

Dear Partner,

We wanted to take a little time to update you about all that is happening with YUE. We apologize in advance for all the info in this somewhat lengthy email, but we hope the TITLES and **bolding** will help direct your attention to things that matter to you. Again, we want to thank you for making a difference in the lives of so many youth in Edmonton. Without you, none of this is possible.

AN EASTER REFLECTION - Redeeming Inclusion

I am always fascinated by language, and how it is so fluid and changing. Sometimes words take on new meanings, some good, some bad. One important word I was reflecting on during Easter this year was "inclusion". For some this has become a negative word, being co-opted by some people with a certain agenda. I want to propose that this word needs to be redeemed in our current context, or maybe restored to its original meaning. Why is this word so important?

The word inclusion, is a very important word in my belief system. As a follower of Jesus, I place unsurpassable value in Easter, and specifically the celebration of Jesus death' and resurrection. For me, these events have huge importance for **understanding how God relates to us as people**. Even perhaps shaping our own perspective on the character or nature of God.

I believe what we see in the death of Jesus is God accepting the violence and rejection of man towards Him, in order to demonstrate His willingness to suffer along with us. And here is where inclusion comes in. He is willing to suffer to **identify with every one of us**. The most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16 starts with "God so loved the world...". God loves everyone. No matter what condition they find themselves in. Another verse that comes to mind is "while we were still lost in our sin, Christ died for us". Jesus himself said, "Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down his life for his friends."

I hope you are getting the *unbelievable* point here. **Jesus died for everyone and he sees us all as his friends, even though we aren't on His side** (sin basically means that we are acting in rebellion against God). Can there be a greater love available for each and every one of us?

So here at YUE we try to live our lives like Jesus did. **We are called to love every kid**. That means we freely accept them into our drop-ins, in whatever condition or state they find themselves in. And then we get the privilege, because of your generosity, to share God's love with them. Helping every one of them move from loneliness and suffering to belonging and hope.

CHANGES

We have a few changes in the office at YUE to report.

First, we were super sad to say **goodbye to Pamela Smith**, our office administrator for 4.5 years. Pam decided to resign in April on very good terms. We have thoroughly enjoyed having Pam on our team, and if you are looking in your organization for a positive, hard-working, and loyal team member, you might want to reach out to Pam. YOu can find her on LinkedIn or Facebook. If you had any contact with Pam during her time here, you will know how much she will be missed by us.

On the other side of the coin, we are thrilled to announce that we have hired a **new Office Administrator, Julie Boos**. Julie comes to us with a strong background in volunteering for various causes, and a long relationship with Youth Unlimited in Wetaskiwin. After a lengthy hiring process, with a some really great candidates, we were excited to have Julie join our team. Welcome Julie!!

GOLF TOURNAMENT

In case you aren't aware yet, we will be hosting our **37th Annual Golf Challenge at RedTail Landing** on Tuesday, June 24. This is our biggest fundraising event of the year, and we are looking to **raise \$90,000 to help support our newest campaign - Another Day**. We are hoping to add enough resources to be able to operate one more day per week at each of our drop-in centres. This would include reaching more youth, providing more meals and programs, and more importantly giving more youth the opportunity to build valuable positive relationships with their peers and adults.

We are looking for corporate sponsors, golfers, and volunteers to help make this the best tournament ever. For more information you can go online at: <https://www.edmontonyouthunlimited.com/golf>, or contact myself or Julie at 780-437-3000.

PARTNER APPRECIATION

We had the privilege of hosting a partner appreciation event at the Vault Youth Centre on Friday, April 25. It was a fantastic night because we had 6 of our youth share their story and tell how they have been impacted by our generous partners at the Vault. I was there and can testify that every story was very moving.

One girl shared about how **she lost her Mom and dog in the same week**, and since she has grown distant from her dad as they both grieve. She was grateful for how Adam, our manager at the Vault, was there to be a second dad for her. A brave young man also got up to share and was visibly moved by the fact that the Vault was the one place he could go to **escape being bullied at school** and find people who cared for him and valued him.

We want to continue hosting at least 2 of these events per year, and they include not just the opportunity to hear from our youth, but also a chance to take in the atmosphere of our unique youth centres, have some dessert and beverages, and meet other like-minded, caring partners of YUE. We hope to see you at the next one in the fall.

DID YOU KNOW?

Research shows that the most influential factor in youth resiliency is one caring adult relationship. Research also shows that one of the main factors in youth mental health challenges is loneliness or isolation. Recent analysis of our impact statements collected from youth last year indicates that **49% of our youth experience significant relational growth** at our programs. YUE is uniquely positioned to meet the foundational needs of our youth, and you are one of the people helping make this happen.

Thank you deeply for your interest in seeing youth in Edmonton grow into being overcomers and not just victims!

Sincerely,

Gary Higgs

Executive Director



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