

ADVOCATE

DONOR & VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

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We called, Calgary Co-op answered

Last year, when the United Nations deemed 2012 the International Year of the Co-operative, using the tag line “Co-operative Enterprises Build a Better World,” they might as well have been talking about Calgary Co-op directly.

Time and again, we at the YWCA of Calgary are overwhelmed by the generous spirit of Calgarians and the local business community. In particular, Calgary Co-op stands out this summer as a tremendous friend to the YWCA.

“Calgary Co-op’s community investment strategy is to support charities that benefit children and families,” shares Laura Babin, Director, Co-op Community Foundation. “When we learned that the YWCA was in need of provisions for women and children evacuated during the flood, there was no question that we would find a way to help.”

And help is exactly what they did. Over the course of two weeks, Calgary Co-op made certain that the

women and children of the YWCA, could go to sleep without the worry of where their next meal would come from; a worry that many of them are all too familiar with.

“As the waters were rising, and we were evacuating, concern for community practically defined the Calgary Co-op,” says Sue Tomney, CEO of the YWCA. “We called, they answered and within hours we had convenient access to quality nutrition for our women and children. I can’t tell you what a relief it was. Staff are still talking about the amazing customer service they received when ‘shopping’ for the food and provisions for our evacuees.”

In 2012 the YWCA provided support to more than 3,000 children.

Calgary Co-op believes that children should be valued, nurtured and given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Like the YWCA, Calgary Co-op’s roots run deep in the heart of Calgary communities, acting as a hub for families and individuals, and this summer we were truly grateful to be part of that connectivity.

From the bottom of our hearts, and for all that you do—thank you Calgary Co-op!



Best laid plans: a message from the CEO



The YWCA of Calgary's resilience has been tested in recent months, along with many other Calgarians, dealing with evacuation, damage and recovery from the flood. On a positive note, these challenges have provided many opportunities to live the mission and vision of the YWCA.

In the wake of devastation, I was inspired by the phrase "best laid plans." The day prior to the evacuation of both the YWCA locations, we celebrated a year of tremendous accomplishments. On June 18 the YWCA held an internal AGM, where we recognized the exceptional work of our staff, shared highlights of the past year and poked fun at ourselves with a satirical video.

On June 19 the 102nd YWCA Annual General Meeting was held, electing a new slate of Board of Directors and acknowledging the support of our community partners. Little did we know that 24 hours

later the landscape would change significantly. Calgary was thrown into turmoil and many found themselves struggling with homelessness and isolation similar to what the women the YWCA serves face every day.

There were many lessons learned during the next two weeks. I witnessed the incredible compassion and empathy that surrounds our work with vulnerable women and children. I was moved by the blatant display of "service above self" as I watched our team do whatever it took to ensure the safety of our families. June 20 also reminded me that change is constant and our ability to deliver on our vision will always be a combination of planning and of adapting to the realities of the current environment.

This time has also reminded me of the depth of compassion and philanthropy that exists within Calgary. Immediately following the flood, YWCA staff rushed to organize donation drives for clothing, hygiene products, food and cash. The response was extraordinary.

Impact from this crisis will continue for some time. Women and children who were vulnerable before the flood will become more so in the weeks and months that follow. A crisis often increases the need for supports related to family violence, mental health and affordable housing. The women and children the YWCA supported prior to the flood are in even greater need and those who were 'getting by' may soon be

finding their way to our doors.

Now that repairs on our downtown facility have been completed, the YWCA is settling into the 'new normal'. We continue to fundraise for the dollars needed to provide services through fundraising events and campaigns. Our plan for a new facility to house those services will continue as well. The new normal for the YWCA sadly included the permanent closure of Fitness on 5th. As a result of the previously-made decision to ensure alignment with our vision of serving vulnerable women to thrive and the extensive impact of the flood, we made the choice to not re-open the facilities at the end of August. Wellness will remain a focus for the YWCA as we further explore ways to help women heal, grow and live healthy lives.

This newsletter is just one way I am able to connect with the many donors, partners, volunteers and individuals who are engaged with the YWCA. It is an honour to share with you the amazing things that happen in and around the organization; mostly done by people just like you. Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Tomney". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sue Tomney
Chief Executive Officer
YWCA of Calgary

COMPASS: helping families find their way

*“I’d really like to thank the COMPASS Program and Melanie for coming to our rescue when we really didn’t know what to do or how to help our child. I know how to de-escalate situations that once would have turned into explosions. It’s given us a model to go back to when we get off track. It’s always easy to try something new but it’s hard to stay on track. I use the information Melanie has given me and refer back to it anytime I need some inspiration or guidance. I’ve learned a lot of great strategies over the past year.” -*Lisa, parent*

YWCA of Calgary COMPASS Family Support Worker, Melanie, met weekly with Lisa, a parent who was struggling with her 10 year old child’s behaviour. “I get excited with every new file that I open,” says Melanie. “It’s a new chance to create positive change.”

COMPASS (Community, Parent and School Support) is an in-home parenting education and support program that works with families whose children 0-12 years of age are struggling with behavioural, emotional and social challenges. The Family Support Workers also connect families with appropriate community resources that meet their needs. These families are referred to the program by other professionals in the community.

Melanie started with providing the parents with strategies and tools



to help their child, *Justin, regulate his emotions appropriately. The family for the first time started to connect and build positive relationships with one and another. They were now able to look forward to outings together.

Melanie also worked with Justin to teach him coping strategies to deal with his strong emotional reactions. The first step was to create a quiet space where he could read a book, listen to music, and/or draw to calm himself down. This quiet time benefitted the parents as well, permitting them to gain their composure. Once everyone was calm, they could sit down together, talk and come up a solution together.

“Now we work on teachable moments, rather than lecturing in the moment,” says Lisa.

“Parents are usually so quick to want to change their child’s negative behavior in the moment when it is much more effective to let everyone calm down, and connect before correct,” says Melanie.

Melanie relays a profound moment for the family when Lisa told her that she witnessed other chil-

dren acting up and the mother yelling at her children anxiously.

Lisa realized in that moment that just a few months earlier she would’ve handled the situation exactly the same way but now she knew what she would do differently.

“Becoming the parent that you want to be does not happen overnight,” says Melanie. “It happens through information, support, research and practice. She encourages parents with the following message, “every night assess what you did well that day and give some thought to what you need to work on for tomorrow to continue on the positive path of change.”

When Melanie knew that her work with Lisa’s family was complete, she closed the file and celebrated a year’s success with the family.

“This is why I do my job; this is why I love my job,” Melanie says. “I feel ecstatic for that family.”

*Names have been changed

From student to volunteer to employee

“Being a volunteer not only helps other people but changes you. You see people who are vulnerable and you can help them in a way that is small to you but has a big impact on them. There is no payment for that.”

Nara Fedozzi has spent her first year in Canada very closely connected to the YWCA of Calgary. One week after arriving from her home country of Brazil, with little English and a great deal of uncertainty, she decided to enroll in the YWCA’s Language Instruction for New comers to Canada (LINC) program. Not only did she find assistance with English but also caring instructors who helped her realize the vast opportunities available to her.

“The reception here [at the YWCA] was great!” says Nara. “The teachers were amazing. They asked me about my goals in Canada and gave me advice on how I could achieve them.”

Volunteerism is not a large component of the culture in Paraty, Brazil, so the idea was a new one for Nara. A suggestion from her LINC instructor had her investigating volunteer positions in the social service sector where she could use her experience as a social worker. She was thrilled to find an opportunity with the YWCA Sheriff King Home emergency shelter. “It was administrative work but I watched and learned how the shelter worked and was amazed.”

Nara completed her LINC course and decided to continue her education with the YWCA through the

Canadian Employment Skills Program (CES). She was able to volunteer yet again through her practicum for CES at the YWCA Mary Dover House short term supportive housing facility and YWCA Community Housing program. “In Brazil we do not have the same services as here. For a long time, I was the only social worker for the whole city with very scarce resources. I felt that I was not only advocating for people’s right, but fighting for them! And here it is so different... I am glad to say that I see here the effort and commitment that I missed in Brazil.”

After her graduation from the CES program in early August, Nara focused on extending her knowledge of the Canadian workplace by continuing her volunteer work while looking for full time employment. Her belief is that the more she learns, the better equipped she will be to help her clients. “I am really proud to be part of an organization that is so effective at providing services and changing people’s lives,” Nara shared when asked what she gained from

volunteering at the YWCA. “I gained experience in a different culture, saw how the workplace is different, learned to communicate better in English and met lots of people.”

The diversity of the YWCA programming provides a wide range of volunteer and engagement opportunities. As Nara discovered, you never know what you will find or learn along the way. Nara found a new perspective in her new country and also found a full time position with the YWCA Mary Dover House short-term supportive housing program following her volunteer experience. Congratulations Nara!



A perfect storm for affordable housing

“It would be like a dream come true to open a door that I can walk through, with keys in my hand, a smile on my face...yes, a home.”

-YWCA Community Housing Client, 2012

Even before the June rains and flooding, Calgary’s housing was experiencing a perfect storm.

With nearly 20,000 people arriving in the city each year, rental vacancy rates at near zero and a waiting list of 4,000 households for Calgary Housing Company units, the availability and affordability of housing is a particular challenge for people on low income, including many of the women and families supported by the YWCA of Calgary.

In 2012, more than 750 women and 360 children spent at least one night in the YWCA Sheriff King Home emergency shelter or one of the YWCA’s short-term or permanent supportive housing programs. Most stayed much longer than a single day or week.

“Women are staying longer in both YWCA Sheriff King Home and YWCA Mary Dover House because

they simply can’t find safe, suitable housing which they can afford,”

says Cynthia Wild, Director, Client Services at the YWCA. “We also know that a fear of being homeless and in poverty causes women to stay in unsafe, violent relationships or situations.”

Leading up to the October 21 municipal election, the YWCA and other agencies will be stepping up efforts to put affordable housing on the agenda for candidates and voters. Working alongside the Calgary Homeless Foundation in the implementation of Calgary’s 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, the Community Action Committee on Housing & Homelessness has formed a working group focused on issues related to affordable housing.

Grounded in members’ experience serving people at risk of and leaving homelessness, the group aims to work with current and future members of Calgary City Council towards the development of a com-



prehensive affordable housing strategy. The near-term solutions proposed include: greater access to land; streamlined development approvals; and tax and density incentives for affordable and supportive housing options.

“The work of so many agencies and the needs of so many vulnerable Calgarians are represented. This is really about a collective voice on a critical issue,” says Kim O’Brien, volunteer co-chair of the working group and Executive Director of Horizon Housing, a YWCA partner agency and provider of housing.

O’Brien says the early years for the 10 year plan have been about solidifying the types of counselling and supports available for people who are homeless. Now, the focus must shift to the wise creation of many forms of housing in the community. “Housing is a basic need. If people (leaving homelessness, including shelters) have nowhere to exit to, then it’s all rather moot.”

Housing fast facts:

- **Affordable housing that does not exceed 30% of housing income allows households to meet other basic needs.**
- **Rents have gone up 7.3% in the past year (before the flood)**

News in brief

Vermilion Energy/ YWCA Employment Resource Centre opens

The YWCA opened the door that opens others - that is, the Vermilion Energy/YWCA Employment Resource Centre (ERC) on June 4 with our partner Vermilion Energy. The ERC supports women struggling with poverty and underemployment to build the confidence and essential skills needed to find sustainable employment.

The grand opening included speeches from YWCA CEO Sue Tomney, Vermilion Energy CEO Lorenzo Donadeo and former YWCA client, Carol Eastman. Supporters of the ERC were recognized, including representatives from Vermilion Energy, United Way and The City of Calgary, Family and Community Support Services (FCSS).

The new program is available to YWCA clients as well as women in the community. The clients are offered one-on-one or group sessions related to job search planning and techniques, resume writing skills, essential skills and career planning.

YWCA 102nd Annual General Meeting held

On June 19, 2013, the YWCA celebrated its achievements from the 2012-2013 year. The event was an opportunity to honour community partners, supporters, volunteers,

individuals and corporate donors who have assisted the organization in their mission to intervene, empower and lead when and where women need them most.

Focused on helping vulnerable women thrive in our community, the YWCA served 8,739 unique individuals, including 2,461 children in 2012 through more than 30 programs from housing and shelter, counselling, to education and skill development.

YWCA launches website

The new YWCA website launched on June 19, 2013. The site enables the YWCA to further advocate for vulnerable women in the community as well as educate the community at large regarding the services and mission of the YWCA. The project was supported, in part, with funding from The Calgary Foundation.



The YWCA proudly announces Naomi Judd as the keynote speaker at the 2013 WHYWHISPER Fund-raising Gala held on Thursday November 14, 2013 at the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre.

CES Graduation

On Friday, August 2, the YWCA celebrated the graduation of 24 clients from 13 countries in the Canadian Employment Skills (CES) program. CES focuses on helping immigrants who have professional backgrounds and experience find meaningful employment in Calgary by offering classroom and work experience opportunities in Canadian culture.

The CES graduates shared their stories after the ceremony. One student, Antonia Leleji, said,

"I'd like to thank the YWCA. How do they do it? During the support and training I received. I kept wondering, how big are their hearts? They show so much compassion, commitment and love."

Many of the graduates find employment with the company's that host their work experience, while others continue to work with the YWCA to find a position that is a good match for their skills.



YWCA Walk A Mile In Her Shoes®

On Thursday, September 19, the annual **YWCA Walk A Mile In Her Shoes®** fundraising event will see men walk in high heels to help women and their children take steps away from family violence. There is still time to donate to your favorite walker or the event itself.

Are you the next YWCA Walk A Mile In Her Shoes® sponsor?

Does your company have a passion for creating a safe community for women and their families? Are you looking for an exciting partnership with the chance to team build at a fun event? Pengrowth Energy, our

sponsor for the last 3 years is passing the torch, and providing an opportunity for another company to sponsor this amazing event.



YWCA Annual United Way Campaign 2013

Did you know the YWCA is partly funded by the United Way of Calgary? That's why every fall our organization rolls up its sleeves and takes part in the annual United Way Campaign by planning fundraising activities for our staff. Last year,

activities included an online auction, pumpkin carving contest, recipe book, bake sale, dodgeball and gerbera daisy sale. We raised a total of \$11,750.37! The YWCA has increased our contribution each year and we hope to do the same in 2013. This year's United Way Campaign kicked off in September and continues throughout the fall. The United Way raised an astonishing \$55.2 million in 2012, which was distributed to various Calgary organizations that work towards reducing poverty and strengthening the community. We are grateful to be one of the United Way recipients and also encourage our staff to be engaged supporters of the hundreds of other social agencies.

YWCA of Calgary is one of the longest serving social service organizations in Calgary. During its more than 100 year history, the organization has touched tens of thousands of lives and has evolved its programming to meet the changing needs of women in the community. Although other agencies focus on women's poverty and domestic violence, the YWCA of Calgary also provides a continuum of services focused on empowering women to move from a position of vulnerability to one of sustainable strength and opportunity.

The YWCA of Calgary represents one of the largest social agencies in the city, serving more than 8,700 Calgarians in 2012 alone.

YES! I want to help vulnerable women in Calgary.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Prov _____ PC _____

Phone _____

ENCLOSED IS MY SINGLE GIFT OF:

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$ _____

I WANT TO SUPPORT YWCA OF CALGARY WITH A MONTHLY DONATION:

Pre-authorized withdrawal of \$ _____ every month.

(Please include credit card information at right or attach a void cheque. You may cancel or change your monthly gift at any time.)

Date _____ Signature _____

I AM MAKING MY DONATION BY: (CHECK ONE)

Cheque (Payable to: YWCA of Calgary) VISA MC AmEx

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____ Security Code _____

Complete this form and mail to:

YWCA of Calgary 320 5th Ave SE, Calgary, AB T2G 0E5

Donations of \$20 or more will receive a tax receipt. YWCA of Calgary respects the privacy of our donors.

www.YWCAofCalgary.com/donate or call 403-294-7343

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