/annual-report-2020)



SCAN ME

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT. THIS IS NOT JUST OUR LEGACY, IT'S YOURS. THIS WORK DOES NOT HAPPEN WITHOUT YOU.**

## PARTNER WITH US

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

### 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 quarterly prayer letter.

## CONNECT WITH US

### SOCIAL MEDIA

 [GVYFCYouthUnlimited](#)

 [GVYU](#)

 [youthunlimited\\_gvyu](#)

### NEWSLETTER

Sign up for our newsletter by visiting [youthunlimited.com](https://youthunlimited.com)

### HEAD OFFICE

#115-12975 84th Avenue  
Surrey, BC, V3W 1B3  
Phone: (604) 590-3759  
Charitable Registration  
No. 107449902 RR 0001

"Without everyone's support, I am not sure where I would be. I've built a community and family around me."

- Surrey Youth