



# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

## FACING CHALLENGES

The past year has seen an even darker shade to the harsh realities of homelessness. The youth who come to us are navigating the opioid crisis, gang recruitment, and often undiagnosed mental health issues.

To meet these challenges, we saw innovative problem-solving from our staff. Across our agency, people came together to support each other and our youth. We saw new and existing donors and

supporters step forward to ensure that YESS will continue to be here with resources, guidance, and love for young people in our community.

Together we can face any challenge. Together we can continue to invest in the potential of our youth.

**Deb Cautley**  
Executive Director

## YESS SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS

Every year, it takes approximately \$5 million to keep YESS up and running. Over half of that amount comes to us through donations from companies and individuals who invest in our community's future by investing in our kids. We have so many generous supporters that we could never hope to list them all, but we would like to extend special thanks to the following for being some of our greatest contributors in the past year.

Darren & Laurel Durstling  
Muriel Hole  
Dave & Gwen Burroughs  
Keith & Laura Graham  
Peter & Cathy Faiazza  
Ryan Collins  
The Blind Enthusiasm Brewing Company  
Estate of Dianne Bateman  
Eddie's Men's Wear Ltd.  
McCarthy Family Fund  
Cameron & Lisa Blair  
Homeward Trust Edmonton  
Edmonton Community Foundation  
The Home Depot Canada Foundation  
Edmonton International Airport  
la maison Simons  
Ledcor Group of Companies  
Shaw Communications Inc.  
The Sherlock Holmes Hospitality Group  
Brookfield Residential (Alberta) LP  
41 Service Battalion  
United Way of the Alberta Capital Region  
Canadian Western Bank  
Boston Pizza Northern Alberta  
Grasschopper Landscaping  
Shaw Charity Classic Foundation

ATB Financial  
Dacro Industries Inc.  
Carlson Construction  
The Summit Foundation  
Alberta Investment Management Corporation, AIMCo  
Trailblazer RV Centre Ltd.  
The Melton Foundation  
John Brooks Company Limited  
Alberta Milk  
Kiwans Club of Edmonton Oil Capital  
City and Dinner Television  
The Organic Box  
Cowan Imaging Group  
Inland AV  
Pattison Outdoor Signage  
One Step Beyond Photography & Video  
River City Events  
REALTORS® Community Foundation  
Frank J. Flaman Foundation  
Collin Bruce Mortgage Team  
Paul Shufelt, Workshop Eatery  
Impark  
Nordic  
Rene and Lisa Cloutier  
Alberta Pork  
Sonic 102.9

# A LETTER FROM A FORMER CLIENT

There was a time in my life, in my teens, when I found myself pretty desperate. I felt like no one understood me. I wanted very badly to disappear. I found YESS and thought to myself: "this is officially the last resort". I was in high school and worked a part-time job. I only told a few close friends where I was living – I recall feeling very embarrassed. Today, it is hard to remember why living at the shelter made me feel so vulnerable. I suppose if someone assured me that everything was going to be okay in the end, I would have embraced it with more pride.

But I was very afraid. Looking back, even that fear played a positive part in the unfolding of my life at the shelter and onwards. I remember being given access to this special room where the donations were kept so that I could do my studying after-hours. I was very keen on shifting my focus onto schoolwork and the staff was very supportive.

The kids I met at YESS came from varying backgrounds and were there to meet a variety of needs; no two stories were alike - there is no "shelter kid" archetype. Their stories could break your heart or infuriate you or scare you half to death. However, all those troubles still did not disturb the soft tranquility of the place we would all call home. There was real warmth there and I cannot stress enough how that provided the foundation to grow and learn and aspire. I left the shelter to return to my family a few months later but never forgot the experience: it toughened and softened me simultaneously.

The tough part of me made me strong and perseverant. The soft part made me humble and understanding

# CHANGING FUTURES

YESS first opened its doors in 1981—that's 36 years ago! Since then, thousands of youth have come to YESS to find a sympathetic ear, a kind voice, and an encouraging hand forward. These thousands of kids have gone on to shape our communities. You may never know all the Edmontonians and Albertans who spent a night or years at

towards people who've had to endure challenges beyond imagination. The soft part also gave me the sense of gratitude, and the ability to be thankful is a strength many people forget. I turned my energy towards the study of law. In law school, many people will question what makes you a good specimen for the assessment of law and policy, what makes you credible as a future lawyer. My credibility is owed in a huge part to my time at the shelter. The purpose it serves for the social health of supplying youth with support and opportunities is just the surface. The fact that it allows for individual growth and learning about the many intricacies of fairness and society is another. But at the very core of it all is the fact that there was this organized safety net, created by people who refused to allow kids like me to be discarded. It was, first and foremost, a place with a clean bed and meals and, quite literally, shelter. Where else would I have gone? What would have become of me?

I feel empowered by the fact that there was, and is, a place that takes care of teens in need. It provided me with the first step out of a kind of mire I could have gotten easily lost in. I feel very proud to have been at one with the kids who occupied the bunk beds next to mine – kids that had survived far more than I could even comprehend. Children of the streets are harvesters of great social knowledge – they are springs of potential. I hope we, as a society, never allow that potential to waste. I hope we can look forward to a future of support and faith: I hope I can stand as only one mere example of what this can achieve.

*This is an excerpt of a lengthy letter written by Patrycja a former YESS client.*

YESS—they're our neighbours, teachers, community leaders, and even our close friends. The programs and resources youth find at YESS change the future of our communities for generations to come.

**René Cloutier**  
Chair, YESS Board of Directors

## STEPS TO SUCCESS

There are many steps to success, and everyone stumbles along the way. Our staff strive to make recovering from those missteps a little easier, so that our youth can see the potential they have to succeed.

Here are some of our programming highlights from 2016 - those little things that help pick our youth up after they've stumbled on their path to success.

- Resource Workers were established to focus on tasks and life skills designed to supplement "housing first" efforts, resulting in sustainable independence.
- Monthly forums give voices to our youth, allowing them to share needs related to policy and procedures, and providing a direct communication line with management.
- A new initiative was launched to include the youth in their own case planning, giving them the opportunity to decide what they want to work on, who their program supports are, and what victories will look like along the way.
- An employment program was launched to provide skills and modules to help our youth achieve employment. With ZERO barriers for attendance and acceptance, this fills a serious gap in a community where employment programs have strict expectations and barriers.

# YESS

youth empowerment & support services

