



SPRING 2022

OUR YOUTH OUR FUTURE

Getting young people beyond crisis - how your support of our work makes this possible

A little over a year ago, I found myself in a really dark place mentally. I hid it from everyone because I felt ashamed.

Then it all came boiling up one day. Living didn't feel worth it, and I felt hopeless. I remember standing on the street being just a couple steps away from throwing myself in front of a car.

I was so scared but didn't feel I could say it out loud, so I wrote my Mom a note. She knew about YSB and we were able to have a Covid-safe visit at their in-person youth mental health clinic the very next day. It was there where I met Sean, one of their mental health counsellors.

It felt good to finally be able to talk about my feelings with someone who understood, who was so kind and cool, and who didn't judge me.

I felt relief almost immediately. We talked and Sean helped me find ways to help myself. I'm doing well in school again, and am able to have fun with my friends again. I often find myself smiling for no reason, which I never did before.

One of the best things that came out of going to YSB is that my little brother, Luke saw me getting help. He was struggling too, but then met with another great counsellor at YSB. I'm really proud of him and happy that seeing me get help might have encouraged him to also do that for himself.

YSB is an amazing place, and I'm so grateful for the support they have given me, my brother, and other young people just like us.

Sebastian*, Aged 17

*name has been changed for privacy

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**YOUTH
SERVICES
JEUNESSE**

Staff Spotlight: Paige



1 How did you get involved with YSB and working with at-risk youth?

I started working with YSB almost a year ago to the day! I started my journey with YSB at the Young Men's Shelter and Transitional Housing and have recently transitioned to the Youth Community Developer role.

I often joke about social services being the "family business" because a large part of my family works with vulnerable populations in different capacities.

My dad managed an outdoor therapeutic centre for at-risk youth and raised six kids with my mom before they started their journey as foster parents, my sister is a parole officer, my brother manages a community living association for adults living with disabilities and my other sister is a protection worker. I looked up to these inspiring people my whole life so it kind of makes sense that I found myself in the same field.

2 What do you hope to accomplish in your new role as Youth Community Developer?

Right now, I am hoping to support the young people at the long-term housing buildings in creating Tenant Action Committees with the intention to increase and promote access to information for tenants, increase participation in housing related decision making, and build capacity around housing decisions and responsibilities. I really hope to work with these young people in a way that empowers, educates, and fosters space for personal and community development.

3 Is there a specific story about a young person that stands out and you would like to share?

I feel like there are so many stories about the young people I have the opportunity to work with that I could share - their resiliency is truly inspiring. I think one story that has brightened my day is a youth who transitioned from the Young Men's Shelter and Transitional Housing to McEwen Long-Term Housing building recently.

When I first met this young person he rarely came out of his room, and had challenges with daily activities like personal hygiene and cleanliness. He also expressed a lot of anxiety in social settings. Fast forward 10 months and he is living independently and is an active and passionate participant in all things related to community development at McEwen and has expressed interest in peer supporting opportunities. It is such an honour to be an ally during a huge period of growth in this young person's life.

Lessons from the Pandemic: Supporting Youth during Unprecedented Times

At the start of the pandemic more than two years ago, YSB moved quickly to transition many of its services – including mental health and employment services – to operate within a virtual environment to continue serving young people and their families.

Some of YSB's services continued in-person, including our two youth shelters, four long-term housing buildings, our Drop-In Centre and youth justice facility.

As restrictions lifted and more in-person services could be offered safely, we began transitioning some of our services to a hybrid model. Our Mental Health Walk-In Clinic is accessible both virtually and in-person, and our Drop-In Centre continues to operate in person with virtual access to the youth health clinic. Virtual employment workshops and counselling were also offered, while also maintaining valuable in-person sessions.

This hybrid model offers increased flexibility for our clients who have choice in terms of what is most effective and convenient for them. Our focus is always to ensure young people in Ottawa receive the support they need, where and when they need it.



Coldest Night of the Year unites Canadians in effort to end youth & adult homelessness

For the second year, YSB participated in the national Coldest Night of the Year event to raise awareness and funds for our shelters and housing programs. Held as a virtual event, our 21 teams and 120+ walkers raised an incredible \$33,000 in support of youth residing and being supported in our two shelters and four long-term housing buildings located throughout Ottawa.

Please join us next year so we can walk together to support homeless youth housed by YSB. Mark your calendar for February 26, 2023 and walk (hopefully in-person!) with YSB.



Your Mind Matters

Earlier this year YSB – in collaboration with the Parents Lifeline of Eastern Ontario (PLEO) – hosted a virtual Mind Matters mental health session on ‘A Practical Survival Guide for Parents of Teens’. Sponsored by Bell Let’s Talk, it featured hosts Michelle Earle from YSB and Christie Kopczyk from PLEO and offered tools for parents on opening up conversations with a young person who is struggling.

Ideas for starting this important conversation with your young person included:

- Find the right time, place and level of privacy to start a conversation
- Remember that you might not have all the answers however, listen, take their concerns and worries seriously and offer a sounding board
- Try to put yourself in their shoes

Check out YSB’s YouTube Channel for the video ‘Tell me what to say’ for highlights of the event. www.youtube.com/user/YSBOttawa

Stay Tuned for Upcoming YSB Events:

Mind Matters – Watch our social media platforms for ongoing youth & family mental health sessions

Stay Up Ottawa – Supporting youth in YSB’s shelters & housing program (November 25th)

Coldest Night of the Year walk – Supporting youth in YSB’s shelters & housing program (February 25th)

HOW YOUR GIFTS ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

\$45 provides one counselling and support session to a struggling youth

\$65 provides a youth in our shelters with meals for one week

\$100 provides one start-up kit for a once-homeless youth leaving our shelter

\$500 provides a vulnerable youth with one week of shelter, counselling and healthy meals



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at YSB – Supporting employees helps us deliver greater value to clients

Corporate Partner Spotlight:

Bell and its employees – through the Bell Let's Talk mental health initiative – are champions for so many causes across Canada, including YSB's youth mental health services.

A long-time corporate partner of the YSB Foundation for more than 10 years, Bell Let's Talk has invested more than \$300,000 through transformational gifts, event sponsorship, in-kind donations and employee matched donations through Bell – all in support of launching new mental health programs and enhancing access to existing services. Their current commitment in partnership with the Ottawa Sport and Entertainment Group (OSEG) Foundation and Danbe Foundation, supports the onsite Youth Hub at YSB's newest youth housing building on Riverside Drive. This support ensures that these once-homeless youth not only have a safe place to live, but also the mental health supports needed to move forward and create the lives they want and deserve for themselves.

Our partners at Bell are truly part of our extended team in ensuring youth have the ability to access support and thrive. Thank you, Bell, employees and the Bell Let's Talk mental health initiative.

YSB's mission and work is built on the belief that every young person can meet their immediate and long-term emotional, physical and psychological goals when given the right support and guidance. As part of this belief – and to build on its existing anti-racism and anti-oppression practices – YSB renewed our commitment to equity, diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Our first step was to provide multiple platforms for YSB staff and youth to share their thoughts about where YSB should focus our EDI efforts. Through our youth-led focus groups, group discussions, team meetings and staff surveys, we clearly heard ongoing learning opportunities and staff diversity were two priorities.

Our EDI work has focused on the co-creation and implementation of an action plan with staff and youth that, to-date, has included:

- EDI training for all staff
- Ongoing learning opportunities on a variety of topics, including: anti-Black racism, Truth and Reconciliation, Introduction to Inuit Culture, working with LGBTQ2S+ youth, Inclusivity in Faith and Cultural Celebrations, and more
- The creation of baseline data with which to measure progress and a safe mechanism to share experiences with leadership

Youth consultants were heavily involved in the first phase of this work and their contributions were immensely appreciated as we continually learn how to better support all clients' unique needs when they access our services.

As we move forward, our EDI work will continue to influence all of our program areas (mental health, employment, housing and justice) and our entire staff team, allowing us to deliver services more effectively and with greater cultural appropriateness with our youth clients and their families.

Thank you to the Ottawa Community Foundation for contributing to the funding of this project.

CRISIS CHAT AND PHONE SERVICE YSB IS HERE FOR YOU

24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by phone or online chat, YSB services are here to support young people in crisis as well as their families. Please share the following contact info far and wide. It just might save the life of a young person in our community.

chat.ysb.ca

613-260-2360 (Ottawa) 1 877-377-7775 (toll-free)

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