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YOUTH UNLIMITED

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15/16

GREATER  
VANCOUVER

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ANNUAL REPORT

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STORIES OF HOPE AND  
NEW BEGINNINGS





YOUTH UNLIMITED HAS BEEN SERVING YOUNG PEOPLE SINCE 1947

Thank you for taking a few minutes to read Youth Unlimited's 2015/2016 Annual Report. For many, reading such a document might seem like a form of punishment, others simply want to see the numbers. As you read we hope you grasp the story being written in Youth Unlimited, a story of new growth and of new beginnings that we hope will encourage and inspire.

On a recent road trip through the dry BC interior, my son Syllas yelled out: "Wow, look at all that beautiful grass." The field of grass looked too nice to be someone's lawn and sure enough a large sign identified it as a sod farm. These folks were in a high growth business, carefully planting, watering, nurturing, cultivating growth, and not ashamed to let everyone know who was caring for it all. If ever I needed someone to help me with my pathetic lawn, I now know where to go.

Speaking of cultivation, did you know Greater Vancouver Youth Unlimited has been serving young people since 1947? "Really? Wow, I've never heard of you guys." This is the most common response we get. It makes sense though; we've prided ourselves on being a grassroots organization. This has many upsides, but some downsides as well. Like grass roots, we have been hidden beneath the surface quietly going about our business for a long time.

The hiding beneath the surface is beginning to change; it needs to change. We see too many youths who come out of detention centres and who age out of foster care with no one to turn to. We know too many kids with nowhere safe to sleep at night. We meet too many children who are hungry on a daily basis. We walk with too many teenagers in danger of being trafficked. We connect with too many kids vulnerable to scores of online dangers who are isolated, lonely and confused.

Simply put, we see way too much to stay hidden and we are therefore in the process of changing this. New beginnings and new growth are happening across our chapter. In the past two years, we have added 20 new youth workers to our team to plant seeds of hope, and to water, nurture and cultivate growth in these young lives. As a result, we are now serving incarcerated youth in and out of detention, we are building partnerships with local businesses to help us feed street-involved kids, we are caring for youth who have aged out of foster care and we are in the process of opening up a new area in Chilliwack, hit hard by addiction and homelessness. I am reminded of the words of the prophet Isaiah.

"I am doing something new; it's springing up – can't you see it? I am making a road in the desert, rivers in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:19

Thank you for providing hope to thousands of youth in our communities. Here's to new beginnings in 2017!

With deep gratitude,

Mark Koop  
Executive Director  
Youth Unlimited

## YOUTH UNLIMITED IN PRISON?

"Hey Matt, you know Mike and Cecil?!!" These were the words that greeted Youth Unlimited field worker, Matt Bergen, when he first encountered Chris\* last November at Burnaby Youth Custody (BYC), one of the province's two youth jails.

Matt was immediately brought up to speed that this was not Chris' first encounter with YU. Prior to his incarceration, Chris had gotten to know Surrey youth workers, Mike and Cecil. These relationships laid the groundwork for Matt to build a friendship with Chris during Matt's bi-weekly visits to BYC. During that time, Chris opened up about his sincere desire for a fresh start. He wanted to get a job and he wanted to avoid getting trapped in the "system," like so many around him seemed to be.

YU's prison ministry was established in 2015 through Matt who has a deep passion for those who are imprisoned. Having left a life of crime and gang-activity himself, Matt understands the unique and difficult challenges the young men face. In addition to biweekly prison visits and supporting BYC chaplain-facilitated Bible studies, Matt continues to walk with the youth once they are released. He helps them to find jobs, housing and connection to supportive communities.

This July, Chris was released. Matt continues to walk alongside him, continuing what his colleagues began—often over pizza and burgers—affirming Chris's potential to make healthy life choices. Chris's strides are significant, already holding down a fulltime job.

"If Cecil and Mike hadn't poured into Chris, would his story be the way it is today?" Matt wonders. "I don't know, but I do know they played huge roles in his life and I'm so glad I had the opportunity to get to know him during a time when no one else was there for him."

\*Not his real name



## YOUTH UNLIMITED Fiscal Year Impact

8 CITIES WITH DEDICATED TEAMS OF YU YOUTH WORKERS

7 INNOVATIVE YOUTH DROP-IN CENTRES (3 MOBILE, 4 STATIONARY)

46,099 MEALS SERVED

63 FRONTLINE YOUTH WORKERS

2083 YOUTH INVOLVED IN DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAMS

58 YOUTH IN YU LEADER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

225+ YOUTH UNLIMITED VOLUNTEERS

95 YOUTH ON INTERNATIONAL SERVICE TRIPS



“BEFORE, I HAD NO HOPE, BUT NOW, I CAN LOOK FORWARD AGAIN.”



## AFTER VIOLENCE IN SUDAN AND INJUSTICE IN CANADA, KHALIL FINDS A NEW BEGINNING

When Youth Unlimited field worker, Arlene Friesen, met Khalil, a 17-year old Sudanese refugee, his father had left their family in dire straits to fend for themselves. As the oldest of four, Khalil was trying to help his mom make ends meet by working under-the-table labour jobs at exploitive wages, all while attending high school.

It was at the learning centre at an alternative Surrey school where the two first met. Arlene has a knack for spotting struggling students, and a gift for supporting even the most vulnerable and difficult students. After 20 years of working as administrative support staff in the Surrey school district, Arlene realized that if she wanted to reach out relationally to vulnerable students, making lasting change possible, she needed to go on the front lines, as a Youth Unlimited youth worker. So at age 50 she made the switch. And because of her adaptable role, Arlene was uniquely positioned to support and advocate for Khalil.

Arlene helped Khalil connect to YU through a sponsored YU surf trip to Tofino, made possible thanks to generous YU partners. There, staff learned of the seriousness of his predicament.

Khalil was born in northwestern Africa, in a village near Khartoum in the Republic of Sudan. “We lived in the

midst of a lot of poverty,” he explains, “but we didn’t really understand the difference between rich and poor since we didn’t have money.”

Due to increasingly dangerous conflict in the country, Khalil’s family fled to Egypt in 2003, where they could file with the UN Refugee Agency and flee to Canada.

The transition to life in Canada, however, was difficult. Khalil’s father particularly struggled, developing dangerous habits and addictions and eventually abandoning the family. When he left—in an act of vengeance—he stole all the children’s documents that they needed to work and prove legal status in Canada.

“He was fighting his own demons,” Khalil explains, “but in the process he left us pretty helpless. We didn’t have many options. My mom worked three jobs trying to keep food on the table, so I took whatever work I could to try to help out.”

Khalil made five dollars an hour as a night cashier at a corner store. “I decided that at the end of the day, pay is pay,” says Khalil. “Even though I was getting underpaid I was still able to do something to help my family. Either I do something or I do nothing, and sometimes you just have to do what you have to do. It’s life, right?”

As a teenager, Khalil was not yet fully attuned to his bleak future of low opportunity and constant risk of deportation without official papers. But Arlene knew—and she was determined to help change that and fought for justice alongside Khalil.

“It was so hard to watch sometimes,” says Arlene.



“Through it all, Arlene was always there encouraging and helping me to keep going.”

- Khalil

“How a few pieces of paper could mean the difference between a fair and unfair wage or the possibility of finishing school. It was so tough seeing him be taken advantage of.” Khalil says without Arlene he would have given up. “Through it all, Arlene was always there encouraging and helping me to keep going.”

In May, after “stops and starts and almost giving up,” Khalil and his sisters officially received the necessary government documentation, that affirmed their legal status and ability to work in Canada.

Because of years of survival work, Khalil had barely attended high school, to the point of missing an entire year, but with perseverance and support from YU staff, in June 2016, he crossed the stage and accepted his high school diploma, with Arlene cheering in the crowd.

“It was a hard journey,” says Khalil. “I often lost hope that I’d ever get my IDs or finish school and gave up a lot, but Arlene was consistent in helping me. She was always connecting me to the right people and forms and giving me the encouragement I needed.”

So what’s it like to be a proven legal immigrant and a Canadian high school graduate?

“It’s a dream come true,” he says. “I have a whole new world of possibility in front of me now and a new ability to take care of my family. Before, I had no hope, but now, I can look forward again.”



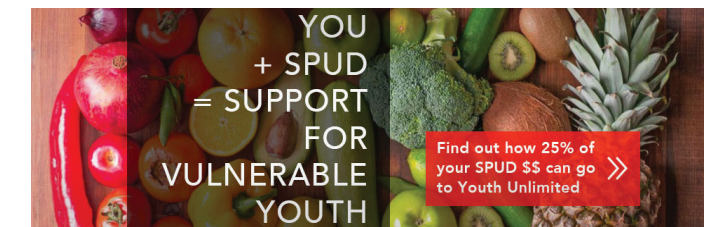
Khalil unwinds shooting pool.

## SPUD PRODUCE TEAMS UP WITH YOUTH UNLIMITED

Thanks to a new partnership, you can direct SPUD to donate 25% of the funds you spent to Youth Unlimited.

SPUD is a local company that delivers affordable, healthy and organic local produce straight to your home or office. They partner with local farmers, ranchers, fishermen, bakers and artisans.

To take advantage of this opportunity to help, please visit [www.spud.ca/fundraising](http://www.spud.ca/fundraising) and choose the organic produce box that you want to order and add it to your cart. At the checkout, be sure to enter the promo code FUNDRAISING and select YOUTH UNLIMITED from the drop-down menu. You will only have to manually select Youth Unlimited the first time. Note the 25% donation applies to items purchased off the fundraising page, not all items. Thank you for your support, and here’s to happy, healthy eating!



## CROSS CANADA TRAINING

From Greater Vancouver Youth Unlimited

**8** STUDENTS ENROLLED IN LIFETEAMS’ 1-YEAR INTENSIVE YOUTH WORK PROGRAM

**1200** CANADIANS RECEIVED SPECIALIZED YOUTH WORK TRAINING

**8000** YOUTH IMPACTED BY CAMP WORKERS TRAINED BY GVVU

**1000** YOUTH WORKERS RECEIVE MONTHLY TRAINING TOOLS



## A TRIFECTA OF AWESOME: THE YEAR OF THE MOBILE DROP-IN

When it comes to meeting youth where they're at, innovative drop-in centers have become a Youth Unlimited cornerstone. Across Greater Vancouver, specialized drop-in programs are run from an airplane hangar, a renovated mechanics shop and multiple retrofitted mobile RVs.

Like the youth we serve, RVs are finding new life and renewed purpose. They might still boast a cozy shag carpet and retro exterior lettering, but they have become a space of hospitality and refuge for teens. This past year, three mobile programs have been rejuvenated thanks to your generous support.

**NORTH SHORE:** Last fall, the YU team in North Vancouver adopted a 1982 Winnebago Brave as a youth hangout space outside a local high school. Students have come to expect the RV to be a space of hospitality, homemade cookies and where people care. For many North Shore youth, it's their first point of connection with YU.

**EAST VANCOUVER:** Across the Burrard Inlet, YU's Street Life team sets up their RV twice a week in East Vancouver to connect with street-entrenched youth. The RV is a space to hang out and enjoy a free meal thanks to Save-on-Meats sponsorship. But as Anna, a Street Lifer, explains, the RV is also a place where youth find emotional and physical refuge.

"It's fun," she says. "And there is food. And, well, you guys care. You actually get to know who we are. Most adults don't really take the time to do that."

"You care about us. You take us out and listen to us. You actually get to know who we are. Most adults don't really take the time to do that."

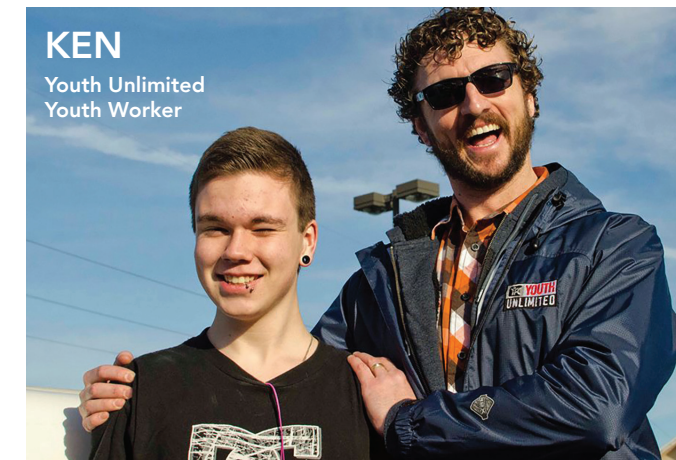
– Anna, 16

The future of Vancouver's Street Life's mobile program was perilous last spring when the RV's lease ran out, but a campaign to raise \$10,000 to buy-out the RV was sprung into action. Thanks to your deep generosity and Fraserway RV's generous matching grant, funds were raised to keep Street Life on the road.

**LANGLEY:** Further east, Langley's Street Life program recently acquired a trailer that's being retrofitted to transport everything needed to create a safe and enticing outdoor, drop-in space. Langley currently has a significant lack of youth-friendly hangout spaces and YU has set out to change that.

A fleet of 24 volunteers has been assembled and YU is partnering with local social service organizations to provide an engaging space where middle school youth can build positive relationships with role models in the neighbourhood.

The trailer is being retrofitted with sports equipment, a concession stand, big-screen TVs, and tents—all with the intent of creating a hospitable and safe space for youth to congregate and connect with youth workers. But the trailer goes beyond drop-in space creation. As the area director of YU in Langley, Danny Ferguson, affirms, "it's not the trailer that makes a difference but the relationships."



## WE'RE EXPANDING TO CHILLIWACK!

Chilliwack is a rapidly growing city of over 90,000 people populated by a remarkably high number of youth, given its size. One of Chilliwack's unique challenges is that it's proportion of street-entrenched and drug-using youth is significantly higher than in other areas. Local youth workers have observed that drug-use escalates much more quickly there, assumedly because of a comparative lack of supply. Alarmingly, this high-risk behaviour is trending younger.

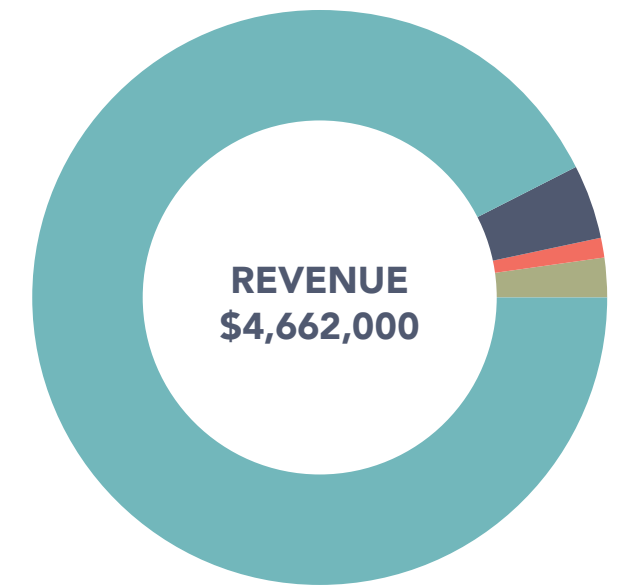
The Chilliwack community, however, has united beautifully in an effort to care for their kids. One of the most notable partnerships is the development of the Child and Youth Committee, which unites the full range of social service agencies serving vulnerable youth. Since a key to countering the prevalence of drug and street involvement is early intervention, this is where YU youth worker, Ken Neufeld, comes in.

Ken has been a field worker in Richmond and subsequently Abbotsford for the last 11 years. His mission is to help struggling teens realize that they are loved and are worthy of love. Chilliwack has a desperate need for youth workers like Ken, and as a result, multiples agencies have invited YU to expand into that city. In 2017, Ken will officially establish a YU presence in Chilliwack, working in partnership with social service agencies and narrowing his focus to middle school students. Stay tuned for more in 2017!

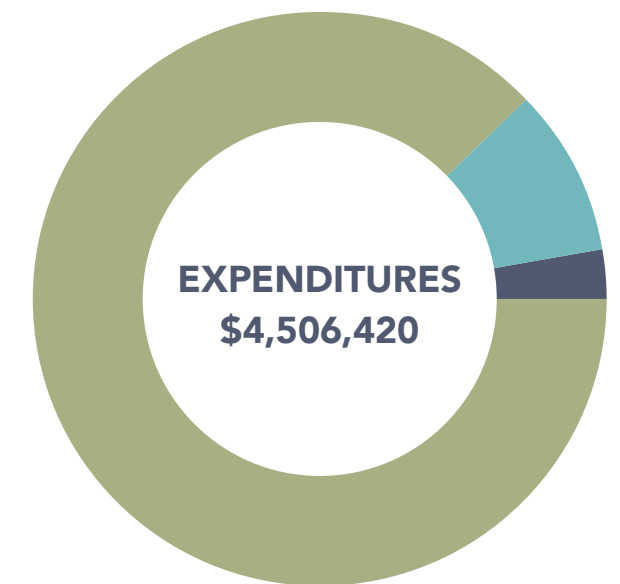


"You're the only person who makes an effort to see me."  
– Maria, 19

## FINANCIALS



■ DONATION INCOME:	\$4,324,300
■ PROGRAM REVENUE:	\$190,000
■ GRANTS:	\$54,400
■ OTHER*:	\$93,300



■ PROGRAMS:	\$3,961,570
■ ADMINISTRATION:	\$427,000
■ FUNDRAISING OR DONOR RELATIONS:	\$117,850

## ANXIETY DISSOLVED WITH LOVE AND CONNECTION

Youth Unlimited field worker, Tullia Mak, first met Coco five years ago when the teen was an anxious, lonely and sometimes volatile, grade nine ESL student in Richmond. Because of her high anxiety and social challenges, a counsellor suggested Coco participate in YU's after school clubs, in hopes these opportunities for personal connection would help her better adjust to school—and what a transformation!

In those five years, Coco stepped out of her shell and flourished. She involved herself in everything from helping lead the table tennis team to championship victory, to becoming an avid local and international volunteer. Today, her story is characterized by success and confidence rather than anxiety and frustration.

Tullia explains that relationship-building is essential for adolescents as they seek identity, a sense of self, and try to build a healthy future. "Kids like Coco need a relevant and consistent presence in life," explains Tullia. "Our walking alongside her showed her we are safe and we care about her."

Coco's growth also extended to the spiritual side of her life. Thanks to Tullia's involvement, Coco heard the Gospel in her mother tongue for the first time and was introduced to a Chinese Church, where she felt most at home. This year, she is taking a big step of baptism, publicly declaring her faith in Jesus.

Now a recent high school graduate, Coco has grown exponentially in so many areas of her life, and she's ready to give back. This winter, Coco returns to YU as a volunteer in the very Richmond school where her own road to healing began.

"Now that I've been found, I'm never going back." – Kevin, 25

### OUR MISSION

Youth Unlimited is a progressive Christian organization that meets vulnerable youth where they are and connects with them through activities, arts, sports, camps, drop-in centres, youth groups and a myriad of other programs that foster their mental, physical, social, spiritual and emotional well-being. We're the last stop for many vulnerable youth falling through the cracks in greater Vancouver.

We believe that together we can transform the world these kids live in—but we can't do it without you.



## MY HOUSE CELEBRATES ONE YEAR!

In September 2016, Mission Youth House (MY House) celebrated its one-year anniversary. While an old, and seemingly ordinary house, MY House is actually nothing short of extraordinary. On the one hand, it's a much-needed practical space for street-involved youth, but on the other it's set up like a home, and thus is a catalyst for new beginnings. When youth enter, they feel a sense of family—not an institution.

MY House's fiscal year has been nothing short of impressive—especially considering its size and location. Highlights include: 1,086 youth visits to MY House, 113 significant life-goal conversations, showers accessed 69 times and 18 youth have accessed medical care. Since its inception, MY House has served 1,600 meals, including a well-attended weekly family-style meal.

MY House is run by YU and seven partners. Today, YU manages the onsite operations and provides the bulk of the staffing.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

#### DONATE

We are extremely efficient with our use of funding, and a little bit can go a long way. Please consider supporting us financially.

#### VOLUNTEER

Many of our programs depend on volunteer support. Connect with us about getting involved!

#### PRAY

We desperately need your prayers, so please pray for us! Contact us to sign up for our monthly prayer letter.

### CONNECT TO YU

#### SOCIAL MEDIA

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#### NEWSLETTER

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