

YOUTH UNLIMITED

17/18

GREATER
VANCOUVER

ANNUAL REPORT

STORIES OF HEALING
AND RELATIONSHIPS



ACES: THE SCIENCE BEHIND CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND HOW TO HEAL

When Jessica was a child, she never knew what she would come home to. One day, she came home from school to see an ambulance parked in front of her home – her father had overdosed after a fight with his girlfriend. Her first thought after seeing this was, “how will my sister and I eat?” They had already gone hungry a few times that week, and the thought of doing so again was unbearable. Her desperate solution was to steal food from a grocery store, only to be beaten by her grandfather for doing so. Though social workers would check in on the sisters, they were never able to tell the truth of their situation. It was only when Jessica became pregnant at age 16 that she was able to leave her childhood home. Jessica, has an ACEs score of eight.

THE ACES CORRELATION DISCOVERY

This article explores the impact of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), and how the relational work of Youth Unlimited can help heal the brain and lessen the traumatic impact on youth.

In the 1980’s, Dr. Vincent Felitti, an M.D. working with patients suffering from obesity, came to the horrifying revelation that the majority of the 286 patients he interviewed had experienced childhood sexual abuse. This startling discovery led to the landmark Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study. At the core of the study is the ACEs Test. This test is a questionnaire designed to score an individual’s experience of childhood trauma. This test considers ten types of trauma which significantly affect one’s physical and mental health into adulthood. They include multiple forms of abuse, neglect, mental illness, incarceration and/or parental separation. Scores range from zero to ten.

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YU WAS DEDICATED TO REACHING THE YOUTH AND THEIR
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HIGHER SCORES, HIGHER RISK

According to the research done by Felitti and the Center for Disease Control, one's ACEs score has a strong, graded relationship to poor health and social and behavioral problems. The research revealed, for example, that an individual with an ACEs score of four, compared with an individual with a score of 0 is 700% more likely to develop alcoholism and 200% more likely to be diagnosed with cancer. While an individual with an ACEs score of six and above has 3000% greater likelihood of attempting suicide.

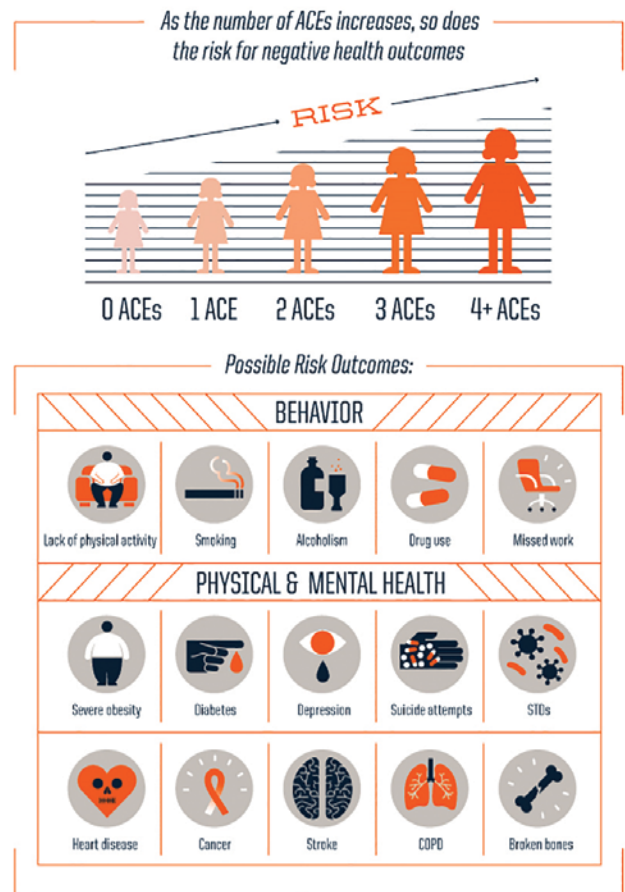
While the results of the research were surprising, what was even more remarkable was the prevalence of high ACEs scores across socioeconomic lines. The majority of those interviewed in preliminary research were middle-class, white, and from seemingly stable households. Through the ACEs research, experts see an epidemic connection between the fentanyl crisis, obesity, depression, and many other societal ills. A connection, which converges in those traumatic events of childhood, which actually alter the neural structure of the brain.



HEALING BRAINS WITH COMPASSIONATE RELATIONSHIPS

Youth Unlimited, along with Faulkner and Felitti, understands how deeply our childhood experiences affect us. YU had been dedicating its efforts to reach out to the youth and their families most at risk for developing high ACEs scores, far before they even knew the science behind it. But what they did know was God's Word regarding reaching the vulnerable. By offering kind, compassionate relationships and safe

WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?



rwjf.org/vulnerablepopulations

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

spaces, individuals who have experienced trauma can find respite and develop resilience. Resilience is the term used by psychologists to describe the ability to deal with and even overcome one's past trauma and to break the cycle of pain, which spreads through generations.

With YU, every initiative, every event, every relationship attempts to build resilience in the youth we serve through unconditional love and understanding. Just as negative traumatic events may set the course for one's life, positive and encouraging events in one's childhood can help build the solid foundation for a strong, healthy, and thriving adult. Thank you for supporting Youth Unlimited as we support our community through caring relationships, safe spaces and offering God's unconditional love.



*"He's going to be okay."
"He's got many caring adults surrounding him
who are like brothers and sisters."*

These words of comfort began to squash the growing fear I felt for *Evan who just lost his identical twin brother in a fatal head-on collision this past June.

My journey with Evan and his brother *Trevor goes back to 2007. They were lively 13-year-old kids who started coming to one of our youth programs. This began a journey that led to one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make. One day the boys disclosed information that caused us great concern and we needed to contact Child and Family Services. It was a painful day when the boys and their sister were placed into foster care. There was a lot of confusion and anger in Trevor and Evan, but they always had each other and never stopped accepting the unconditional love of our youth workers and volunteers. I've witnessed other youth go through similar challenges but end up dead or in jail. Not Trevor and Evan; they continued to grow and lean into the community of faith around them. They were indeed surrounded by many brothers and sisters who loved them, and so, when Trevor passed away, Evan had a huge family in his corner. "He's going to be okay."

"Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law." -Galatians 6:2

Christ's law is straightforward. Love God and love others. Vulnerable youth who have had adverse childhood experiences need to be surrounded by loving, caring adults. It's how they will survive and even thrive as they experience healing of their hearts and minds. At Youth Unlimited, we have always known this. It is why we create places of connection and belonging for youth to experience the love of God through our staff and volunteers.

It has been an amazing year with many stories to tell of young people's heart and minds being healed, of young people in the process of being made whole. For this, we thank God, who called us to this important work. We also thank you! Thank you for praying and thank you for giving so generously. You have made it possible for us to be present in the lives of thousands of youth who need to know we love them and will stand by them through whatever challenges come their way.

You make it happen! Please continue to stand with us as we empower young people to live life to the full.

With deep gratitude,

Mark Koop
Executive Director
Youth Unlimited

(*Not their real names)

YOUTH
UNLIMITED
HAS BEEN
SERVING
YOUNG
PEOPLE
SINCE 1947

TRANSFORMED BY COMMUNITY AND FRIENDSHIP

Abbotsford's Gurpreet Virk is not the same timid girl who walked through the doors of Youth Unlimited Abbotsford's after school program at the beginning of middle school.

"I used to be really shy," she explains. "Now I'm open and excited to try new things." At YU she discovered community and friendship unlike anything she had ever seen before. "YU made a really big difference in my life," she says.

Since Gurpreet's father passed away, life had been challenging for Gurpreet, her mom and two siblings — but Gurpreet hasn't had to journey alone. She speaks of gratitude for the support received in particular from YU's Greg Sawatzky and Dave Wiebe, positive male role models in her life when she needed it most. "I admire Greg and Dave for being there when I've needed them," she says.

Their consistent support has built trust among her family. "My mom lets me go and have adventures if it's with YU," says Gurpreet. With a wider circle of adults that Gurpreet's mom can trust, Gurpreet's world has opened up. And so has her outlook.

Now in grade 10, Gurpreet has discovered a self-confidence and courage that pushes her to want to help others. "If you're with people that are brave and courageous, you wanna do that too, right?" she says.



FIFTEEN YEARS OF CITYFEST

This year, Youth Unlimited celebrated the 15th annual CityFEST, a youth showcase with more than 6,000 attendees. Local youth perform or compete in music, dance, skateboarding, longboarding, visual arts, and film. CityFEST exists through a partnership between the City of North Vancouver, community groups, local businesses, and Youth Unlimited. Co-created by YU Executive Director Mark Koop as a BBQ and skateboard competition, CityFEST has grown into the biggest Youth Week event in the Lower Mainland and is the largest youth festival in BC. CityFEST is a shining example of what can happen when diverse groups partner.

A YOUTH UNLIMITED ALUMNI, 40 YEARS LATER

From the outside you couldn't tell that JJ Edwards has been through some rough teen years. At 13 he left home, fleeing an abusive stepdad and by 15 he was in a group home. It was there, however, that he encountered an organization that would change the trajectory of his life: Youth Unlimited (at the time known as YFC).

"They made us feel comfortable and offered us stuff that we enjoyed," says JJ who was a teen in the 80s. "I wasn't a perfect teenager, but it gave me an outlet and somewhere to go."

The experiences and friends JJ collected at YU made his teen years memorable and positively formative. Forty years later, JJ maintains some of those relationships to this day. JJ particularly remembers fondly one of his leaders, Barry McLeod, a youth worker still serving at YU today, and last year's Citizen of the Year in Mission. Interestingly, it was JJ and his friends who predicted Barry would marry his wife Sue— far before they ever knew!

Now in his 50s, JJ is married with four kids and loves his job as a community youth worker. When he remembers his four years with YU, he remembers the impact that the YU youth workers made in his life. "This is why I do what I do — it's because of the people like Barry and Sue who made a difference in my life."



NEW YOUTH COFFEE HOUSE

When YU youth workers noticed a growing number of students who didn't want to go home after school, they decided to provide a positive place for these students to gather. Thus began the Coffee House initiative in Maple Ridge, launched last year.

Many of these teens are also part of the morning breakfast clubs, so they feel at home hanging out after school. As youth worker Maureen Floris says, "We've built trust with them over the years. They recognize our faces, feel our encouragement and see our smiles. They know they can talk to us without judgment." Teens want to open up, but most can only do so once they know they are safe and invested in—which is the heartbeat of YU.



YOUTH UNLIMITED

2017/18 Fiscal Year Impact

19,023 YOUTH IN CONTACT WITH YU

9 CITIES WITH DEDICATED TEAMS OF YU YOUTH WORKERS

 **27,972** MEALS SERVED

57 FRONTLINE YOUTH WORKERS  

2,207 YOUTH INVOLVED IN DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAMS

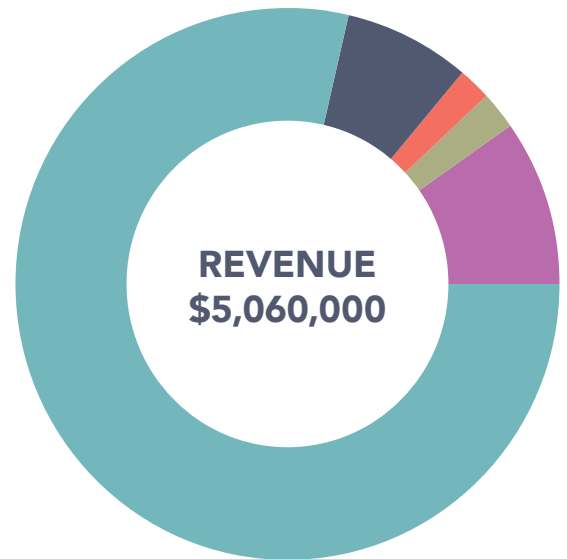
ONE HUNDRED FORTY THREE YOUTH IN LEADER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS 






250 + YOUTH UNLIMITED VOLUNTEERS

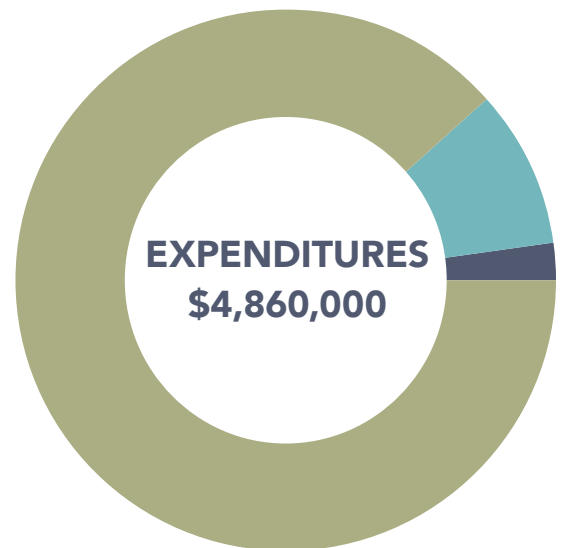
7 INNOVATIVE YOUTH DROP-IN CENTRES (3 MOBILE, 4 STATIONARY)




2,200 PARTICIPANTS IN TRAINING SEMINARS

FINANCIALS



	DONATION INCOME:	\$3,991,000
	PROGRAM REVENUE:	\$366,640
	GRANTS:	\$105,000
	GIFT IN KIND:	\$115,300
	OTHER:	\$482,060



	PROGRAMS:	\$4,302,000
	ADMINISTRATION:	\$450,000
	FUNDRAISING OR DONOR RELATIONS:	\$108,000

NEMIAH VALLEY

In the remote reaches of British Columbia’s Nemiah Valley, sits the Indigenous community of Xeni Gwet’in people. Iona Snair, Lifeteams co-founder, describes the Nemiah Valley as “one of only a few places in North America where wild horses run free.” For the last 15 years, young adults from Lifeteams, Youth Unlimited’s youth worker training program, have been serving in that community.

Trips to the Nemiah Valley started four years into Lifeteams’ existence, but had been prayed over since the beginning. In training young adults to reach vulnerable youth, Iona and Rob — Lifeteams co-founder and Iona’s husband — felt a burden to teach their students how to reach one of the most at-risk youth populations in Canada: Indigenous youth. Sixteen years ago, when an Indigenous student from the Nemiah Valley enrolled in Lifeteams, it was the perfect opportunity to learn from Indigenous people about themselves.

Thanks to this young youth worker who forged the partnership, every year Lifeteams students pile into a van and travel ten hours to a place where houses are powered by generators and where there is no main street. They come to mutually serve, learn and offer support — a radical, and at first precarious, partnership considering the historical animosity lingering among white and Indigenous ancestors.

A few years ago, just prior to Lifeteam’s arrival day, one of the Nemiah Valley youth took their own life and rocked the community. When Rob inquired whether they would still be welcome, he was told that not only were they welcome, but that the wake had been put on hold until Lifeteams arrived, so they could support the community’s hurting young people.

Iona calls Lifeteams’ work in the Nemiah Valley “a ministry of reconciliation between people. Reconciliation is not a strategy; it’s a change of direction, a change of the way we live.”

It is also a commitment. The Chief of the community said after their third year visiting: “You came back! A lot of people come once, some come twice, but no one keeps coming back.” But Lifeteams has returned and become a beacon of hope, light and support.

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.



2017/18 AWARDS + MILESTONES!

- Youth worker Barry Mcleod was named Mission’s 2018 Citizen of the Year
- Richmond Area Director Tombert Chen was awarded Richmond’s 2018 U-ROC award
- Dedicated youth worker and counsellor Dale Peters retired after 35 years of ministry in Abbotsford
- Youth Unlimited was named as a finalist for Non-Profit Organization of the Year by the Maple Ridge Chamber of Commerce
- North Shore youth workers Allie Parry and Avere Creighton received Awesome Ally Awards at the 2018 Civic Youth Awards

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

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

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