



**YOUTH  
SERVICES  
JEUNESSE**

# OUR YOUTH OUR FUTURE

2026 EDITION I

## **Finding Hope, One Step at a Time:** A journey of resilience, connection, and believing in a brighter future.

For much of high school, Dex felt overwhelmed by challenges that made everyday life feel heavy. Struggles with mental health, ADHD, anxiety, and depression made it difficult for them to attend school, stay motivated, or imagine a positive future.

“It felt like a dark cloud was always over my head,” Dex shared. Everything began to shift when Dex reached out for support. What followed was an experience rooted in compassion, consistency, and real human connection. Through accessing YSB’s mental health crisis support, counselling sessions, and structured programming, Dex found a safe space to be heard without judgment and without feeling “fragile”. That sense of being treated like a whole person made all the difference.

With the right support in place, Dex began to rebuild routine and confidence. Attending school became manageable again. Productivity increased. Stress was lessened. Most importantly, their sense of hope returned. “I started to feel like I deserved to be happy,” Dex said.

Dex has since finished high school and college studies began in January, with the goal of one day supporting young people facing challenges similar to their own. Having experienced firsthand how meaningful support can change a life, Dex now encourages others to reach out when they’re struggling. “No matter how nervous you are, it’s a choice you won’t regret.”

Dex’s story reminds us that with the right care and support, young people can begin to see new possibilities for themselves and the path ahead.

# Donors supporting Shelter Diversion helping youth stay housed

For many young people, the risk of homelessness can feel overwhelming. By the time they reach out for help, it may seem like an emergency shelter is the only option. At YSB, our shelter and housing team knows this isn't always the case - and that's where the organization's three-year Shelter Diversion Pilot Program comes in.

Shelter diversion focuses on slowing down a moment of crisis and exploring every possible alternative. Rather than immediately placing a young person aged 16-24 into one of YSB's two shelters, the shelter diversion case manager listens with empathy, seeks to understand what led them there, and works alongside them to explore safe, realistic options. These may include reconnecting with family, staying with a trusted relative or friend, or accessing short-term housing while longer-term supports are arranged.

Diversion is never about denying help. When shelter is the safest option, YSB ensures a smooth and supported transition. More often, however, thoughtful conversations reveal alternatives that keep youth connected to their support networks and out of the shelter system.

The process is personalized and strengths-based. The shelter diversion case manager meets one-on-one with youth to set short-term goals and connect them with resources such as counselling, financial assistance, and/or housing supports. The program is designed to meet youth where they're at, recognizing the diverse realities they face - including cultural, identity, and family-related factors. It creates a welcoming and affirming space, especially for LGBTQ2S+ youth, who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

By prioritizing prevention, YSB's Shelter Diversion Program helps young people avoid homelessness before it begins - building stability, independence, and hope. Every conversation is unique, but the outcome is the same: youth feel heard, respected, and supported in finding a path forward.

To support YSB's Shelter Diversion Program, please contact Patti Murphy at [pmurphy@ysb.ca](mailto:pmurphy@ysb.ca)

## A Renewed Space for Connection and Care

YSB is proud to share the transformation of its kitchen at our Young Women's Shelter. The renewed space is bright, functional, and welcoming. Designed to support nourishment, community, and meaningful everyday moments for shelter clients.

We are deeply grateful to our partners IKEA, the Ottawa Community Foundation, Crabtree Foundation and Realtors Care Foundation whose generosity made this renovation possible. Their support reflects the power of collaboration in creating safe, dignified spaces for young women.

This kitchen stands as a lasting example of what can be achieved when community partners come together with a shared commitment to supporting youth.

This renovated kitchen is a lasting reminder of what's possible when community partners come together with a shared commitment to supporting young people. What a beautiful space where YSB's young clients can gather, cook, share celebrations and feel connected.



**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

# New Auto Mechanics Program Launches at Tamarack Trades Training Centre

The Tamarack Trades Training Centre at YSB's Youth Justice facility has expanded its hands-on training opportunities with the launch of a new auto mechanics program. Developed by Youth Counsellor Ashley Letourneau, the program offers youth an engaging, real-world introduction to automotive work.

“This program gives youth a chance to experience what the work is really like.”

“Being a mechanic means embracing the dirt,” Ashley explains. “This program gives youth a chance to experience what the work is really like.” Designed to reflect entry-level automotive service environments, the six-part program can typically be completed within one month.

Participants begin with foundational skills such as completing task sheets, changing tires, and identifying vehicles using VIN numbers, license plates, and make/model information. As they progress, youth step into the role of a mechanic checking vehicle fluids, evaluating tire wear, and learning industry-standard safety practices. The program culminates with hoist training, where youth safely lift vehicles and perform oil changes, a key skill for employment in the automotive field.

Ashley brings a unique background to this initiative. Prior to working in youth justice, she spent four years as a professional mechanic. She later represented Team Canada



as a kickboxer, finishing fourth in the world in her division. That same focus and discipline now fuel her commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for youth.

The program is fully integrated with YSB's Youth Justice school curriculum, enabling participants to earn a technology credit while gaining practical job-ready skills. Graduates are well-positioned for employment at oil change and automotive service centres and leave with valuable experience to strengthen their résumés.

This new auto mechanics program represents an exciting expansion of the Tamarack Trades Training Centre. Beyond technical training, it helps youth build confidence, develop professional skills, and explore a potential career path, benefits that will stay with them long after the program ends.”

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

**\$300** provides a  
vulnerable youth with one  
**week of shelter, counselling**  
and **healthy meals**

**SHOP  
NOW**  
Help change  
a life



# TD Partner Spotlight

For well over a decade, TD has been a dedicated partner in helping young people in our community find safety, stability and hope. Through their long-standing support of YSB's shelters and housing programs, TD has played an important role in ensuring youth experiencing homelessness have a safe place to turn when they need it most.

Beyond their financial contributions – which include sponsoring rooms at each of YSB's two dedicated youth shelters - TD has shown an ongoing commitment to strengthening our housing initiatives. The bank has been a valued supporter of our housing-focused fundraising events, helping bring our community together to raise critical funds and awareness for young people working toward independence.

Equally meaningful has been the enthusiasm of TD employees, who regularly roll up their sleeves to

volunteer their time and energy. Whether supporting events, baking at YSB shelters, or sharing their skills, their team continues to make a tangible difference in the lives of the youth we serve.

Partnerships like this remind us that lasting change happens when organizations commit not only resources, but also heart. We are deeply grateful to TD and their employees for standing alongside young people on their journey toward safe housing and brighter futures.



## Ways to Give

Your donation to YSB offers help and hope to some of Ottawa's most vulnerable young people. Your gift makes a real difference in the lives of youth, both today, and tomorrow.

**Become a Monthly Donor** and provide sustainable support to YSB programs, ensuring youth in need get help when they need it. Join the YSB donor family by becoming a monthly supporter. [www.ysb.ca/become-a-month-donor/](http://www.ysb.ca/become-a-month-donor/)

**Gifts of Securities** include stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. These donations make a profound impact on the lives of vulnerable young people each day. Read more here: [www.ysb.ca/gift-of-stocks-and-securities/](http://www.ysb.ca/gift-of-stocks-and-securities/)

**Planned Giving** will provide youth in our city access to safe and supportive housing, mental health services, employment assistance, justice programs and other supports they need to thrive. To discuss a planned gift, please contact Patti Murphy at [pmurphy@ysb.ca](mailto:pmurphy@ysb.ca).



CONTACT US:

 613-729-1000

 FOUNDATION@YSB.CA

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