



NOVEMBER 2020

YESS NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM MARGO



Hello everyone and welcome to our November newsletter. This month is full of change and celebration at YESS. As we head into the Winter months, we prepare for a safe and warm response for our young people and plan to balance the changing hours of daylight and decreasing temperatures with some intentional fun

and celebration of successes. From the incredible impact of Richard's Read Room, to our new youth art elements, and our incredible donor partners there is a lot to celebrate this month, and we tie it all up with some very tasty recipes from our kitchen.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about what we are doing, we wish you a warm and safe November.

– Margo

KEEPING OUR NEIGHBOURS SAFE DURING EXTREME WEATHER

By Jasmine Salazar, Homeward Trust Edmonton

When temperatures drop, Edmontonians can keep warm inside their homes. But where do you go when you don't have a home? For our vulnerable neighbours experiencing homelessness this is a frightening reality that can be dangerous without contingency plans in place.

Every winter, members of Edmonton's homeless-serving sector—comprised of Homeward Trust, the City of Edmonton and more than 25 system partners and agencies—coordinate an emergency response to reduce the risk for people experiencing homelessness by getting them into a safe space as quickly and as easily as possible. The current public health crisis has exacerbated the risk for people experiencing homelessness, highlighting a need for an emergency response that goes beyond extreme weather to address unforeseeable challenges.

This coordinated response has resulted in a shift in focus to a broader Sector Emergency Response (SER) to reflect the year-round need to ensure networks are in place and active in order to support individuals when shelters are at capacity and the weather takes a turn for the worst.

"We know people experiencing homelessness are already at increased risk. The compounding effects of extreme cold weather and COVID-19 exposure and restrictions only adds to those dangers," explains Matthew Ward of Homeward Trust. "Our Sector Emergency Response, which builds off existing control measures to keep the COVID-19 virus from spreading, are important steps to help our vulnerable neighbours stay safe."

A collaborative and proactive problem-solving approach is taken to address arising challenges, which involves partners working together in sharing timely data and resource information between shelter providers, emergency services, transportation services and other service providers across the City to deliver supports to those who need it.

Triggers that activate the Sector Emergency Response in winter include temperatures of -20 or below (including windchill) and/or shelter capacity reaching 90% or higher. The response would typically involve lifting bans at shelters under the discretion of providers, opening overflow spaces, increasing current shelter capacity where possible and providing supplementary transportation services. In the past, Edmonton Transit Services has also operated additional buses to serve as a warming space and transport people to shelters.

And in the summer, extreme heat or poor air quality are conditions that could activate a Sector Emergency Response. The response looks at weather warnings from Environment Canada, existing capacity of the city's emergency shelters, and other emerging concerns expressed by the group.

While the best solution to homelessness is permanent housing, the Sector Emergency Response ensures that people experiencing homelessness have access to life-saving services in times of immediate crisis and are protected from the risks of COVID-19 and cold weather.

Winter shelter is available at the following locations:

24/7 Shelter at Hope Mission and Commonwealth Stadium

Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre (WEAC)

Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS) – Nexus Shelter

Salvation Army Addictions & Residential Centre: Transitional Housing

E4C Youth Housing Programs: Transitional Housing

Edmonton Convention Centre

Mustard Seed CESSCO Shelter

For the latest updates on the Sector Emergency Response, visit homewardtrust.ca



NEW YESS ARTWORK

We were so excited to premiere the incredible artwork from local artist Jonathan Busch on the cover of our 2019/2020 Annual Report. This was a very special project spearheaded by Manager of Shelters Tessa Mulcair.

Hear more from Tessa on her aim for this project, get to know Jonathan, and learn how this collaboration created some incredible artwork!



Our youth are incredibly diverse in so many ways, they represent many cultures, races, religions, sexual orientations, gender expressions, and different neuro and physical abilities. When youth who are experiencing trauma are looking for support it can be difficult for them to know where they will be accepted. I wanted to have some artwork created that could signal to youth that they will be accepted at YESS, that these diversities would never be a barrier to getting the support that they need from us.



Get to Know Artist Jonathan Busch

Tell us a bit about yourself!

I'm a queer artist, drag queen, and public library employee, born and raised in Saskatchewan. I make digital art, mostly portraits but other stuff, which I like to share online, also on t-shirts, fridge magnets, stickers, and other kinds of homemade merch. I also do commissioned artworks for a variety of clients. I have two cats.

What was the vision and collaboration behind the new YESS artwork?

Tessa approached me about creating an artwork for the YESS Facebook banner, and I was definitely on board. It was all her vision and also general design, which cohered very well with my style of work.

I have had the pleasure of being a judge for an annual YESS fundraiser drag competition that Jonathan has organized, and through that have become acquainted with his incredible art. I was drawn to having Jonathan do the art for our youth because the portraits he does have a modern edginess to them and manage to reflect emotion and mood authentically. I was not disappointed! The art he created for YESS captures not just the diversity of our youth but the spirit and individuality is reflected so well. From the pensive gaze to the all out sass, and many expressions in between.

She and I had also collaborated on a fundraiser for YESS, a drag competition called Mz. Arthaus, which I organized and hosted. To be honest, the project came about more or less because I wanted to host my own competition-style event, and often such events make great fundraisers. A chance conversation with Tessa led me to want to raise funds for YESS, which I had heard of through various channels. It seemed like a perfectly suitable choice because I see drag events as opportunities to inspire and empower others through creativity and to build each other up with self expression. There seems to be a shared interest there.

What is something you wish the community knew about YESS youth?

I guess I just wish people knew that the YESS youth exist, and that YESS itself exists to help provide the empowerment and support that all young people require and deserve to flourish in their lives and society, that it's going into building a better world.



NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY

November 19 was National Philanthropy Day!
We nominated these incredible YESS supporters
for recognition on this special day.

The REALTORS® Community Foundation

For 26 years, The REALTORS® Community Foundation has both inspired and encouraged Youth Empowerment & Support Services (YESS) in its delivery of supports and programs for our youth. The team began in 1994 with their Edmonton Bike Nights and Ride for Kids community fundraisers, sponsorship of our annual Golf Classic. We have been the beneficiaries of their time and unique skills with volunteering. They've given the gift of enhanced safety to our kids with their investment in the security system upgrades at our Armoury Resource Centre (ARC), pride of home with the upkeep and renovations of our buildings, caring comfort with new furniture within our programs. And, their most recent investment in our Art Therapy Program will help to facilitate connection, self-expression and healing for our youth. The REALTORS® Community Foundation continues to weave a lasting, sustainable legacy within our organization, the lives of our youth, and the community at large. YESS is so grateful for the support of the REALTORS® team for helping to shape our future and strengthen the critical supports for our youth as they they address they address life-changing trauma and homelessness.

Ledcor Group

Youth Empowerment & Support Services (YESS) is honored to recognize Ledcor Group as a true pillar in the Edmonton Community -whose philanthropic leadership, dedication and commitment has championed YESS for over a decade. The team at Ledcor Group has been tireless in their long-term support of YESS and their strength of confidence in YESS programs that are helping to transform the lives of our incredible youth. They have been major donors since 2015 and have gifted YESS with profound encouragement and countless hours of volunteer leadership. Purposeful and always with a great sense of fun, their team has helped to create a spirit of community, safety and responsibility while transforming the front yards of YESS buildings and a neighborhood cleanup. And as a result of much creativity and flair, they helped to create a truly one of a kind Halloween celebration for our youth to enjoy at YESS' Armoury Resource Centre (ARC) . The leadership and vision of Ledcor Group has helped to support the programs and resources that help youth experiencing trauma and homelessness achieve goals for their relationships, their health, and their futures Thank you for being a part of creating a community where we can heal together!



Photo from October 2019

"Embedded in our company culture is the Ledcor Cares spirit. That spirit comes from a desire to assist others in need and to help move our communities forward by coming together for organizations that have a place in our hearts. YESS provides an essential community of care and encouragement to Edmonton's most vulnerable youth and we are proud to support them and their mission to walk beside traumatized youth on their journey towards healing and appropriate community integration."



Photo courtesy of REALTORS® Community Foundation from September 2019

"The REALTORS® Community Foundation has proudly supported YESS since 1989 and in 26 of the last 31 years. Their tremendous compassion for youth facing homelessness in the Edmonton Area is evident in their programs and facilities. By meeting youth where they're at and offering diverse programs, youth of many backgrounds and interests are able to connect to positive paths forward, empowering them to achieve their goals and contribute to a strong, vibrant future for our community. The Foundation has committed to a three-year pledge to YESS in support of their continued efforts to support youth in our city which will bring total giving to the organization to over \$300,000 upon fulfillment. REALTORS® care about the communities in which they live and work; through the Foundation they invest in charities, such as YESS, who are doing the important work so needed to create opportunities for all community members to thrive."

Collin and Janel Bruce

The Youth Empowerment & Support Services (YESS) is honored to recognize Collin, Janel & the team at Collin Bruce Mortgage Team for the profound impact that their philanthropic commitment has had over the past 10 years on our organization and the lives of the incredible youth that we serve every day. As passionate advocates and ambassadors for our youth in the community, the Collin Bruce Mortgage Team has helped to strengthen the futures of our youth through their many creative and generous avenues of support. With television and radio commercials, they have been instrumental in raising awareness of the challenges our youth face. Their benevolence has extended to major financial support, Christmas gifts for the youth celebrating the holidays at YESS and they have generously matched support for an annual Sonic auction initiative. Over the years, they have regularly sponsored and helped to grow both our annual Gala for Youth and YESS Charity Golf Tournament. Many thanks to Collin, Janel & the Collin Bruce Mortgage Team for their tireless long-term support and encouragement of our youth as they grow and empower themselves to become independent and break the cycle of homelessness.



Photo from January 2020

"YESS plays an integral role for the youth of this city. These youth are put in unimaginable, terrible circumstances, at no fault of

their own. Not only does YESS provide a safe place for these kids to go, over time they help address and heal the trauma that they face. We are so grateful and blessed to be a part of the small business community in Edmonton and have always wanted to give back to that community. We connected with YESS when we started our business and feel so lucky to be a part of that family. We truly believe that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more and try to live by this."

No Room in the Inn

Since 1999, the Edmonton & District Council of Churches has sponsored an ecumenical Christmas fundraising initiative called No Room in the Inn. Each year, church congregations and individuals from many denominations join together to provide financial support to a housing provider for the homeless or people at risk in the Edmonton Capital Region. The annual campaign raises from \$40,000 to \$70,000. Over the years, the project has raised (cumulatively) over \$1 million from the community for twenty different housing projects in the Capital Region! Rooted in values central to Christian faith and identity, their annual campaign expresses to vulnerable persons in our community that they are loved and cared about as valued members of our society. YESS was awarded funds from their 2018 campaign to completely renovate the bathrooms in our Whyte Avenue Nexus program to provide a cleaner environment with increased privacy and dignity. This will help the traumatized youth assisted by YESS to understand they are important and to help them integrate back into the community. Thank you to each member of the Edmonton & District Council of Churches for your generous support!

“No Room In The Inn is a Christmas fundraising initiative sponsored by the Edmonton and District Council of Churches. The name, drawn from the biblical story of Christ’s birth in a stable, reflects our focus on creating or improving housing for those in need. We often support small renovation projects for groups that might otherwise not be able to afford them. EDCC has long been aware of the good work that YESS performs in the community, and we were especially taken with the request from YESS knowing what a significant benefit they would receive from our relatively modest contribution.”



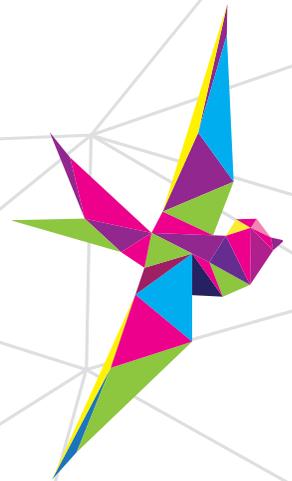
Photo from June 2019

Hillcrest School

Each year the Edmonton Oilers NHL team runs a Hockey Helps Kids campaign. Schools pick a charity to support and submit a proposal to be selected as one of four school groups, each of whom, represent their chosen charity in the campaign. Hillcrest School chose Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS) as their charity. The group creates a video presentation about the charity, which is then shown at NHL hockey games and works online as well to get votes for their video. Hillcrest School was able to accumulate a large number of votes and was able to get an award of \$10,000 for YESS, which is used for clothing, food, shelter, youth training, and many other things. The students at Hillcrest did an outstanding job of representing YESS through the creation of their video, all of which they did themselves, and directly helped a large number of traumatized youth in doing so. They are an outstanding group of kids with an incredible understanding of social responsibility.



Photo courtesy of Hillcrest Junior High, from Hockey Helps Kids campaign January 2020



CARROT AND GINGER COCONUT SOUP

with YESS Chef Tiffany



Warm up with a bowl of this delicious and nutritious carrot and ginger coconut soup!

Follow along with Tiffany in the video! >



A SANCTUARY WITHIN A SANCTUARY

This article originally appears in the Summer 2019 Newsletter. November is the anniversary of Richard's Reading Room, which continues to be a beloved space now more than ever. A transformation of Richard's Reading Room is planned as a project in 2021.

Meet the Latte Family, who created Richard's Reading Room at the Armoury Resource Centre and created a legacy of giving in memory of their son, Richard

1. Tell us a bit about yourself.

My name is Cheryl Latte. I am a mom of five, and a grandma. I love to help create spaces and sanctuaries for others. Thus far I have helped create a number of spaces including: a playroom at another charitable organization, a family space at an assisted living facility, and have helped set up and decorate homes for new refugee families. Of course Richard's Reading Room is the space that started it all. When my son Richard passed away tragically at the age of 22 from testicular cancer, I was a mom who was deeply grieving and needed to find something positive to focus on in the face of something so tragic. I thought of YESS and the rest, as they say, is history. I am so humbled that this small space has become an integral part of the YESS landscape, and that Richard (and our family) continue to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

2. What are some of your strongest beliefs about YESS?

YESS helps kids. That is the long and short of it.

They help youth in so many ways: their physical and mental health, and emotional needs.

YESS gives them a safe place to be and a soft place to land when their world is anything but.



3. What is something you wish the community knew about YESS and YESS youth?

When I visit the Armoury to tidy Richard's Reading Room, or to bake with the kids there, I always come away with far more than I give. I can't count the number of thanks and hugs I have received over the last 7 years. I am always awed at the level of kindness and compassion I see in these kids, and that they are so grateful for the smallest of gestures. I have had the privilege of hearing some of their stories, and they have asked me to share mine. Sharing our stories... it is how we connect with each other, despite our differences. How fitting it is that those stories are often shared in Richard's Reading Room: a place where stories abound.

4. What inspired you to give to YESS through an endowment?

When we were planning the grand opening of Richard's Reading Room in November 2012, it became apparent that the monetary donations we received from the community to create the room exceeded what we needed at the time. We were lucky enough to meet with a representative from the Edmonton Community Foundation, who suggested that an option for the remaining funds could be to create an endowment fund in Richard's name. We were excited to go ahead with this, as it would mean that Richard's legacy would continue to give back for years to come.

Although the direction of the "Richard Latte Educational Fund" has changed a bit over the years, I'm thrilled to know that Richard's Reading Room at YESS will continue to receive funds regularly, which will allow the space to continue to be updated, homey, welcoming, aesthetically pleasing, and filled with a selection of good quality youth literature. It will continue to be a "sanctuary within a sanctuary."

Richard's chapter is finished, but his story continues thanks to Richard's Reading Room at YESS and the endowment fund established in Richard's honor with The Edmonton Community Foundation.

YESS is a proud partner of the United Way!

Do Local Good at: myunitedway.ca



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