



# ANNUAL REPORT

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2023 EDITION



"Youth Central has provided me with opportunities not only to make change in my community but also to develop individual skills for success. I especially appreciate the flexibility the program provides me with; I get to choose where to dedicate my time from the huge variety ... projects that all address a variety of important topics. The program has also provided me with valuable resources, news, and opportunities that support not only me but also all of their youth volunteers to become capable, well-rounded, and independent leaders."  
-Youth Volunteer



# ABOUT US

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## **Mission Statement:**

Empowering youth to find and build their communities.

## **Vision Statement:**

All youth participate in shaping a vibrant community.

## **About Youth Central:**

Youth matter and they want to make a difference. Youth Central is a youth-led charity with a mission to empower youth to find and build their communities. Through our different programs, we offer hundreds of group-based volunteer and leadership opportunities to youth ages 12-18 in Calgary. For over 31 years, we have known the value of youth and we have helped them make an impact. Becoming a volunteer with Youth Central is a proven way for youth to be better connected to their communities and gain valuable skills. Encouraging youth to participate in their communities now builds resilience later.

## **Values:**

- We believe that all youth are awesome!
- We honour the power of the youth voice and the importance of youth in our society.
- We value a community in which all youth are respected and encouraged to be active citizens.
- We value the diversity, skills, creativity and talents of our volunteers, participants, and staff.
- We value community partnerships that align with our vision and mission.



## **PROGRAMS**

- Calgary Cinderella Project
- Calgary Youth Foundation
- Mayor's Youth Council
- Outreach
- Youth Are Awesome
- Youth of Distinction Awards
- Youth Volunteer Corps
- Youth Volunteer Corps in Schools

# MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

As an organization dedicated to empowering youth through community building, Youth Central continually strives to understand and meet participants' needs. In 2023, the board and staff flexed in new and measured ways.

In 2023, Youth Central employees continued to deliver on the strategic plan and resource their programs. New partnerships were explored, new funding was garnered all in the spirit of reducing the conscious and unconscious barriers to youth participation. Congratulations to Executive Director Lisa Kindree and her team for exploring ways to engage youth and the broader community.

When it came to the board's effectiveness, the board aligned our work more closely to Youth Central's strategic pillars while maintaining good governance. We introduced a Diversity Inclusion and Equity project committee as our commitment to integrating the tenets of a representative organization at the board level. We evolved our fundraising and communications committees into an Advancement Committee with a focus on organizational sustainability. And lastly, we formalized an Executive Committee which fosters board development.

All this while continuing to operate the foundational aspects of our Governance and Nominations and Finance and Risk committees.

The board continued to ebb and flow its community representation with the movement of its board directors. This past year we wished Mathew Burpee and Matthew Grant all the best as they stepped down from the board after 11 and 8 years of contribution respectively. Their imprints on Youth Central's board effectiveness are numerous and significant with both having served on the Executive as Treasurer, Vice Chair and/or Chair. On behalf of Youth Central, thank you for your leadership and service to empowering youth.

Given the high demand for resources by the nonprofit sector, we continue to be grateful for renewed and new financial support in the form of individual, foundation, corporate sponsors and funding from all three levels of government. Your belief in Youth Central's vision and mission results in life-long impact to people, their communities, and our society in general. Thank you for helping us make an impact.

Julianne Rohel  
Board Chair

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS (as of October 31, 2023)

Chair: Julianne Rohel  
Vice Chair: Sarah Pervez  
Treasurer: Yisha Pang  
Secretary: Bryce Kapsha

Directors:  
Lana Bentley, Ranita Charania, Michael Doerksen,  
Derek Fraser, Jason Kraatz, Henry Su



# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year, Youth Central celebrated 31 years of serving local youth. We engage hundreds of young people every year and have become the leading agency for youth and leadership opportunities in Calgary. In a landscape where volunteer shortages afflict many charities, at Youth Central, we continue to see growth in the number of youth who want to give back and support their community. We know Youth Central is providing much-needed volunteer support to many organizations.

We are grateful for the rising number of young volunteers who are joining our programs, and we appreciate the generous support of our donors who have helped us meet the growing demand this past year. We thank you for recognizing the power of volunteerism and the importance of youth involvement. Your support ensures that our programs remain free and accessible to all youth while maintaining the highest standards of quality and impact.

We are committed to connecting our volunteers with the Calgary community and being a trusted resource. I'd like to extend our gratitude to our amazing community partners whose support has made a lasting impact on our mission.

Your dedication and collaborative spirit have helped drive positive change in our community and with our youth. Together, we are empowering youth and uplifting those in need. Thank you for being an essential part of our vision of creating a more vibrant community.

The dedication of our staff, Board of Directors, and unwavering supporters is unparalleled. Your collective contributions immensely aid our organization's success year after year. We couldn't achieve our mission of empowering youth to find and build their communities without each and every one of you.

The growing number of youth enthusiastically stepping forward to support their community speaks volumes about the enduring power of volunteerism. The true value we deliver at Youth Central goes beyond our volunteer initiatives; it lies in the connections we create. As we reflect on the past and look to the future, it's clear that the strength of our connections is what will continue to propel us forward, creating a ripple effect of positive change within youth and throughout the Calgary community.

Lisa Kindree  
Executive Director

## YOUTH CENTRAL TEAM (as of October 31, 2023)

Executive Director: Lisa Kindree

### Full Time Staff:

Ros Doi, Sylvia-Galica Casuncad, Michelle Hodgins, Jen Saj, Peony Wong

### Part-Time Staff:

Alexia Hu, Ali Hussain, Anwar Subhani, Calla Ha, Cerena Bond, Dana Desamparado, Donna Patolot, Fathima Chappangathil, Gaby Nunez, Jesse Peters, Melanie Sing, Qurat Ul Ain Khalid, Sophie Wu

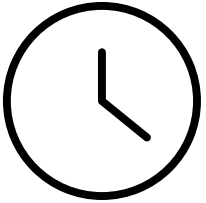
# OUR IMPACT



**755**  
YVC volunteer  
projects



**2,179**  
youth engaged in  
Youth Central programming



**23,539**  
hours contributed  
through Youth Central  
programs



**100%**  
of youth on leadership  
committees felt their voice  
was heard



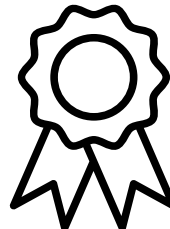
**96%**  
of youth on a leadership  
committee felt  
empowered



**89**  
charities and non profit  
organizations benefitted from  
YVC volunteers



**100%**  
of youth in our Outreach  
program felt their opinion  
mattered, compared to 83%  
at the start of the program



**36**  
youth volunteered more than  
100 hours in the past year

## TESTIMONIALS

“My anxiety no longer runs my life. I’ve gained self confidence because of my friendships, connections and organizing events.”  
- Outreach Program Youth Participant

“As a guardian, I know the importance of giving back to the community which is why I was ecstatic when my goddaughter wanted to volunteer in the community. In a short span of time with Youth Central, she's made a big difference and I have watched her grow personally and professionally. She has met other like minded youth through this organization. Importantly, she has learned the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion by working with people from different walks of life.”  
- Godparent of a Youth Central Volunteer



# HIGHLIGHTS



## IGNITING YOUTH IMPACT AND SKILLS

The Youth Volunteer Corps continues to be the flagship program at Youth Central, providing a platform for youth to actively engage in volunteerism. Maybe it's gaining access to hundreds of volunteer projects. Maybe it's the guidance provided by dedicated staff. Maybe it's about finding a cause. Maybe it's just about connecting. Whatever their why is, we know that volunteering with us is a proven way to develop vital skills and youth are coming to us in droves!

755 different volunteer projects, 89 dynamic partnerships, and 22,138 total volunteer hours given. These accomplishments reflect the growing impact of YVC. By nurturing connections, encouraging community engagement, and cultivating skill development, we are proud to shape a vibrant community.

## EMPOWERING YOUTH PHILANTHROPY

In the past year, the Calgary Youth Foundation successfully raised over \$12,000 to support their distinctive youth philanthropy program. A team of 11 dedicated volunteers, all between the ages of 12 and 18, collaborated to craft and deliver a compelling presentation that inspired many people to contribute. The project required teamwork, collaboration, and unwavering dedication. Their efforts resulted in the highest funds raised for the program in a decade, and built lasting confidence. The volunteers honed their presentation and communication skills while forming strong bonds through shared experiences. This achievement not only provided crucial financial support but also left a lasting impact on the personal and professional growth of the young volunteers.



## YOUTH SPEARHEAD PERIOD EQUITY

Nearly 80 young artists participated in the Free. Period. Initiative Art Contest, which was organized by the Mayor's Youth Council at Youth Central. MYC is a group of volunteers who collaborate with the city's mayor to provide insight and amplify youth voices while addressing local issues. Last year they marked a significant stride in period equity. By inviting young artists to design dispensers for free period products, MYC enhanced both the inclusivity and visibility of the initiative. The winners, Jasmine, Maya, and Alice, showcased diversity, support, and empowerment in their artwork. Thanks to the generous support of the Shoppers Foundation for Women's Health, the initiative is now providing free period products at all 21 Calgary Public Library locations.

# STORIES OF US

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The **Outreach** program currently works with four Discovering Choices Outreach high schools to develop and facilitate a youth council. With the help of our Outreach Coordinator, youth council members volunteer and facilitate fundraisers for community organizations. Janine Rudy is a recently retired Discovering Choices staff who supported the Bowness Outreach High School Youth Council.



The Youth Council program is designed for students to come as they are. There is no skill requirement, it is not based on academics, they don't need to be leaders or be creative. They need only show up as their authentic selves with a desire to

be a part of something. Projects are directed by the students, so they develop organizational, team building, listening and leadership skills.

Youth Council allows students to be a part of creating school community and get recognized for their efforts. Through community projects, students volunteer with other community agencies, learning about local and global issues. Being involved in Youth Council has been such a valuable and rewarding experience for not only the students, but for me too. It was a chance to get to know students, where I really learned who they were and could also support them on many different levels. I was constantly amazed by their creativity, insightfulness, their willingness to face some fears (especially when they had to speak in front of others) and their desire to give back. From September to June, it was amazing to see students' personal growth, some became more confident, some became great advocates for themselves and their peers, some attended school more, some developed new friendships, some had new goals and aspirations for their lives.

I retired last year, and it was very difficult to let go of the program. I have many fond memories from the 10 years that I was a part of Youth Council. I have seen so many lives changed, and I can honestly say that this program was an important part of that." - Janine Rudy



"Youth Council provides a voice for many students who never felt they had a voice, especially in school, or that felt what they said never really mattered, but at Youth Council they have a sense of belonging and they are heard."

# STORIES OF US

The **Calgary Cinderella Project** celebrates aspiring graduates as we fit them with formal attire including dresses and accessories to attend their high school graduation ceremonies. Since 2006, this program has discreetly enabled students in need to graduate with pride and confidence with their peers. With their permission, we are thrilled to share the story of one of the graduates who received a dress in 2023.



My experience at the Calgary Cinderella Project was very exciting and made me feel like a princess. I got to try on as many dresses as I wanted and was complemented by not only the adult volunteer helping me, but also the other

volunteers! It was a very open and welcoming space. I knew I would be getting a dress, but I had no idea I would also be getting a tiara, scarf, purse and jewelry. This meant that I was able to express myself through all of my choices of accessories, and really make the entire outfit my own.

I would absolutely recommend this to other students! It's an empowering experience to be celebrated in this way. It was so easy to sign up and on the day of, it was very welcoming and reassuring to walk through the whole process. Everything was truly amazing. The volunteers were awesome and made me feel so comfortable." - Cinderella Project Graduate

“Having a dress motivated me to complete one of the most difficult feats of my life - finishing high school. I loved being able to dress up for my grad ceremony. I felt more beautiful than I ever have before.”



# STORIES OF US

The **Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC)** engages youth in team-based service experiences that build life and work skills while inspiring a lifetime ethic of service. Youth Central's YVC sends groups of youth to 89 non-profit organizations, including Bethany Care Society sites. At Bethany Calgary, YVC volunteers help with recreation nights by setting up board games, transporting residents in wheelchairs to the recreation area and interacting with residents. Suzanne Eckstadt is the Coordinator of Volunteer Services at Bethany Calgary.



Youth Central's Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC) program became involved at the Bethany Calgary site where I work 11 years ago. YVC volunteers contributed more than 683 hours in 2023.

There are many benefits to having YVC volunteers support our organization! Residents can participate in activities more easily when they have extra people to help. Youth volunteers are special because they add an intergenerational dynamic to the volunteering interaction which enhances the impact for residents and volunteers. I always appreciate having YVC volunteers onsite because I know we are getting a responsible leader and an eager group of young people that are interested in being involved with their community. It is exciting to see youth who have made the choice to serve others.

We all benefit from having the energy and vitality of young people interacting with residents, as well as each other. There are many smiles and laughter along with a general feeling of fun. I have had youth who have registered as volunteers with Bethany Care Society individually once they were old enough, so they could continue helping on their own. I genuinely feel that the experiences these young people have build confidence, communication and leadership skills, and foster teamwork.

It is inspiring to see 12 or 13 years olds already have such awareness of the world around them, and making it a priority to get involved. These young people represent the next generation of the workforce that will impact all of our lives for a long time. Volunteering has great benefits and is a potentially life-changing experience available to everyone, which is evidenced by Youth Central's YVC program." - Suzanne Eckstadt



"This is an opportunity to impact youth and their experiences and outcomes, just as much as reaping the benefits for your project."

# WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

## \$50,000+



John Bowlen Legacy  
Flow Through Fund 1  
at Calgary Foundation



## \$25,000 - \$49,000



## \$10,000 - \$24,999

Canada Life; Enbridge Inc.; Gibson Energy; Home Depot Canada Foundation;  
Jessalyn Rohs and Michael Stensby; Birdies for Kids, presented by AltaLink;  
TELUS; Youth Volunteer Corps

## \$5,000 - \$9,999

Kinette Club of Calgary, Penny Hume, Sentinel Storage, SMART Technologies

## \$1,000 - \$4,999

Anonymous, Bridal Expo YYC Inc., C&E LLP Chartered Professional Accountants, Calgary Catholic School District, Calvert Home Mortgage Investment Corporation, ConocoPhillips Canada, Government of Canada – Canada Summer Jobs, Harry & Martha Cohen Foundation, Hopewell, Hunter Family Foundation, iA Special Markets, Joanne Cuthbertson, Koeller Charitable Giving Fund at Calgary Foundation, Lisa Kindree, Matco Financial Inc., Matt Grant, RBC Foundation, Rotary Club of Calgary East, Sanjel Energy Services Inc., Stephen Cleaners, Suede Energy Ltd., TD Bank Group, Usman Tahir Jutt, ZS2 Technologies

**VIEW OUR AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**





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