

YOUTH UNLIMITED

16/17

GREATER  
VANCOUVER

ANNUAL REPORT

STORIES OF COURAGE  
AND OVERCOMING





YOUTH  
UNLIMITED  
HAS BEEN  
SERVING  
YOUNG  
PEOPLE  
SINCE 1947

Remember the good ol' days when after a long Friday at work you would put on your sweat pants and head over to the local Blockbuster to rent a movie? The store would be full of people excited to check out the new releases with new stories waiting to be told. Then Netflix came along and choked out the once ubiquitous video giant. Netflix got the upper hand by offering an unending number of stories at the fingertips of our convenience-driven society.

Stories are like air; we can't live without them. When they are compelling, the potential exists for our lives to be changed. Interestingly, I have yet to find a compelling story that didn't include a character I could identify with—one facing a significant obstacle they needed to overcome and someone to guide them to safety. I am reminded of the words of Jesus from the book of John chapter 16.

"In this godless world, you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I've conquered the world." - Jesus

You won't find our Youth Unlimited stories on Netflix but that doesn't mean they don't exist. There are literally thousands of compelling stories to tell, stories shaped by the hand of God as his Spirit moves in and through partners like you, our staff and volunteers. These are stories of brokenness, hopelessness and pain, but they are also miraculous stories of healing and newfound hope.

Here are a few of those stories to celebrate, and to give you a taste of how much your prayers and financial investment helps vulnerable youth overcome the obstacles they face every day.

You, yes YOU, help rescue youth from drug overdoses and suicide attempts, pull teenagers out of gang life and the sex trade and YOU prevent youth from falling through the cracks into a death spiral of hopelessness and despair. You are doing it all through Youth Unlimited, and we can't thank you enough for making it possible for our team to walk alongside these young people as they begin to discover what it looks like to flourish in life.

If you are not a partner yet, we welcome you to join us by investing through prayer and by giving generously to this work. We cannot do this without you.

With deep gratitude,

Mark Koop  
Executive Director  
Youth Unlimited



## SAM ROWLAND: BRINGING HOPE AROUND THE GLOBE

Under the umbrella of Youth Unlimited, author, speaker and musician Sam Rowland takes his youth work to schools and prisons all around the world. This year alone, Sam travelled to Namibia, Hungary, India and Botswana where he was invited to bring the Gospel message to over 14,000 young people. The impact is significant, meeting a need for teaching and preaching. This year Sam delivered 58 presentations where 604 individuals publically indicated that they want to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

## HEALING AFTER UNTHINKABLE TRAGEDY

It was a typical November afternoon for youth worker Doug McKellan. He had just driven away from Abbotsford Senior Secondary when his phone blew up with texts and calls from parents wanting to know what was going on at the school.

Tragically, a fatal stabbing had taken place, ending the life of a wonderful, vibrant teen. The horrific incident was heroically contained from further disaster, thanks to the bravery of a teacher, but it could not undo the loss and devastation.

“Nothing can prepare you for this kind of trauma,” says Doug.

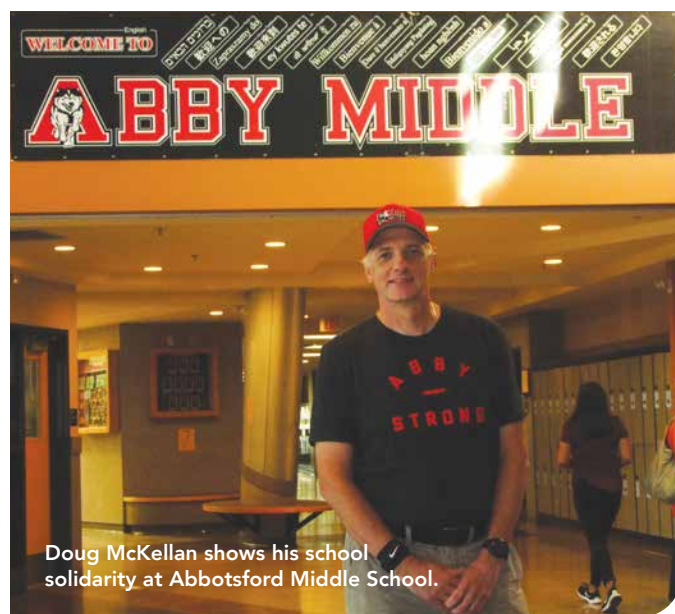
Youth Unlimited has been a part of the fabric of Abbotsford schools for decades, coming alongside vulnerable youth and bringing support physically, emotionally, socially, mentally and spiritually. When this senseless loss took place, the entire school community needed support. And while the YU team grieved alongside the schools, their training and role in the schools allowed them to offer a familiar and stable presence to a shaken community.

“Every day I would listen to whoever was experiencing anxiety or grief,” says Doug, remembering last November.

As time passed and school life returned to its routines, there was a deepened desire for mentorship.

In Doug’s case, there were many expressions of gratitude for his caring presence and more requests by teachers for him to meet with certain students on a regular basis. Like other YU staff, Doug significantly increased the number of students he walks alongside, offering support and comfort.

“Their safety bubble had burst,” explains Abbotsford youth worker Julia, also impacted by the tragedy. “It didn’t feel safe there. We don’t know why it happened, but it did. And we got to be agents of God’s love, supporting kids when they need it most.”



Doug McKellan shows his school solidarity at Abbotsford Middle School.

## ADDICTION AND RECOVERY AMIDST A FENTANYL CRISIS

“I was strapped in the ambulance, panicking. There were machines going off and my body felt numb. The paramedics weren’t telling me anything. I was pretty sure I was gonna die.”

After a week of partying, 23-year-old Scott Guitard had overdosed on alcohol and was being rushed to the hospital. He had entered gang life at 16, and by 19 he had more money than he knew what to do with. He had previously kicked a cocaine addiction, but the excessive drinking had taken a toll on his body.

In a moment of desperation in the ambulance, Scott prayed for the first time in a long time. God, please don’t let me die. I’ll do anything.

Miraculously, Scott’s life was saved, and he got the wake-up call that turned his life around. He became a Christian and extricated himself from gang life. That was 16 years ago. Today, he works at Youth Unlimited’s youth house in Mission (MY House), a safe space for vulnerable youth.

Recovery from addiction has never been easy, but since fentanyl hit the streets, even occasional drug use has become more deadly. In 2011 there were 292 overdose deaths in BC, only eight from fentanyl. Last year saw 935 overdoses and by the end of this year it’s expected to hit 1,700—the increases attributed to fentanyl.

Vulnerable YU youth are now exposed to more danger.



**“RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION HAS NEVER BEEN EASY, BUT SINCE FENTANYL HIT THE STREETS, EVEN OCCASIONAL DRUG USE HAS BECOME MORE DEADLY.”**

**In Surrey, youth worker Matt Bergen has witnessed fentanyl’s devastating effects first hand.**

“Jeff\* was this funny, odd-looking gangster kid,” says Matt of a youth he met at Burnaby Youth Custody where he mentors incarcerated youth. “You’re kind of surprised that he’s so engrained in street culture.”

Jeff was released and he wanted to turn his life around. He was in a stable relationship with his girlfriend of several years with whom he had a two-year-old son.

Late one night, Matt received a call from Jeff’s girlfriend. “Her voice was all over the place,” Matt recalls. “She told me that Jeff wasn’t all right—that he was dead.”

Matt beat the first responders to the home. He

stood with the bereaved girlfriend and Jeff's child as paramedics arrived.

"Teens need to hear that people care," continues Matt. "It changes someone's life when they hear someone say that they're a better person."

**Scott has seen this brutal pain, but he's also seen youth come out the other side. This year, five youth he works with entered recovery programs.**

When Scott first met Alex\* two years ago, he was guarded, but opened up when they connected over Alex's passion for computers.

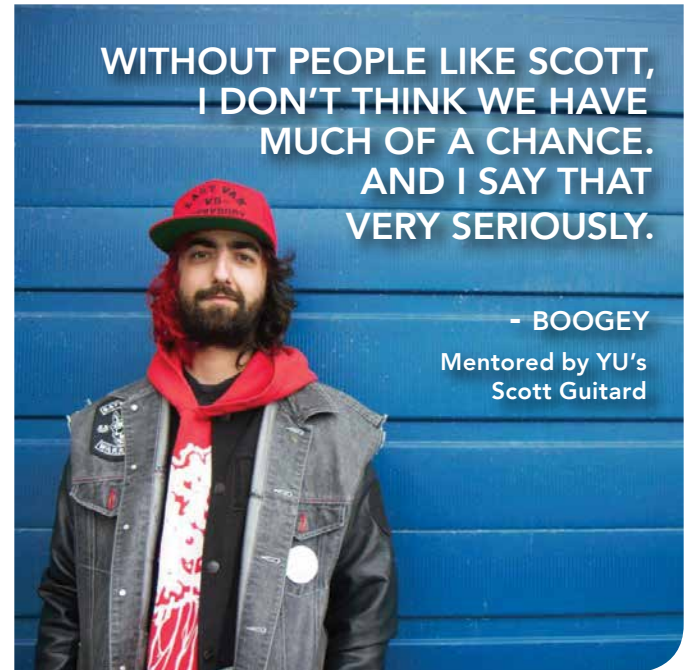
Both Alex and his girlfriend Julie\* were drug users. When Julie became pregnant, however, she became clean, turned to Scott for support, and was able to deliver a healthy baby.

It took Alex a year, however, to realize the impact his addiction was having on his family. With support from Scott and others, Alex entered treatment. Now, thanks to Youth Unlimited, Alex has someone in his life who understands what he's going through.

"I get why they use," says Scott. "When you know their story you understand why they'd want to numb themselves from the world. They need someone with them for the long haul."



**"GOD, PLEASE  
DON'T LET ME DIE.  
I'LL DO ANYTHING."**



**"I GET WHY THEY USE,"  
SAYS SCOTT... "WHEN YOU  
KNOW THEIR STORY YOU  
UNDERSTAND WHY..."**

**Jason Hardaway oversees the East Vancouver drop-in centre—a retrofitted RV—and is reaching kids at risk of similar deadly dangers.**

"A lot of the kids that come to Street Life are under the influence, typically weed," says Jason, "but it's a gateway to the harder drugs that can be laced with fentanyl." Jason says they hope to intervene as early as possible.

"These youth haven't been taught what a healthy outlet is," he says. "They are pushing the boundaries and no one is pushing back. It's up to us to be that positive influence and consistent support."

Fortunately, thanks to your generous support, youth workers like Scott, Matt and Jason are there for Greater Vancouver's most vulnerable youth, helping transform one life at a time.

\* Real names not used.

## THE BREAKFAST CLUB GRADUATES

High school was not easy for Riley\*. Academic and social barriers were high and graduation was not a given. While many of his struggles were daunting, there was one that had an obvious solution.

"I was hitting rough times at home and never had enough food for breakfast," he recalls. "When I heard about free breakfast from Youth Unlimited, I jumped for joy. They've been helping me ever since."

While missing breakfast is bad for anyone, YU youth worker Tim Gadd explains the impact on his youth.

"Growing up in an unstable home or coping with mental health issues makes the challenges of adolescence hard and school focus a challenge," he says. "Beginning the day without proper nutrition just exacerbates these issues. It's an uphill climb all day, every day."

**Youth Unlimited runs breakfast programs in five Maple Ridge schools, serving 31,200 morning meals a year.**

And while the food alone is a game-changer, the program is so much more than physical support.

"When we started our program, we quickly noticed that struggling students were sticking around," says Tim. Soon youth were arriving at school two hours early to meet with the YU team for breakfast. "As much as they need basic nourishment, they also need the emotional support and safety that we can provide."

Now with physical and emotional supports, youth are finding the focus and determination needed to overcome life's challenges. This year the Maple Ridge team celebrated Riley's grade 12 graduation, along with many other youths for whom, prior to the breakfast program, graduation with their peers looked unlikely.

"They found a positive community," says Tim, "and it's changing their future."

And for Riley, the love through provision, is tangible. "The idea of a warm meal—especially pancakes—waiting for me at school brings tears to my eyes."

*\*Not his real name; Riley prefers male pronouns.*



Young YU artists, Baz and Erica, at their very own art show.

## CONNECTION THROUGH ART IN THE DTES

This year Youth Unlimited's Creative Life program has been all about creating connection in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

This spring the team partnered with Foundry Mental Health, a resource for youth struggling with mental health and addictions in Vancouver. Together, the groups run weekly art workshops for youth struggling with mental illness.

"Foundry approached us for advice on starting an art program," says Charlotte Browning, Creative Life Director, "but we decided working together made more sense. That's the beautiful thing about Youth Unlimited; we're set up to serve other organizations in our community!"

Creative Life is also creating connections for their youth. This year, program participants Baz and Erica accomplished a major milestone and held their own art show. Through the DTES Small Arts Grant founded by the Vancouver Foundation, YU helped them coordinate their very own show, entitled, "Harmonized."

"Baz and Erica took ownership," says Charlotte, "they chose how to spend the money, they invited their friends, and they sold a lot of their art! They were truly empowered."

# YOUTH UNLIMITED

## 2016/17 Fiscal Year Impact

**23,189** YOUTH IN CONTACT WITH YU

**9** CITIES WITH DEDICATED TEAMS OF YU YOUTH WORKERS

 **46,997** MEALS SERVED

**57** FRONTLINE YOUTH WORKERS  

**6,156** YOUTH INVOLVED IN DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAMS

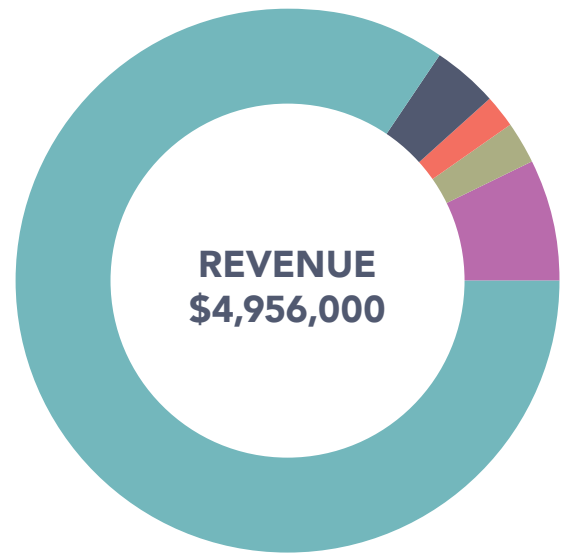
 **FIFTY THREE** YOUTH IN LEADER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS






**250+** YOUTH UNLIMITED VOLUNTEERS

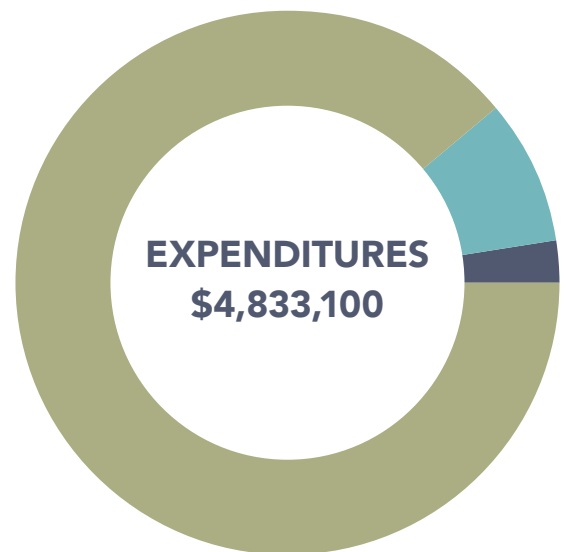
**7** INNOVATIVE YOUTH DROP-IN CENTRES (3 MOBILE, 4 STATIONARY)




**700** CAMP WORKERS TRAINED 

# FINANCIALS



	DONATION INCOME:	\$4,198,000
	PROGRAM REVENUE:	\$192,600
	GRANTS:	\$96,000
	GIFT IN KIND:	\$111,600
	OTHER:	\$357,800



	PROGRAMS:	\$4,307,900
	ADMINISTRATION:	\$415,000
	FUNDRAISING OR DONOR RELATIONS:	\$110,200

## RESTORING FAMILIES STARTS WITH COMMITTED CONNECTION

When Nini and her husband Don first moved to Surrey, the stay-at-home mom was looking for a way to give back. She soon found YU's Young Families program—whose mandate is to radically change lives and restore families—and she was sold.

One of the critical gaps Nini filled was as a driver to and from the weekly baking program. It was there she met Marissa, single mom to two-year-old Ben. Having grown up in a single parent home, Marissa's support was limited.

Through weekly rides, the women bonded and built a strong, mentoring relationship. Marissa enrolled in "Thrive," YU's intensive life skills program that exists to empower and support young moms.

Four years later, the women are closer than ever, and Nini and Don are now integral parts of Marissa's life, and grandparent figures to Ben.

"It has been a wonderful experience and it makes me appreciate just how amazing these young families are," says Nini, who brought Marissa and Ben on a family vacation at their cabin this summer. "We believe Marissa and Ben are a gift from the Lord for us!"

"We love seeing our families' circles widened," says Young Families Program Manager, Louisa He. "Our hearts were so touched to hear that Marissa's circle now includes two loving people who are committed to her family for the long run."

Today, Marissa is taking the torch passed by Nini and becoming a child care worker with the same program that helped change her life.

"Our hope for every family is that they would have another family walking alongside them," says Louisa. "Nini and Don have done just that."

### 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.



Marissa and Ben, third from the right.

## 2016/17 AWARDS + MILESTONES!

- Andrew Chong, North Shore Area Director, received an Awesome Ally Award at the 2017 Civic Youth Awards.
- The RCMP awarded Langley Area Director Danny Ferguson a commendation for coordination of the Onside Program and his ongoing youth work in the community.
- Eric Ens, YU's Ministry Operations Director, was inducted into the Volleyball BC Hall of Fame for his work with volleyball for youth in BC since 1989.
- Dedicated youth worker Lily Lee retired this June after 17 years of faithful ministry in Richmond.

### 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

 [GVYFCYouthUnlimited](#)

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 [youthunlimited\\_gvyu](#)

#### NEWSLETTER

Sign up for our newsletter by visiting [youthunlimited.com](#)

#### HEAD OFFICE

#115-12975 84th Avenue  
Surrey, BC, V3W 1B3  
Phone: (604) 590-3759