

20 25

Growth & Renewal

Greater Vancouver Youth Unlimited
Annual Report

24,865

YOUTH IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH YOUTH UNLIMITED.



That's 24,865 youth who connected with caring, trained adult mentors who offer hope and opportunity.



MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I grew up in Winnipeg, where the ground is frozen solid for more than half the year. Nothing grows. Nothing moves. The earth just waits.

But then, comes spring. And by August, the fields explode in waves of yellow, purple, and deep prairie green. **The transformation can catch you by surprise.**

When my wife Sherri and I moved to BC, we rented a house with a yard full of beautiful trees, hedges and wild flowers. I'll be honest, I was terrified. My track record with growing things was, at best, poor. But something remarkable happened: it all thrived. The soil knew what to do. The rain arrived. The sun did its work.

My role turned out to be surprisingly simple: create a little space, do some pruning, and trust the process. This is what I've come to understand about Youth Unlimited after 30 years of walking alongside vulnerable young people.

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow."

- 1 Corinthians 3:6

We don't manufacture growth. We can't force a life to flourish. **What we can do is show up—consistently, faithfully, relationally—and cultivate the conditions where a young person can believe that growth is possible for them.** That they are not frozen ground. This is our Three Story Relationship approach: listening deeply to the stories young people carry, sharing our own stories of resilience, and when the soil is ready, introducing them to God's story of unconditional love and grace.

Consider Calvin, one of our staff, who noticed 15-year-olds openly discussing sports betting at Monday night basketball. He didn't shut it down. He leaned in, and provided guidance; week after week, showing up. That's the pruning, the tending, the patient work of a gardener who knows you can't rush the season.

It's the type of work we do at Youth Unlimited. It's work that matters for vulnerable young people. As you'll read in this report, it empowered a young woman to call the Mission Youth House "the first and only safe place I've ever been in my life" and a young refugee from Ukraine to find belonging amongst a community of peers.

The youth we serve carry more resilience than the world gives them credit for. Frozen ground, discovering it was made to grow all along.

Your partnership makes this patient, incarnational work possible.

Thank you for investing in the early stages of these journeys, trusting that God is at work even when transformation is still unfolding.

With deep gratitude,

Mark Koop
Executive Director



Greater Vancouver Youth Unlimited acknowledges with humble respect that our work is located on the traditional unceded territories of the Coast Salish, Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, Katzie, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo, Matsqui, Sumas and the Sto:lo First Nations.

YOUR IMPACT



480
Youth Mentored



13,971
Meals Served



54
Community Outreach Programs



745
Discipleship Hours



353
Volunteers



24,865
Youth In Direct Contact with YU



57
Youth Outreach Workers



MY HOUSE: TEN YEARS OF SHOWING UP

For ten years, Mission Youth House (MY House) has been the place youth go when they have nowhere else.

The idea began in 2012, when social agencies in Mission asked a hard but necessary question: what happens to homeless youth in our community? As the community rallied together, the answer became clear — there needed to be a dedicated, safe space for marginalized young people. After two years of planning, MY House officially opened in 2015.

As word began to spread across the city, “youth started coming every day,” recalls Calvin Williams, YU’s Mission Area Director. “And it just grew from there.”

A COMMUNITY CONSTANT

Today, MY House is a trusted and consistent presence in Mission. Youth can access basic necessities like showers and meals while working toward long-term housing, employment, and stability. “The work we do is very youth-directed, while staying focused on their highest needs,” Calvin explains. One young woman navigating addiction and homelessness told long-time youth worker Barry McLeod that MY House was **“the first and only safe place I’ve ever been in my life.”**

Calvin describes the team’s approach as “professional parenting.” He recalls five youth who were camping in the forest behind a middle



school last winter. “We worked with them daily — coordinating housing, social workers, and medical care. **Today, all five are housed. Some are thriving, some are still vulnerable, but they’re in a much better place.**”

AN ADAPTABLE PRESENCE

Today, MY House continues to adapt. It has formed new programs alongside community partners to offer comprehensive substance use care, partially staffed by youth with lived experience. **This creates a safe, unconditional environment for those on the path to recovery.**

The measure of success isn’t found only in numbers, but in the stories of youth being known, housed, and cared for. Ten years in, those values remain firm. As Barry puts it, “We’re going to love those kids the way they are — and we’re going to help them find ways to move forward.”



HOPE FROM THE FIELD

“I feel that I’ve built more genuine relationships with some of the dads I work with. I still don’t see many of them as often as I would like, but when we do connect, the moments are meaningful. They’ve begun trusting me with stories from their lives — both joyful and difficult. I’ve been able to speak guidance grounded in Biblical wisdom into their lives, and **one dad even saw his son healed and returned home from the hospital after I prayed with them** over the phone last Christmas.”

— Jeffrey Chaters, Young Dads Coordinator

We’ve seen a handful of youth take steps towards Jesus. I handed out 5 or so Bibles over the past year. Youth are praying and are interested. They’ve become more connected into youth group at church and are curious about faith.

— Amanda Ratzlaff, Vancouver Youth Worker

In 2025, our Mountain Life program partnership with Mt Seymour logged over 250 skiing and snowboarding visits by youth from Vancouver, Surrey, and Abbotsford — **by far a new YU record.**

“Chairlifts are magic. You’re stuck together for a few minutes, and youth start opening up about family, relationships and things they’re carrying.”

— Graham Goertzen, Vancouver Area Manager

GIVING BACK: BAHDASAR'S INCREDIBLE STORY OF RESILIENCE

February 23, 2022 will forever remain in Bahdasar's memory.

On that day, Bahdasar was returning to his boarding school in Kherson, Ukraine, when he noticed something was wrong. "I saw cars pulling artillery machines," he says. "That evening, while doing homework, I kept hearing loud, heavy noises" The next morning, he realized something was drastically wrong. "I went downstairs and saw the security lady crying. On the TV, I heard a Russian official say they were taking over our region."

Overnight, Bahdasar went from studying for exams to fighting for survival. Russia had invaded Ukraine.

SURVIVING THE UNTHINKABLE

"I called my parents and my dad came to get me," Bahdasar recalls. "All of the gas stations we passed were on fire. We saw a military patrol get bombed just up the road and I didn't know if we were in the line of fire. It was horrible." When they finally reached home, the

adrenaline began to fade. "I felt the gravity of it all," he says. "I just started crying."

In the months that followed, Bahdasar and his family endured Russian occupation and checks, the loss of loved ones, and, in Bahdasar's words, "days of shelling." In April, two full months later, they finally escaped—arriving in Poland as refugees after a harrowing 16-hour journey. In July 2022, they were approved through the Canadian refugee program and arrived in BC for the chance of life outside of war.

"On the TV, I heard a Russian official say they were taking over our region."

AN IMPORTANT WELCOME

That October, Bahdasar began attending Burnett Secondary School in Richmond, trying to learn about life in a new country while grappling with why he was there at all.



“I didn’t really talk to anyone,” he says. “It was just a cycle; wake up, school, go home.” Certain things, like loud noises and planes, triggered alarms in his nervous system. The transition was overwhelming, but Bahdasar knew he had been given a rare opportunity. “I really wanted to make the most of it,” he says.

Fortunately, he didn’t have to do it alone. Help arrived when, on one school field trip, Bahdasar connected with YU Richmond Area Director Tombert Chen. “I always want to welcome people in,” says Tombert. “And I thought he needed some welcoming.” That day, Tombert invited Bahdasar to a weekly volunteer opportunity handing out hot chocolate. “Sure—why not?” Bahdasar responded. Soon he was volunteering regularly alongside Tombert and a group of guys from his school. Before long, they became his community. “I didn’t know any of them before,” says Bahdasar. “Now, they’re the people I feel closest to.”

A COMMUNITY WITH PURPOSE

For Tombert, these volunteer opportunities are a key form of creating connections with students like Bahdasar. “So often, students are in their own little bubbles,” he says. “And this is a way to help them connect with others. We get to ask the question, ‘how can we help those around us?’ And right from the start, Bahdasar was all in, even with what he’d experienced. It was awesome.”

Over the past three years, Bahdasar and his friends have spent hundreds of hours volunteering. Some of their most meaningful experiences have been at Camp Stillwood,



where they’ve gone on 11 work trips, repairing facilities and supporting upkeep. “Most of us have something to deal with - we’ve all got hardships,” says Bahdasar, “but by doing these things together, we’ve built friendships and grown as people. Now, we’re even going and working on projects by ourselves. I got a second chance at life, and I don’t want to waste it.”

THE NEXT CHAPTER

Today, Bahdasar is a first-year teaching student at SFU while working towards Canadian Citizenship. Canada now feels like home—in no small part due to people like Tombert. “Before Tombert, my day-to-day was tough,” Bahdasar says. “He helped me out tremendously. Learning from him helps me be less overwhelmed. It feels safe with him.” And Tombert’s thoughts on where Bahdasar’s heading? “He’s a lovely dork and a tremendous young man. I’m proud of him.”

“I got a second chance at life, and I don’t want to waste it.”

The success of Bahdasar and his peers is hugely rewarding for Tombert. “We’ve built so much more than just things,” he says. “We’ve built friendships, resolve, and character. In the midst of hard things, there are these amazing wins. It makes it all worth it.”



LIFETEAMS ALUMNI

IMPACT ACROSS CANADA

Courtney Austerberry - Vancouver
Aboriginal Support Worker, BC
Childrens Hospital

Amanda Torres - Edmonton
Youth Social Worker,
CASA Mental Health

Zach Hair - Kelowna
Counsellor & PHD Candidate

Dr. August Pierik, MD - Thunder Bay
Anesthesiologist

Laura Solberg - Langley
Executive Director, Kentro
Christian Network

Jonathan Hochachka - London
Youth Worker, Youth Unlimited
YFC North Middlesex

Carmen Rempel - Victoria
Habitat for Humanity Victoria CEO

Ashley Reimer - Steinbach
Steinbach YFC Ministry Director

Audrey Ann Ballanger-Baur - Ottawa
Economist, Statistics Canada

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF LIFETEAMS



Over the past 25 years, 212 graduates of the Lifeteams School of Youth Outreach have walked out of the Lifeteam House in Abbotsford full of learning, growth, and real-life experience. The school equips its students to create community impact wherever God might lead them - no matter what that calling is!

Lifeteams Resources is another fruit of these 25 years - a collection of training helpsheets, videos, and in-person learning opportunities for youth workers around the world. At the end of the day, it all leads back to the Lifeteams mission: Engaging the people of God with vulnerable youth in a way that will transform both in the process.

“ Lifeteams taught me so much more than amazing youth work skills; it taught me how to love well, live with integrity, and lean into new opportunities. What I gained there continues to shape me daily, both professionally and personally.

— Ashley Reimer, 2014 Alumni

“ Lifeteams has helped me truly see people and grow as a human by learning to live in nuance, where two things can exist at once. It has shown me the beauty of not needing to have it all together, but instead choosing to be fully present with others in both the good and the hard moments.

— Zach Hair, 2013 Alumni

HOPE FROM THE FIELD

Over the past two years, YU's frontline workers have revitalized overnight youth trips. Once a YU staple, trips were paused during the pandemic, but now, we're traveling to the Okanagan, Vancouver Island, Oregon, California, and beyond. Veteran YU youth worker Arlene Friesen explains why these trips matter now more than ever:

“Kids don't even have their own family vacations anymore. There's not much time to disconnect and unwind from social media. To have no pressure, to go on a trip and have someone take care of them and love them? That's important. One kid told me: **'I haven't touched my phone in three days. This is the best trip ever!'**”

Read more about GVVU trips:



CONVERSATIONS WITH A YOUTH WORKER

Across our region, 57 frontline YU youth workers walk alongside young people each day who face barriers to well-being, heightened risk, and limited access to resources. Hear directly from our staff as they share how they meet these challenges with Christ-led compassion, and listen to Executive Director Mark Koop explain how, and why, our relational approach to ministry leads to lasting change in the lives of vulnerable youth.

Scan the QR codes beside their names to watch now.



Amanda Ratzlaff
*Vancouver Outreach,
East Vancouver*



Mike Willms
*Skate Night,
Surrey*



Ken Neufeld
*Area Director,
Chilliwack*



Mark Koop
Executive Director



A NEW RISK IN YOUTH CULTURE

“My parlay just hit!”

Last year, Abbotsford youth worker Calvin Wiens began noticing a worrying trend at his basketball drop-in. A group of students began talking openly about their sports betting habits, and sharing information and bragging about their “winnings.” Online sports betting had become a daily fixture in their lives.

The main issue? These youth are minors.

“The amount of betting going on would be really concerning for a 19-year-old,” says Calvin, **“but it’s illegal for 15-year-olds.”**

Over time, Calvin began to see how it was happening. Using parents’ or older siblings’ IDs, youth were signing up for online betting platforms. Money given for other purposes — such as allowances or school lunches — was being used to fund accounts, with some youth losing hundreds of dollars in the process.

For Calvin, the why is easy to understand. Sports betting generated over \$4 billion USD in Canada

in 2024, and research shows betting ads appear as often as every 13 seconds during major sporting events. Movie stars, pop icons, and online streamers frequently promote betting platforms. It’s everywhere many of these young men are looking.

Calvin explains the impact’s severity. “Many of these boys don’t have an accurate understanding of what money is,” he explains. “Often, they’re not even using their own money. **When you combine that access with the rush of winning, it lays a blueprint for addiction.**”

That’s why programs like Calvin’s Monday-night basketball are vital. “Every week, these young men are mentored by adults who care about them and want to see them excel, both in athletics and as people,” he says. **“We have the ability to notice what’s going on and challenge them: not in judgment, but in care.** We’re intentional about explaining the future consequences. It’s slow progress, but it’s progress — and we’re going to keep showing up for these young men.”



A YEAR OF GROWTH

This year, we saw growth come to life in powerful ways:

- Through a partnership with the City of Vancouver, our Creative Life Vancouver team transformed the blank wall of our Vancouver location into a vibrant, purposeful mural, collaboratively designed and created by our youth. Visit the south-east wall of 1495 Venables Street anytime!
- In December 2024, our ICTC team hosted their first annual 3x3 basketball tournament fundraiser, bringing together over 70 athletes and raising much-needed funds to support youth programs in Abbotsford.
- Richmond youth worker Wayne led an eight-week summer cooking challenge. This gave youth hands-on culinary experience, mentorship from professional chef and YU volunteer Alex, and meaningful opportunities to build friendships.
- Our Maple Ridge breakfast program evolved into a credited course where students earn credits for cooking and serving free breakfast to their peers. Youth workers now serve alongside and mentor students as they grow in skills and work toward graduation.



CHALLENGES FROM THE FIELD

Alongside growth, our youth workers continue to navigate complex and often heavy realities in the lives of the young people they serve:

“Youth continue to experience strained relationships with their biological parents. Some parents are street-entrenched or caught up in the life, which makes those relationships especially difficult.”

— Amanda Ratzlaff, Vancouver Youth Worker

“Youth behaviour can be challenging at times — from boys fighting and vaping to girls bullying and being just plain mean. It can be hard.”

— Greg Sawatzky, Abbotsford Youth Worker

“Youth continue to be impacted by a range of mental health challenges, many of which appear to stem from pandemic years that might otherwise have been spent building healthy, in-person connections beyond screens.”

— Nate Wiebe, North Vancouver Youth Worker

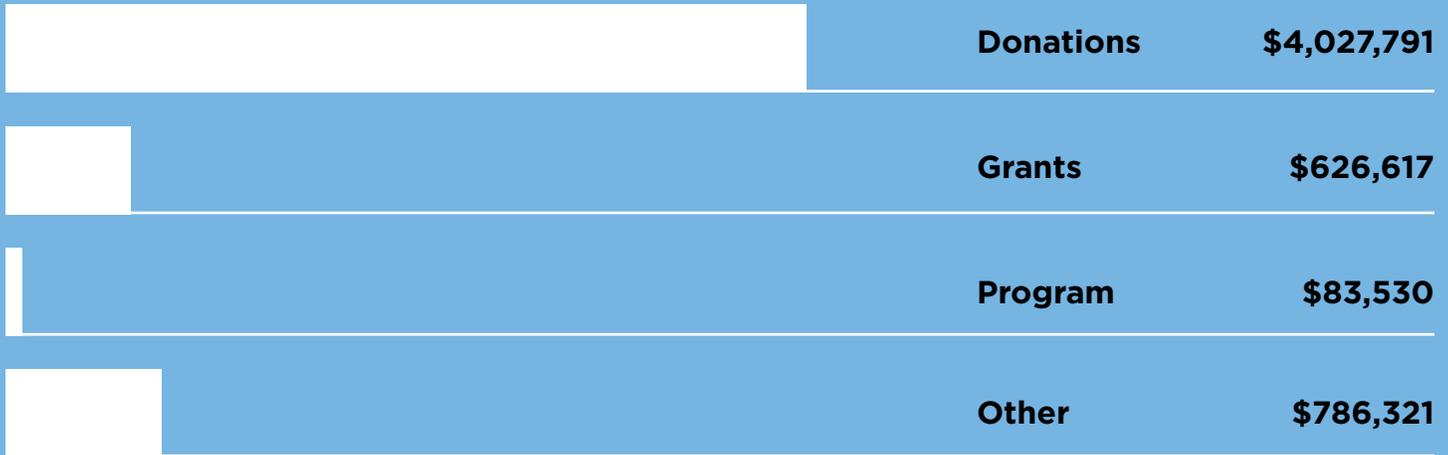


FINANCE



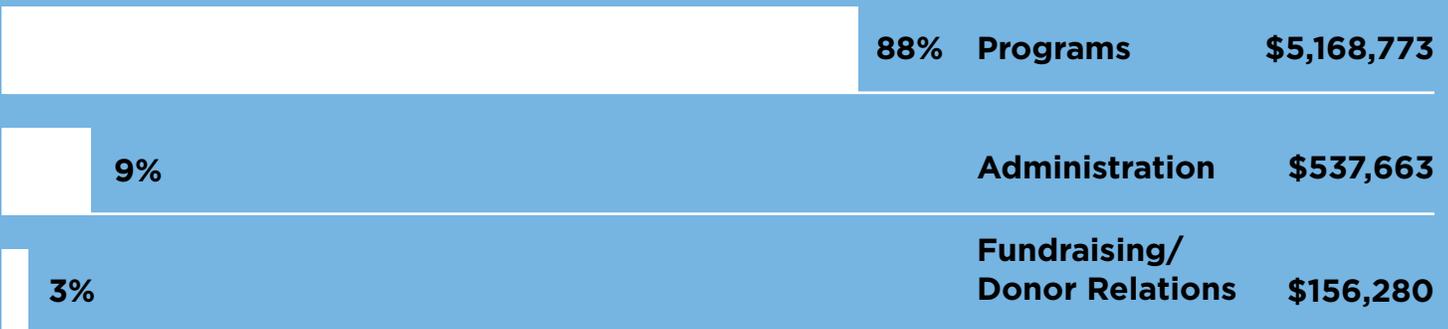
Amount Raised from Sept 1, 2024 - Aug 31, 2025*

\$5,524,259



Expenses from Sept 1, 2024 - Aug 31, 2025*

\$5,862,716



*Greater Vancouver Youth Unlimited's fiscal year runs from September 1 to August 31. For clarity, we refer to this as the 2025 Annual Report, as most of the stories described took place in 2025.

“ There’s your family and our youth family, and our youth family is more like a family to me than my family.

— Vancouver Youth

“ Just had one of my youth tell me that they wanted to take another step towards a relationship with Jesus!

— James Parlee, Abbotsford Youth Worker



CONNECT WITH US



youthunlimited_gvyu



GVYFCYouthUnlimited



Greater Vancouver Youth Unlimited

Sign up for our newsletter at www.youthunlimited.com

PARTNER WITH US



There are many ways you can partner with Youth Unlimited as we walk alongside vulnerable youth across Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley.

DONATE | PRAY | VOLUNTEER

HEAD OFFICE:

#115-12975 84 Avenue, Surrey, BC, V3W 1B3
(604) 590-3759 | info@youthunlimited.com