

ADVOCATE

DONOR & VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

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“How did this happen to me?”

YWCA Mary Dover House is a safe, affordable short-term supportive housing program for women and children in crisis or transition. Mary Dover House also has six emergency beds, available to single women for up to 14 days, to accommodate overflow from homeless and domestic violence shelters, including the YWCA Sheriff King Home.

A former resident tells her story in her own words:

How did this happen to me? I had a \$700,000 beautiful home, a family and a high paying job I'd had for 23 years.

I woke up one morning on a matt on a floor... I was extremely hungover and disoriented. Looking around me I was laying beside a whole bunch of people who I formerly would describe as disgusting lowlifes.

This is where my addiction to alcohol has led me. This is why I was homeless. I stayed at the Alpha House for about a month, calling the YWCA Mary Dover House every day. My family would no longer allow me in their house and the YWCA was my only chance to have a bed and a roof over my head. Eventually I got a room and stayed there for about 7 months.

Then I was invited to have my own apartment. A beautiful



(YWCA Community Housing) apartment with some of the women from Mary Dover House. I am so fortunate for this opportunity, it was so overwhelming at first and to be able to say "I have my own apartment" was such a gift.

Most of the women I had lived with or met through my homeless journey had been verbally or physically abused (as well as myself) by their partners.

I eventually started volunteering at Alpha House and when I would press the buzzer to get in I was always asked if I was here to work

because of my appearance. I would laugh and say "no, I'm one of you guys."

These last two years have drastically changed the way I view the homeless. I was an ignorant, uneducated and judgemental person when I had my house, my job and vehicles.

I am now in therapy and attending AA meetings and also attended three treatment centres. I relapse but I always pull myself up and start the fight against my addiction again.

I will never give up. I will always be grateful to the YWCA for all they have done for me the last couple of years and especially my case worker who is so kind and understanding.

I would never in a million years think I would end up homeless, but I did. I am blessed and hopeful that I will be back working and living in a condo that I will buy. This will be an opportunity to give my apartment up to another lady who is in need of a home.

Homelessness can come quicker than people would think.



Calgary Food Bank and YWCA: partners in hope

Have you heard the one about the rabbi, the priest and the minister coming together in a room?

As it turns out, it was exactly that meeting which was the genesis of the Calgary Food Bank more than 30 years ago.

Prior to the collaboration, churches and mosques around the city distributed food independently to those in need. Community activists came together to pool their efforts and leverage their resources to feed the hungry in a collective way.

Today, the Calgary Food Bank distributes more than 50,000 hampers annually to feed close to 140,000 people. The YWCA and the vulnerable women we serve have benefitted from the start.

D.D. Coutts, Food Bank Manager of Communications and Development, said the YWCA partnership is a two-way street which benefits clients of both agencies. The YWCA team “shops” at the Food Bank to acquire food for clients in emergency and short-term housing pro-

grams at Mary Dover House and Sheriff King Home. Simultaneously, a two-way referral process exists, whereby YWCA clients in need of food hampers are sent to the Food Bank and Food Bank clients in need of social services such as emergency housing and other support services are referred to the YWCA.

“The YWCA makes such a difference in the community,” said Coutts. “Over the years we have sent thousands of people there who are literally changing their lives through the programs (the YWCA) offers. It’s a wonderful partnership.”

The YWCA agrees. “It’s a symbiotic relationship,” said **Cynthia Wild**, YWCA Director of Client Services. “Their clients are our clients: we help distribute food to those in need.”

Coutts said 81 percent of Food Bank clients receive food hampers three times or less in their lives, which means the majority of support is provided on an emergency, interim basis.

After three visits, Food Bank clients are connected to a social services agency which can help address issues such as poverty, homelessness, affordable housing and unemployment.

“People can’t move forward in their lives unless there are agencies like YWCA,” said Coutts.

“The YWCA is so great at helping people successfully change their lives, and without them, people would be even more dependent on the Food Bank.”

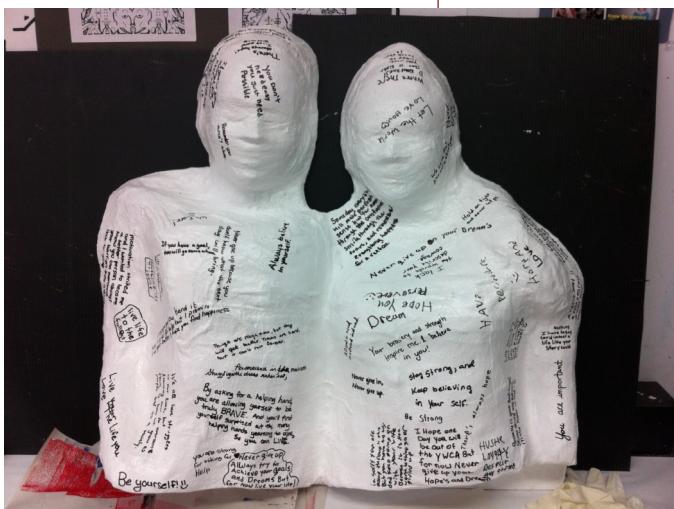
To our friends at the Calgary Food Bank, we salute you! We are proud to work side by side in symbiotic partnership.

Calgary Academy students support YWCA clients

"You deserve to be happy." These are some of the powerful words written by Calgary Academy students on a cast of two teenagers with their arms wrapped around each other. Their artwork and fundraising efforts were the result of an in school YWCA KEEP A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS® event..

The art was produced by students at Calgary Academy who wanted to do more than fundraise for YWCA of Calgary. Students decided to send messages of support and encouragement to YWCA clients. Through notes, students let clients know that they matter, that everyone's story is important and that every person should have a safe place to sleep at night.

In February, 45 students and nine teachers spent the night on the school's gymnasium floor. Together, they raised more than \$6,000 to benefit vulnerable women at the YWCA of Calgary with basic needs, counselling, training and support.



Adam MacPherson, a Calgary Academy teacher and three-time participant in YWCA KEEP A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS® event, encouraged his students to experience homelessness for one night so they would begin to understand its powerful affects.

Students aged 13 to 18 challenged stereotypes, discussed the need for a living wage, shared their own experiences with homeless people and considered how their struggles compare to those of people who are homeless. They discussed the importance of taking care of one another and they looked for solutions to systemic issues. Students bunched down in sleeping bags on the gym floor, emulating the YWCA KEEP A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS® event where participants sleep on the YWCA gym floor for one night.

MacPherson and six students presented YWCA of Calgary with a cheque and their powerful creative message to clients. The cast will be put on display to motivate and encourage clients.

The YWCA sincerely thanks the compassionate and creative students and staff of Calgary Academy for their remarkable efforts. Those who supported the students and teachers, and subsequently clients of YWCA, thank you for your kind generosity. Your support will go a long way to keeping a roof over the heads of women and children in Calgary.



*For more information on the YWCA KEEP A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS® event being held on May 2, 2013 or to host your own event, please contact **Sarah Hughes**, Special Events Officer, at 403.705.0138.*

Helping Hands

- In 2012, more than **8000 people** accessed one of the many YWCA programs and services.
- **753 women and 365 children** slept at least one night in a YWCA of Calgary shelter or housing program in 2012.
- **Nearly half** of all people accessing a YWCA of Calgary program or service were employed though most women served were concerned about their financial circumstances.
- In 2012, the YWCA was gifted more than **7,500 hours** by 673 committed volunteers. Thank you for your support!

Words of wisdom ...



Gloria Steinem and YWCA of Calgary CEO Sue Tomney
at WHYWHISPER Gala, November 2012



*There can be no peace
in the public sphere if
there is no peace in
the private sphere.*

- Gloria Steinem



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

Charitable Registration #108227927RR0001