



ADVOCATE

Fall 2017

The Road to Trust

Kristal's warm smile and easy laughter quickly draw you in, but there is a caution in her eyes that hints at the trauma she endured from the time she was a little girl. The neglect and abuse she experienced stole some of the simple joys of childhood and ultimately left her struggling with homelessness, leading her to a life on the street.

Kristal was barely a teenager when she ran away, certain she'd be more safe on the street than at home. She would trust no one but herself from that day on and, in her innocence, decided she could figure the rest out along the way. She had no way of knowing it would be more than 40 years before she could begin to trust anyone enough to give her the help she had evaded for decades.

Kristal will tell you that trust is still hard for her – but that isn't surprising when your trust has led to fear in the past. Her journey was long and difficult; each day a struggle to survive. Without food or

shelter, minor crimes were often committed, just to sustain herself.

Kristal was apprehensive to reach out for help, but when she had few options for a warm and safe place to stay in the harsh winter she accessed YW's emergency shelter program. Within a year, Kristal moved in to transitional housing where she was welcomed by YW team members and soon felt a sense of comfort and trust she had not experienced for a long time.

"YW has been my biggest gift," she says with a warm smile. She describes how empowered she felt not to be judged for the ways she coped with her trauma. She learned she is not defined by her past – that it is simply a reflection of the difficult places she's been and the hardships she's endured. Kristal took a chance on trust at YW Calgary and found hope for a better life.

Message from the CEO

I continue to tell people: “I have the best job in the world”. Thanks to donors like you, this is a true statement. Donors who believe in a better future, who believe in and trust YW to ensure women and their families can access the opportunities they need to thrive in our community.

It is also true, because I get to share wonderful stories that fill my heart. One story is about a young woman and her daughter who had been living in our transitional housing for more than two years. They would often walk by my office on their way to yet another disappointing attempt to find safe and appropriate permanent housing. Until one day, after so many of these attempts her daughter ran into my office with arms wide to tell me “Mommy found us a home!”.

There are so many barriers and challenges for women, particularly those who are vulnerable and seeing the joy on this little girl’s face – not to mention her mother’s – reminds me why we do what we do each day. And why we need all of you so much! Thank you for your continued support of YW Calgary and for helping women and their families find brighter futures.



Sue Tomney
Chief Executive Officer

YW in the Community

YW WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES®

On September 19 more than 200 women and men put on high heels and took steps down Stephen Avenue to Olympic Plaza for a serious issue that impacts too many families in our community – domestic abuse.

This annual fundraising event helps raise awareness of domestic abuse and empowers women and their children to walk away from family violence. This year YW raised more than \$160,000 to support YW programs and services which enable women to live healthy lives and thrive in their community.

For more details, visit: walkamile.ca



YW Hub Facility

Following intense community engagement last year in Inglewood, YW was thrilled to have our development and building permits approved by the City of Calgary this summer. The new YW Hub will be a beacon for women and the community to heal and build healthier lives. Construction will begin shortly and doors will open in 2019!

For more details, visit: ywcalgary.ca/inglewood

Calgary Pride Parade 2017

YW team members, friends and families proudly marched in the Calgary Pride Parade on September 3rd to stand up for equality and celebrate the tremendous diversity of Calgary’s community.

We march in Pride because equity and inclusion are part of the core beliefs that drive our work at YW. We see and celebrate women and families in all of their diversity. Speaking up and speaking out for equity is critical as governments here and south of the border try to limit the rights of individuals.

Women's Homelessness in Calgary



Heather Morley
VP Programs and Services

Q: Why do women struggle with homelessness?

A: It can often be traced back to unresolved physical, sexual and emotional abuse, domestic violence or trauma, often beginning in childhood. It's complicated by isolation and societal barriers. Each new obstacle creates another burden making a solution seem impossible to reach.

Q: Is poverty a factor?

A: In Calgary, many families build stable lives with very little, but when trauma and abuse are unaddressed, particularly if there is no support system, anyone from any walk of life can become poor, homeless or both.

Q: What are the challenges?

A: Safety, poor nutrition, neglected health and extreme temperatures are just some of challenges, but the emotional scars are hardest to heal. Being shunned only adds to feelings of isolation and despair and can rob even the strongest woman of

her confidence, dignity and self-worth. Over time, all hope is lost.

Q: What's different for women experiencing homelessness?

A: The problems are complex and the solutions, more so. Women are at greater risk for being victimized. Women's wages are lower, so safe, affordable housing and childcare can both be out of reach. A mother may have to choose between giving up her home and children to stay safe, or continuing to put her life at risk staying in an abusive relationship.

Q: What is the solution?

A: Hope is always the starting point.

We are consistently amazed at the strength and resourcefulness of women who are surviving on the street. If we can help them find hope; help them recognize their own abilities, the rest will follow.

Q: How does YW help?

A: First, we leave judgement at the door. We offer tools and help to build skills that foster independence. We build on the individual strengths of each woman. We advocate at all levels of government for policy change and we help others see the value each woman holds.

Q: What would you tell those who want to help?

A: Be compassionate. Set judgement and blame aside. If you can, support them through our work. We go far beyond providing food and a safe place to lay their head and refresh. Lasting change comes when women have the tools they need to succeed. The longer she has been without help, the longer she may need to recover. We are in it for the duration.

Thanks to You:

- In 2016, YW Calgary provided shelter and housing for more than **1,100** women.
- Last year, YW supported **20** women to transition from our emergency shelter to more sustainable accommodation through YW Transitional Housing.

Supporting Healthy Families



Shortly after Christmas in 2016, Amber enrolled in a unique visitation service offered through the YW Family Access Services program. As the non-custodial parent to a four-year-old daughter, Amber was seeking a safe and supportive environment where she and her daughter could spend time together.

During their initial visits together, Amber struggled. Although she loved her daughter dearly, she confessed that at times she felt no real connection.

Barely out of her teens herself, Amber had grown up without the guidance of a role model. She didn't have the skills or knowledge to engage with her daughter in a meaningful way. In fact, she herself had never really learned how to play – it was not something that existed in her childhood home.

Today, she and her daughter look forward to their fun and lively visits. They laugh and play together and wish they could spend more time with each other. With the support of YW, Amber has learned many new tips to successful parenting.

Amber is also taking her own journey of self-discovery as she proudly explores her heritage. It's something she looks forward to sharing with her daughter as they build their future together.

While fathers and stepfathers comprise the majority of non-custodial parents who access visitation services, the number of mothers and grandparents is also significant. YW Family Access Services is a safe, supervised visitation service available to the public. Subsidies are available for this fee-for-service program to ensure financial hardship is never a barrier to healthier family relationships.

Learn more at: ywcalgary.ca/visitationservices

YES, I WANT TO HELP WOMEN THRIVE

Charitable tax receipts will be issued by YW Calgary for gifts of \$20.00 CAD or more.
Please ensure this form is completed in full and legible.

First Name Last Name

Address

City Postal Code

Phone #

Preferred email (charitable tax receipts will be sent here)

MONTHLY DONATION AMOUNT \$ _____ each month

by pre-authorized withdrawals. Please attach void cheque or fill out credit card information below.

ONE TIME GIFT DONATION AMOUNT \$ _____

by cheque (payable to YW Calgary) or fill out credit card information below.

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION Visa MC AMEX

Credit card # Expiry date (month/year)

Name (as appears on card)

Signature Date

MAIL TO YW Calgary
320 - 5th Avenue SE, Calgary, AB T2G 0E5
or DONATE ONLINE at ywcalgary.ca/donate