

Making Connections

Dusting for Prints



We are Youth Unlimited, YFC Highlands. One chapter. Ten communities. One unifying mission and passion: youth living fully in Christ.

As we reach out to youth with the love of Jesus, we do so with your help as one of our many partners. Partnership comes in many forms: volunteers, donors, prayer partners and countless others who cheer us on with notes of encouragement along the way! Regardless of what part you played in 2020, we are incredibly grateful!

2020 was a indeed an unusual year. In some ways, it was very difficult, especially for the youth we serve. We couldn't connect the way we have always done. Yet, we also experienced God's blessing and saw His "fingerprints" on many aspects of our ministry. Our team grew closer together and become more resilient. We launched a number of creative new approaches to reaching youth. God brought some wonderful new staff. Finances remained strong. And, we also implemented a number of new systems and processes

to increase our ministry and operational effectiveness.

So, where to from here in 2021? We, like so many other organizations will continue to do the COVID dance: two-stepping, side-stepping, and shuffling around the obstacles it creates. But, as one gifted leader said at the outset of the pandemic, "while crises bring challenges, they also bring opportunities". That has been our posture all along: on the hunt for opportunity. As we look forward from here, we will continue to keep our eyes peeled for evidence of God's presence -- watching out for His "fingerprints". And when we spot Him in action, we will like all the greats of the faith before us, trust Him to lead us forward. The prophet Isaiah says: "But for those who are righteous, the way is not steep or rough. You are a God who does what is right, and you smooth out the path ahead of them."(Isa 26:7 NLT)

We are excited about the path ahead in 2021 and we are blessed to have you by our side praying, encouraging, helping, and giving.



Dave Armstrong
Executive Director
Orangeville

P.S We hope you enjoy our first issue of Making Connections!

Donate

We depend on the generous donations of people like you to reach youth today. If you are able help, please visit

yfch.ca/donate.

Thank you!

Only the Lonely

Even prior to this pandemic, life for our young people was anything but simple. Growing up in a world of technology is complicated, fast, and everchanging. Just as they were adapting to this world, the pandemic changed their lives forever. In the last year, our kids have lost real-life relationships, peer support, and the social experiences that would normally help mold and shape who they would grow up to be.

As I've reflected on youth culture during this pandemic, one of the greatest tragedies I see is the loneliness that pervades this generation. There is a deep sense of isolation and aloneness that has only been enhanced by the pandemic. Pictures are no substitute for real human interactions, the sound of another person's voice, the gaze of their eyes, and a touch of their hand. Technology by its very nature isolates all of us.

Loneliness appears across all demographics regardless of age, race, and income. It

is no respecter of persons and all of us fall prey to its icy grip from time-to-time. Teens are lonelier than any time since 1991 while being more connected electronically but having less time to develop meaningful relationships. The danger today is that kids feel there must be something wrong with them and most see it as a personal failure which it is not.

A USA Harris Poll in October 2020 reported that 61% of teens said that the pandemic has increased their feelings of loneliness. Youth Mental Health Canada also reported that almost 60% of teens said they had no one to turn to with an emotional or mental health problem.

Parents need to make sure they are engaging their teens in meaningful conversations about mental health and not be afraid to ask them if they are doing OK. The fact that we even ask the question communicates to our kids that they are important to us. Together, we will get through this.



Paul Robertson
Youth Culture Specialist
Youth Unlimited, Toronto
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Parent: This is _____ mom.

YUChat: hi I am so glad to hear from you....how is he doing

Parent: he is still the same - but they want to send him home.

YUChat: ok - Has the discharge team connected him with outpatient supports?

Parent: no - they just keep wanting to send him home

YUChat: Ok - you can call the unit and request a discharge plan - since he is a youth.

Parent: Ok thank you I will do that right now. Thank you soooo much!!! You guys are great.

YUChat: Oh please stay connected we are here to support along the path.



YU Chat

YU Chat was launched at the outset of the COVID pandemic as one way to stay connected. Whether teens are in trouble, needing help, have questions about YFC programs, or are just bored, staff are available to talk anytime between noon and midnight on weekdays.

Youth: It was a crap day.

YUChat: I'm sorry to hear that. What made it a crap day?

Youth: My boss yelled at me and I want to quit but I can't

YUChat: That's rough. What's keeping you from quitting?

Youth: Mom lost her job cause of the flu and we need the money its minimum wage but we need it

Youth: I need to get some help.

YUChat: For sure, I'm here to help. What's up?

Youth: I need to go to a foodbank

YUChat: I can help get you connected with one. Can you tell me what town you are located in?

"Our Kids"

Psalm 27:1

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid."

Lucky are we who can read this verse with true faith, then pray and know without a shadow of a doubt that our God has got this. This is why we do what we do for the youth we serve, striving to help this truth penetrate their hearts and minds. Sadly however, it is not embraced by most of the youth we have seen in this most challenging year. Although we have all been affected by the pandemic and are "in this together", our youth often feel alone and isolated.

I heard a quote that made me think about "our kids" (those that attend the outreach programs). "We are all in the same storm...however we are not all in the same

boat". The youth that come to me are not the ones who have parents sitting up at night trying to find ways to help their lonely child or planning board game nights at the kitchen table. These are the kids that were the ones who even before COVID were barely holding their heads up just enough to not drown; the ones whose homes were never safe. The ones who could be out at 2 am, with no one the wiser. Those are my kids, my youth.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to continue running a program we call "Illuminate Youth". This is a one-on-one coaching program. Most youth come with confusion, anger, and no outlet. I help them welcome opportunities for positive change and growth through listening, prayer, and activities. Nothing helps a youth more than finding purpose and understanding who they are

in Christ.

Here is Carl's Story:

"I am 19 years old, and my life has already been a rocky road. I dealt with sexual abuse at a very young age and it was a person who I was supposed to be protected by and loved and this began a feeling of disconnection and isolation from even my circle as a young boy. I already was born with cerebral palsy which left me with some physical disability that was obvious to anyone looking at me and has judged me all of my life. In elementary school, I was moved from mainstream to special classes and this was very hard on me socially. I was picked on and bullied on school busses, schoolyards and ended up in fights all time. I had maybe one friend and was left feeling alone and not normal or accepted.

I moved schools when I was heading into high school to a new town and this did not help at all because then I had no friends. But I got

connected with a church and a youth group run by Marcy. My friend circle began to grow and my mental health was so much better finally.

THEN COVID- It felt like a giant wall popped up in front of me. I knew there were people on the other side but I no longer could connect or be near them. The internet began to be my only friend and my only spot to escape from as well as video games. This was not good for me as I began to explore things that were unhealthy and inappropriate but I was alone and bored and it was easy to fall into this which began to pull my family away from me as I got into trouble. I was talking to people I should not have and got messed up in a bad place, a place I never would have gone without feeling so alone and separated from everyone. The people that I thought were my friends

began to just disappear out of my life. I was now more alone than I used to be and felt it now worse because I used to have it, and now it was gone. I began to lose my connection to my faith, I felt ashamed and guilty and hating who I was.

One day I wrote something on social media and Marcy reached out and said we need to talk. If she did not reach out and let me share and pray with me I am not sure I would be ok right now, I don't even know what would have happened.

Covid without support or God is a dark place to be. I can see how it's taking the lives of the youth today because we have never had to deal with anything like this. Don't hate on kids doing bad things right now it's a struggle and they hate themselves enough! We need to not be alone, we just need support."



Marcy Hill
Ministry Director
Huntsville



Carl
Attendee: Illuminate Youth
Huntsville

We would love to keep in touch

If you are interested in receiving ministry updates, prayer requests, and even annual tax receipts by email, please send us yours.

Simply send an email to info@yfch.ca and let us know your preference.

Staff Happenings



Saying Goodbye to Doug Calder **Ministry Director, Centre Wellington**

We are so thankful for Doug's contribution to our mission of helping "every young person living fully in Christ". In his almost ten years on staff (and many years prior as a volunteer), Doug passionately served the youth of Centre-Wellington and stayed in contact with many even after they had left the area. We wish Doug God's rich blessing in the future.

Welcome to Josh Calder **Youth Worker, Erin**

Josh literally grew up in Youth Unlimited with his dad, Doug Calder, serving on staff in Centre Wellington for almost 10 years. Seeing his father in action for so many years left an indelible mark on Josh. Eventually, he volunteered with us for a number of years and most recently sensed God's call into vocational ministry himself. We are blessed to have Josh join our team and are excited to see what God has in store for the future!



Welcome to Chris Graham **Ministry Director, Shelburne**

Chris comes to Highlands after working in the school system as a Child and Youth Worker. Chris felt called to serve in his community and to connect with Shelburne's young people in a ministry that shares Jesus in real and meaningful ways. We welcome Chris to the Highlands family and are excited about growing our ministry in Shelburne - named one of fastest growing communities in Ontario!

Events

Orangeville Winter Gala Silent Auction

Join us for some fundraising fun
March 1-15th as we launch our first-
ever silent auction.

For more information, go to
<http://yfch.ca/event/winter-gala/>

Prayer Corner

**"Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man's will done in heaven, but for getting God's will done on earth."
- Robert Law**

We would be thrilled to have you join our prayer team. If you are interested, please let us know and we will provide more details. Also, if you need prayer, let us know that too! Either way, our prayer team can be reached at pray@yfch.ca.