



Youth Unlimited™
YFC HIGHLANDS

James Hunt
Area Director



Brain Box

BrainBox is a creative new approach towards addressing the growing youth mental health crisis. Developed by colleague Mark Stromenberg, BrainBox is a quarterly subscription box packed full of **fun mental health resources**. The “buy one, give one” concept is genius: for every paid adult order, we will deliver a free BrainBox to a youth who needs it! Each box contains a clothing item, fun mental health tools, unique stickers, pins, or buttons, and connections to local resources & supports. Behind every BrainBox is the goal of providing a resource that will not only be helpful, but also be exciting to receive. Every item in a BrainBox serves to foster good mental health, provide joy, and equip you to be a mental health advocate. To sign up for your quarterly subscription, or to sign up a young person who could benefit from it, visit www.mybrainbox.ca



YUmedia

Colleague Aaron White and I have continued to expand our digital ministry footprint. Drawing on the skills and expertise of our fellow YU/YFC co-workers, we have been able to significantly broaden the number of online platforms and multiply the impact of this new ministry field. It's amazing to looking back on how God has been at work here: what began as a simple online study through the Book of Mark in response to the initial pandemic lockdowns last year now includes regular video productions on Instagram & YouTube, blog devotions. Spotify playlists, Art & Poetry tutorials, church tours, a weekly EDM (electronic dance music) podcast, and regular virtual meets with youth. Most recently we've been working on a new podcast designed to inform and equip youth ministry workers, volunteers, and ministry partners; SHIFTED will explore the rapidly changing face of youth ministry as our team of seasoned youth veterans share what they have seen and learned, what has changed, how they've adapted through the years, and what they see for the future of youth ministry. To explore all that YUmedia has to offer, visit www.yumedia.ca

Lockdown: round two

Once again we find ourselves handcuffed by current COVID-19 safety precautions, forcing us to get creative in replacing our traditional group programs & activities with fresh new initiatives. In Huntsville, **Marcy Hill** has really taken advantage of this opportunity to invest deeply in relationships with youth, as she focuses on "Illuminate" - her ongoing **one-on-one mentoring** program. Marcy has been keeping weekly appointments with several youth as they work towards uncovering & living out their full life potential. Marcy also continues to provide crisis response to youth in need.

In Parry Township, **Ryan Campese** has been using this time to build a solid future for ministry in the region. It's brought back fond memories as I watch Ryan dive headlong into his personal/professional development as he pursues credentialing as a missionary with the Religious Order of Youth For Christ Canada. Ryan is currently working hard on his Bible & Theology Exam, and it's been exciting to see how the Holy Spirit has been speaking to him through this process! Ryan is also working on building the framework for a **carpentry ministry**, and has secured a strong working partnership with Georgian College as they work together to invest in youth and equip a new generation of tradespeople.

Meanwhile, I have been using this time to continue leading our growing team of staff, building community connections across the region, further developing partnerships with other like-minded organizations, and leaning into my pursuit of **youth advocacy at the regional level**. I continue to represent the voice of young people in several regional groups, including: the Muskoka Youth Advisory Group, Muskoka Homelessness Sharing Table, Community Partners Group, and the Home For Good planning team (see right). Most recently I have been invited to join forces with Gravenhurst Against Poverty (GAP) as they seek to establish a **youth centre in Gravenhurst**.



Transitional Housing

Home for Good (HFG) is a provincial funding program that focuses on helping people find stable housing. Last year The District of Muskoka received funding to support a local HFG project for youth between the ages of 18 and 25. Construction has begun at 49 Pine Street in Bracebridge and the finished project will consist of 12 self-contained dorm-style housing units, which will be used to house Muskoka's youth who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. While the District will remain the landlord for the building, they will be looking to local service providers for operational support in meeting the needs of these youth. This model is based largely on our input and experience, as YU/YFC has several years experience in successfully operating similar youth housing initiatives in Manitoba. It's been an exciting venture over the past several months, as we have been hard at work planning out the details: everything from building design to acceptance criteria and ongoing programming. The overarching goal of the program is **to equip young people with the skills and knowledge required to successfully transition from homelessness** into safe, stable and independent living; skills like meal planning, healthy relationships, resume writing, home budgeting, conflict resolution, and more. Each participant will be supported in developing a unique Personal Development Plan that will address their individual barriers to successful, independent living, and we will be there to assist them in achieving their personal development goals. Most recently, we submitted an Expression of Interest to the District which, if approved, will see YU/YFC positioned as the lead agency in charge of daily operations. Stay tuned for future updates on this exciting new ministry opportunity!