



CHOICES
FOR YOUTH

COLLECTING VOICES & CREATING CHANGE

**25 YEARS OF
LEADING THROUGH
PARTNERSHIP &
INNOVATION**



CHOICES FOR YOUTH

COLLECTING VOICES & CREATING CHANGE

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A Message
From the
Deputy Premier

THE HONOURABLE STEVE KENT

This year, Choices for Youth once again played a vital role in developing awareness to bring attention to the realities of homelessness in our community. These efforts have significantly impacted many vulnerable young people and have helped countless youth to achieve their fullest potential.

The organization provided important supports through transitional housing programs, holistic mom-and-baby peer support groups, and youth employment program Train for Trades, which has set the standard for innovative social enterprise programming. Through the Youth Leadership Council, the organization also supported a mental health conference which built on the momentum that has been growing around mental health awareness.

The success of Choices for Youth is proof that collaboration between community members, organizations, youth, and government leads to informed decision-making – with tangible and positive results for everyone.

On behalf of Premier Davis and the Provincial Government, I applaud Choices for Youth for the ongoing impact the organization is having in helping people live healthier, happier, and more meaningful lives – and I commend staff and supporters for the tremendous difference they are making.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Steve Kent
Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Community Services and
Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement

A Message

From the Executive Director



SHELDON POLLETT

I am honored to be a part of such a tenacious and innovative organization as Choices for Youth (CFY) as we celebrate 25 years of activism and support. The theme of this year's report – Collecting Voices and Creating Change: 25 Years of Leading through Partnership and Innovation – could not be more representative of our journey over the past two and a half decades. It is through connections with national initiatives, local partners, and our own internal culture of listening to the voices of youth that we have been able to lead the conversation on how to change the course of the lives of young people who face homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador. As an organization, while we have matured in our understanding of the paths leading to youth homelessness, we have also evolved in our approach and are actively exploring the trajectory of youth to transition *out* of homelessness.

As an active participant and leader in the national conversation on youth homelessness, CFY has been a frontrunner in a growing movement to change the response to the needs of vulnerable youth on a systemic level. This work has resulted in, for the first time in our province's history, a call for a provincial plan to end youth homelessness. This process included the piloting of a community planning institute on youth homelessness in December 2014. This event brought together key stakeholders from around the province and presented proven approaches from across the country on how to effectively prevent and end youth homelessness. These efforts have recently culminated in the form of a panel discussion and report release titled "Towards a Solution – Creating a Plan to End Youth Homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador". With the planning institute and this report as a starting point, it is our hope that by the summer of 2016 we will have a formalized plan to end youth homelessness in our province.

A particular highlight from this past year has been our work with the Mental Health Commission of Canada and Metro Youth Mental Health Committee to support mental health initiatives in our province. The result was the inspirational role taken up by the Youth Leadership Council (YLC) to help host a HeadStrong campaign as part of a provincial conference to explore ways to better understand and support youth mental health and combat stigma. In the past year, the YLC has also played a huge role in shaping the work of CFY. Their connection to our staff and the Board of Directors has allowed them to share lived experiences and amplify the voice of at-risk youth. The importance of this cannot be understated. It is a connection that ensures everything we do here at CFY is directly relevant to and informed by the young people who are facing homelessness.

Finding the will to do what is necessary and prompt social change is a challenge that CFY staff have taken on admirably over the past 25 years. In my experience, the staff at CFY are led entirely by their belief in the potential of young people. Each member of our organization is rooted in the reality of what's possible when a young person is given stability and support. They are inspired to innovate and find new ways to connect with young people, provide unique supports, and explore fresh ideas. Working in constant partnership with young people, a strong sense of camaraderie, and an incredible culture of wanting to give at-risk youth the opportunity to succeed – these are the reasons why CFY has remained a leader in the sector and continues to make important strides both locally and nationally.

The journey to prevent and end youth homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador has proven to be a long voyage, complete with challenges, opportunities and surprises. To succeed in this endeavor, we must build partnerships, learn from one another and engage all stakeholders. As we embark on this next chapter of our journey, we look forward to finding new opportunities and achieving new milestones.

Thank you for your ongoing support and for believing in the young people of our shared community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sheldon Pollett".

Sheldon Pollett
Executive Director, Choices for Youth



A Message From the Chair of the Board

JONATHON DUKE

With the support of our community partners, the Choices for Youth team has worked with over 1000 youth this past year. This can be viewed as a measure of success, and also an indicator of the rising need of youth across our communities. In a province with so much opportunity there are a great number of youth who require support to reach their potential.

The truest testament to the transformative power of Choices for Youth is the success of the youth that choose to engage with us. For example, at The Lilly, one of our supportive housing programs, all youth are participating in education or engaged in the workforce. Momma Moments continues to operate in both St. John's and CBS and has provided support and parenting skills to young mothers enabling healthy families and decreasing the need for protective interventions. Train for Trades has graduated 49 participants over the past 6 years with over two thirds going on to further education or employment. Participants in these programs are some of the most at-risk youth in our community and they are making changes that will last generations. These programs have come to fruition through partnerships with other organizations throughout the country and Choices for Youth's own internal innovations.

Choices for Youth is based on providing a continuum of supportive programs that meet youth where they are. We support youth today so that they can create healthy and promising futures for themselves and their loved ones tomorrow. Outreach continues to be an essential part of the Choices' model. Hot meals and a safe place provide a venue for youth to engage with staff and begin to access supports including safe and appropriate housing, education, and meaningful employment and training. It is this commitment to low barrier supports that has earned Choices and its staff the reputation as the place at-risk youth can turn to.

After 25 years of serving the needs of the most vulnerable youth in our communities, Choices continues to evolve. This year we will be engaging our partners and stakeholders, including youth, in our three-year strategic plan. This plan will guide the organization in identifying and meeting the needs of youth. I invite you to participate in the process.

Thank you to all the staff at Choices for their tireless efforts, and to the Youth Leadership Council for their peer support and leadership in bringing awareness to important issues in our community. Most of all, thank you to our partners who make this work possible and enable brighter futures for so many youth.

Jonathon Duke
Chair of the Board of Directors, Choices for Youth

A Message

From the Youth Leadership Council Director



SARAH BROWN

The Youth Leadership Council (YLC) is thankful to have experienced yet another year of empowering and youth-driven growth within Choices for Youth. This organization's unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of our youth is astounding, and their dedication is evident in all that we have achieved. It fills me with pride to report that the YLC is now an official program at Choices for Youth and continues to play a proactive role in breaking down barriers for young people.

With the overwhelming support of Choices for Youth, the YLC has had a remarkable year. To say that we have flourished would be an understatement. As a council, we use our own voice and lived experience to spread awareness of the many realities that our youth face everyday. With the ever-changing needs in our community, we play an essential part in ensuring that the voices of individuals availing of services are heard.

A vital factor in our growth has been our increased involvement with community allies. These partnerships help break down barriers through sharing stories, perspectives and passion. A strong partnership that stood out for us this year was working with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC). By working on the MHCC's anti-stigma campaign we facilitated awareness activities and presented our own stories at a provincial youth mental health conference. As MHCC is stationed out of Ontario, we had to be creative in the planning process. We had two Council members fly to Ontario to participate in a summit on anti-stigma training, and also brainstormed and shared information via webinars. The outcome of the conference was an experience that both our members and youth participants are unlikely to forget. Inspiring, uplifting, and powerful barely come close to describing the impact of these shared experiences. An event such as this undoubtedly proves that working together as compassionate beings is fundamental in constructing a better quality of life for our youth.

As we look to the future we intend to continue our work and also hope to expand. With support from Choices for Youth, we will continue innovating on how we engage both young people and the public as we further strengthen community partnerships. The sky is the limit!

A handwritten signature of Sarah Brown in blue ink. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Brown

Youth Leadership Council Director, Choices for Youth

WHO WE ARE

REFLECTING THE YOUTH THAT INSPIRE US

Across the organization Choices for Youth strives to provide at-risk youth with programming informed by their experiences, the participants in our current programs and respected national programming and research. Each program offers unique support services and resources, which together span four areas of focus:



This report highlights successes, stories and challenges of each program, sharing some insights into the impact we've been able to have with the over 1000 youth we've worked with in the past year.

Choices for Youth strives to be a model of diversity and inclusion, and our Board Members, staff, volunteers, and program participants reflect the many faces, cultures, identities, abilities, and walks of life that make up our province. We are a learning-centered organization that values the perspectives and contributions of all people, and strives to incorporate the needs and values of diverse communities into the design and implementation of inclusive programs.

We respect, value, celebrate, and welcome racialized people, all sexual orientations, women and trans* people, Aboriginal and First People, people with disabilities, with mental illness, and those from all social strata.

Our organization is based on the philosophy that everyone has a right to:

- Safe housing;
- A standard of living that promotes physical, mental, emotional, psychological, and social development;
- An environment of mutual accountability, responsibility, independence, equality, dignity, peace, and respect;
- Protection from abuse;
- Participation in any decision making that affects their lives.

OUR CORE VALUES

- Act with empathy and kindness
- Choose to see the potential
- Cultivate safe, inclusive spaces, and promote diversity
- Work hard, with boundless ambition and strategic excellence
- Inspire hope, and create opportunities that empower

MORE THAN A NEW BRAND

In the fall of 2014, we made the decision to revisit our brand. As an organization that has been working with the at-risk youth population for 25 years, we had a lot of history to draw upon, a lot of learning to incorporate, and a sophisticated understanding of how we strive to achieve our goals.

A new brand meant expressing the best version of ourselves to everyone, in every format.

The obvious place to start was to explore the core values of our organization. This set of values, universally true to Choices for Youth, provided a compass to begin tackling other branding elements.

It became clear very quickly that what we pay attention to and what is exciting about our work are the solutions, and the immense potential of at-risk youth. The harsh realities of youth homelessness are not ignored by us, but they have never been the focus. We see the problems, the challenges, and the injustices – and we face them head on with a clear line of sight to making things better. This positivity and sense of possibility is something we wanted to capture in our brand.



After over 10 iterations of design, 7 rounds of feedback, and discussions with staff, board members and youth, our new logo symbolizes growth, nourishment, roots, and diverse possibilities.

EXECUTIVE STAFF

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BOARD MEMBERS

April 1st 2014 – March 31st 2015

Chair
Jonathan Duke, *Group M5*

Secretary
Andrew Woodland, *Smyth Woodland Del Rizzo & Ledrew*

Treasurer
Lynn Zurel, *Chartered Accountant*

Kathy LeGrow, *Steers Insurance*

Jim Murray, *JSM Electrical*

Lynne Henley, *Community Organizer*

Kevin Harnum, *TD Bank*

Connie Duffett, *Eastern Health*

Donna Donovan, *Suncor Energy*

Michelle Ward, *Reddy Kilowatt Credit Union*

CHALLENGING OURSELVES

DIGGING DEEPER

We've made a point to articulate logic models for all of our core programming. By analyzing inputs, outputs, priorities, outcomes, and impact, we can better evaluate what's working and what needs to be adjusted. Visualizing our work this way has helped us unpack the theory behind how our programs are creating change, and how external factors and assumptions interact with that theory.

BETTER PREPARED THROUGH TRAINING AND RESEARCH

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is the world's leading suicide intervention workshop. Recently, we've starting training key staff members in ASIST to better serve and protect the safety of the at-risk youth we work with. In addition to formal training, mental health has become a foundational focus in all of our programs and is a key focus of our Youth Leadership Council.

In 2013, Choices for Youth took the provincial lead in a two-year national survey by the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAM-H). The project worked collaboratively with youth-serving agencies in eight communities across Canada and implemented a common screening tool for youth with substance use and mental health concerns. As the provincial network lead, we connected agencies to the study that represented three or more sectors, including substance use, mental health, justice, child welfare, education, housing, outreach, and primary health care. This year, we are once again taking the provincial lead, focusing on evidence-informed treatment practices, cross-sector collaboration, and understanding how the needs of youth are unique.

FROM PILOT PROJECT TO SOMETHING BIG

One of our fastest-growing programs has been the Momma Moments program. Currently, the program supports 42 moms and 54 babies, and helps participants navigate housing, education, employment and support services while providing a group of peers with which to talk about their new roles as mothers and facing challenges in their lives.

Our ambition has always extended well beyond the limitations of our current program. In many ways, the Momma Moments program serves as a pilot project. Based on its success, we've set our sights on building a Young Parents Resource Centre – a facility that will provide expanded programming under the Momma Moments model, supportive housing for young at-risk mothers and integrated child minding services.

To date we have successfully secured land, completed engineering and architectural drawings, formalized a business plan, built a team of driven individuals, and raised seed funding to launch a capital campaign for the project.



◀ REBECCA AND HER DAUGHTER VIOLET AT A MOMMA MOMENTS GROUP SESSION

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

THE COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

On February 21, we hosted our second-annual Coldest Night of the Year walk in support of homeless and at-risk youth. Starting at our Carter's Hill location, over 200 walkers took to the streets of St. John's to show their support for youth in need of safe, affordable housing. The afternoon ended with a hot meal, served community supper style, thanks to the generous support of The Sprout restaurant. Thanks to all our walkers, especially to the teams from local RBC and Sun Life Financial offices. Together, we raised an incredible \$35,000!



YOUTH CHRISTMAS PARTY

The CFY youth Christmas party is always a highlight of our winter season. The event is a celebration of community and offers young people a Christmas that they may not otherwise get to participate in.

For many young people that we serve, Christmas can be a challenging time. The youth Christmas party brings our community together in the spirit of support and joy. This year at CFY the youth Christmas party was held at the Salvation Army Citadel on Adam's Avenue. Approximately 150 young people were in attendance and were given a full turkey dinner, served by the Salvation Army Men's Group, along with a delicious dessert donated and served by the Hibernia Management and Development Company Ltd.

Community champions, funders, board members and supporters came together to give the young people a Christmas they could cherish. Santa Claus himself made an appearance, and CFY elves made sure that every young person received a small gift and token of appreciation. The Christmas sing-along was a merry highlight, and everyone in attendance walked away with full stomachs and full hearts.

OUR 1ST ANNUAL FUNDRAISING GALA

The development of a Young Parents Resource Centre (YPRC) is an ambitious and exciting undertaking. The facility will offer supportive housing units, child minding services, and program options evolving from the work being done by Momma Moments.

With this vision in mind, Choices brought together more than 200 philanthropists, business leaders and change makers at our first ever fundraising gala in February, hosted at GlenDenning Golf. Thanks to the immense generosity of our guests, the event raised an unprecedented \$120,000 supporting Momma Moments and the development of the YPRC. Highlights of the evening included an elimination draw culminating to the announcement of the winner of a brand new Jeep, and powerful stories shared by two incredible young mothers.

Our event sponsors, Scotiabank, Tiffany Village Retirement Living, Kenny's Pond Retirement Living, Mary Brown's, Chevron, and Fougere Menchenton Architecture, alongside numerous partners in the community made this event possible. Jill and Trevor Morris, Maureen Williams – thank you so much for your ongoing support and for your instrumental role in making this event possible.

COURTNEY BAKER

MOMMA MOMENTS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT
AND YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR



At the age of 17, Courtney Baker became the mother of a handsome baby boy who immediately became the most important person in her life. As a young mother living on her own, Courtney faces daily struggles that challenge her in many ways. Through it all, she remains determined to give her son the best life possible.

In 2012, our Momma Moments program expanded to Conception Bay South, giving Courtney a chance to get to know other young women facing many of the same issues that she was experiencing, as well as a safe and supportive environment for

her son to interact with other children. Momma Moments had no barriers to entry – the program offered transportation to-and-from group sessions, provided healthy meals for everyone in attendance, and provided free child minding, so that the children could be in good care while the moms made time for themselves in the peer learning sessions.

Courtney quickly recognized how important it was to be able to share her own experiences with others who were facing similar challenges. Beyond personal supports, the group also offered resources and connections to educational programs, employment opportunities, housing, help with custody and access issues, and much more. Through the program, Courtney has been able to attend special events, outdoor recreation activities, and gain skills and knowledge through group sessions facilitated by professional instructors and special guests.

“

To feel accepted, heard, and supported as a young single mother is so important and something incredibly special.

While the experiences that Courtney and her son garnered through Momma Moments have been incredibly helpful, it is the personal supports that Courtney received that really stand out for her. To feel accepted, heard, and supported as a young single mother is so important and something incredibly special. With the support of the group, Courtney chased her dream of starting her own business. She enrolled in a distance education program for Early Childhood Education, and began taking steps to open her very own registered day home.

Through countless long, sleepless nights, Courtney pushed through parenting her young son, studying for school, and accessing funding to start her business. When she felt defeated and wondered if all her hard work would be worth it, her circle of support through Momma Moments kept her going. Her peers and the program facilitator continued to believe in her, and ultimately helped Courtney believe in herself. On days when no Momma Moments meetings were scheduled, Courtney would still receive messages of encouragement from friends and staff cheering her on.

Courtney has come a long way from when she first attended the Momma Moments group. These days, she runs her own day home business, and would eventually like to expand to operate two locations. Though she can no longer attend Momma Moments group sessions as much as she would like, she is sure to be there as often as she can, and knows that she will always have the support of the group. She will always feel the huge sense of belonging, community, and appreciation for the Momma Moments program, for her peers, and for the staff at Choices for Youth.

Our programs

MOVING FORWARD

“ We’ve reduced their reliance on hospital services and helped them work through skills training related to addressing their mental health challenges.

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORTS

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

Young people in our communities face numerous challenges, including mental health, addictions, and developmental issues; a lack of appropriate social and/or family support; and involvement in the criminal justice system. With an extensive gap in social programming, and wait times and eligibility criteria that create barriers to access what is available, too many young people are unable to reach their potential.

The Moving Forward (MF) program was created in recognition of this gap, which was shown to us through the lived experiences of the youth we serve, as well as research programs and dialogue with mental health associations across Canada. The program is built on a commitment to individualized assessment and customized support for every participant. We believe that with the appropriate mix of intensive supports, youth struggling with complex mental health issues can successfully live on their own in the community.

We were fortunate enough this past year to offer MF participants more than just programming supports. Often the youth we’re working with miss out on the normal experiences of their peers. Organizing a small get together of the program participants for Christmas dinner was an opportunity to provide such an experience. One young person shared with us that he was “touched by the Christmas dinner and it was one of the nicest ones he had ever experienced”.

The staff of Moving Forward have been working exceptionally hard alongside our clients. Through positive, trusting and nurturing relationships we’ve achieved attendance rates of 75-80% for individualized support meetings with our youth. We’ve reduced their reliance on hospital services and helped them work through skills training related to addressing their mental health challenges. We’ve also invested a lot of time understanding how our services compliment and can work in conjunction with other community groups such as Stella’s Circle.

In addition to focusing on getting youth housed, the program continues to provide personal development opportunities such as managing money, building relationships, and self-care – all of which help participants develop a set of tools to tackle their mental health challenges. With issues ranging from depression, to anxiety, to bi-polar disorder, techniques such as meditation, Dialectic Behaviour Therapy, and role-modelling of staff can have a tremendous impact on the individual’s ability to function in a healthy and positive manner.

Finally, this past year we were also able to complete a comprehensive evaluation of the Moving Forward Program with the help of *Focus Research and Evaluation*. This was a major milestone in understanding how well the complex mental health needs of young people were being met by the program and is a testament to our commitment to continuous learning and improvement in order best serve our youth.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

In 2014, **17 youth participants** aged 16-24 were involved with Moving Forward.

- 2578 visits offered
- 2066 visits attended
- 75% of participants were able to secure stable housing
- 80% of participants attended all medical, psychiatry, legal, school, dental, optical and counseling appointments (over 1800 appointments)
- Over 500 meals provided to young people

RICK PITTMAN

FORMER CHOICES FOR YOUTH CLIENT AND
POLICY ANALYST



On the surface, Rick Pittman's story seems like one that many have experienced. His parents divorced when he was 7 years old, and for some time after the divorce, he bounced back and forth from parent to parent as they all adjusted to a new lifestyle. For Rick, the reality extended well beyond this already difficult situation. He was experiencing physical and emotional abuse at home, severe bullying at school, and was diagnosed with a rare and life-threatening kidney disease. At just 12 years-old, Rick became a ward of the court when his parents placed him in permanent foster care.

Life in the foster care system didn't allow any reprieve for Rick. The home he was placed in was unstable, and soon Rick found himself in an ongoing state of crisis. After seeing a pamphlet outlining the programs and services offered by Choices for Youth (CFY), Rick made the decision to reach out and take steps toward a healthier and more stable life. Beginning in 1994, Rick was actively involved with CFY for almost six years. He started in the semi-dependent transitional housing program, and eventually graduated to the independent transitional housing program, both of which are now a part of RallyHaven at CFY.

Initially, it was the possibility of stability and empowerment that attracted Rick to CFY. His childhood had brought him through 6 different foster homes and 12 different schools. He was ready for CFY's philosophy of mutual accountability and appreciated the boundaries set in place for him. He knew that by following the guidelines and adhering to some straight-forward principles, he would be given a stable and nurturing place to grow as a youth and into a young adult.

Though he experienced struggles with trauma and family breakdown, the biggest challenge that Rick faced as a young person was finding stable housing. Once CFY helped him gain access to this, Rick was able to work through other barriers drawn from his experiences as a young person facing emotional distress from years spent in the system. At CFY, Rick was able to mature as a person, obtain his first job, complete high school with honors, and proceed to post-secondary education where he completed a diploma in Computer Studies from the College of the North Atlantic, and a diploma in Business Administration from CompuCollege, as well as a Bachelor of Commerce from Thompson Rivers University. The stability and independence provided by CFY gave him the life skills he needed to move forward and achieve his personal goals.

These days, Rick spends his weekdays working full-time as a Policy Analyst with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. He loves travelling with his supportive wife, watching his puppy grow, and looks forward to becoming a better person every day. Though he faced huge struggles in his childhood, he calls CFY "the best thing to ever happen to [him]". He remembers the feeling of empowerment upon entering the program, the great feeling of finding his first apartment and furnishing it, the many CFY events, and the amazing staff members who made his journey possible: Bernadette Duke, Eric Skoglund, Rob Fildes (the "Youth Whisperer"), Diane Molloy, Kevin Parsons and Connie Haas. Whether it was connecting him with resources, education, shooting hoops, going to a movie or helping him develop healthy relationships – to Rick each staff member gave him the family he never had.

In addition to helping him to achieve his own potential, Rick's time with CFY also impacted the way he views the world and the people in it. Rick prides himself on being non-judgmental, and recognizes that everyone has a unique set of circumstances that have led them to where they are today. He knows that success is relative to the individual, and is thankful that CFY helped him to achieve his own successes.

Thinking of the future, Rick is hopeful that young people who encounter problems will not be labeled as "hard cases" or "lost causes." He hopes that by celebrating successes, we can help eliminate stigma and create a more inclusive and productive society. With the right supports, such as those offered by CFY, all youth can be on a level playing field and unlock their true potential.



Our programs

RALLYHAVEN

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORTS

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

Access to supportive housing options is essential in preventing youth homelessness and at Choices for Youth, getting youth housed is our first priority. RallyHaven is one of three housing options we provide. With eleven units spread over four houses in St. John's, the RallyHaven program provides long-term supportive housing to any youth at risk of homelessness. Residents receive individualized and regular supports while in the program, and we continue follow up after they have exited – inviting them to social events, community meals, and other activities happening through our Outreach and Youth Engagement Program.

“

The young people that come through our program are able to make meaningful, healthy decisions by accessing support at CFY, and are able to transition to a stable adulthood at their own pace.

While the RallyHaven Program essentially provides at-risk youth access to affordable housing paired with a system of supports, the impact on our residents is indicative of how these two elements together can truly transform a young person's life. The young people that come through our program are able to make meaningful, healthy decisions by accessing supports at CFY, and are able to transition to a stable adulthood at their own pace.

This year, one particular resident who had been with us for over 5 years, was able to move out of their Rallyhaven home and into their own independent apartment. This was a huge success both for this young person and our program, and is exactly what we want to see: young people learning the necessary skills to be able to live at a level of independence that best suits their needs. This client is now happy and moving forward with ongoing and collaborative support from CFY and Stella's Circle.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

In 2014, of the **11 at-risk youth** housed through RallyHaven:

- 7 have completed pre-employment programs
 - 4 have secured stable employment
 - 1 has secured their own apartment and has transitioned to independent living (collaboration with Stella's Circle)
-
- Currently building 6 brand new affordable housing units.
 - Provided over 550 meals to young people.

MENTAL WELLNESS & ANTI-STIGMA

“ Providing supports for mental health is a critical component to a young person’s recovery and overall wellbeing.

– Paula Soper, *Moving Forward*

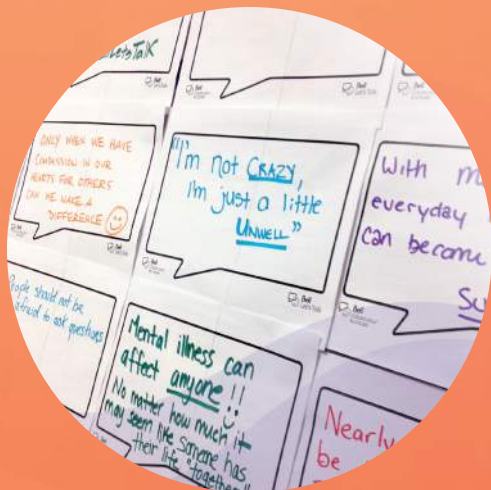
ANTI-STIGMA POST-IT PROJECT

This past winter, the Youth Leadership Council (YLC) partnered with the Metro Youth Mental Health Committee (MYMHCNL) to share post-it notes with positive affirmations around the community. On March 30, these post-it notes were placed in high schools, businesses, and various locations around St. John’s, showcasing little bits of positivity to make the day better for those who read them. Messages like “You are special!” and “Keep on going, the work is worth it!” were featured on the post-it notes to encourage the idea that kind words can go a long way to support someone’s mental wellbeing.

Both the YLC and MYMHCNL participated in the project, and captured the attention of social media on the hashtag #postitproject. It was powerful to hear from many individuals how the affirmations impacted them, and how a small act of kindness could have such a large effect.



BELL LET'S TALK DAY



Bell Let's Talk day is an annual event across Canada with the goal to raise awareness about, and to help end stigma surrounding mental health. This year, Choices for Youth shared statistics, quotes and resources throughout the day – adding to the day-long national dialogue on mental health. In addition to online initiatives, we brought the campaign to a community supper at the Outreach and Youth Engagement Centre. Young people were encouraged to share thoughts about mental health by capturing an idea, feeling, or suggestion. The level of participation and reaction from youth was immensely positive and enlightening to staff members and young people alike. Today, the messages created by young people remain posted on a wall at the Outreach Centre as a reminder of the ongoing fight against stigma and the barriers that remain for many people who need access to mental health supports.

HEADSTRONG SUMMIT

On April 24 and 25, the Youth Leadership Council (YLC) partnered with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) and Metro Youth Mental Health Committee (MYMHCNL) on the delivery of a Youth Mental Wellness Conference for students across Newfoundland and Labrador. After months of planning and coordination between both groups, the conference succeeded in spreading awareness and information about mental health to young people and combatting stigma around mental health struggles. Over 300 young people from across Newfoundland and Labrador gathered to share awareness and information about mental health, and to combat the stigma associated with mental illness. After hearing personal stories from their peers, participating in group sessions to brainstorm ways to combat stigma, and various break-out activities to promote the mental wellbeing of participants, attendees were encouraged to take the information they learned back to their schools in order to continue to raise awareness about mental health. A group of youth from the YLC presented their stories of hope and recovery, and engaged the students in thought-provoking activities aimed at highlighting the realities of experiencing stigma. The YLC has also participated in pre- and post-summit activities to ensure the conversation surrounding mental health continues.



Featured Staff Member

SHIRLEY DELANEY

TEAM LEAD WITH THE LILLY PROGRAM AND
DEDICATED CHANGE MAKER



Shirley Delaney has been a staff member at Choices for Youth (CFY) for over 18 years. Since she started in June of 1996, she has witnessed first-hand how CFY has evolved in providing supports for at-risk youth in Newfoundland and Labrador. Shirley has held many positions across CFY and in 2010 she welcomed the opportunity to be Team Lead at The Lilly.

Before CFY, Shirley worked in a group home setting, as a home parent to four individuals living with developmental challenges. When the opportunity came up at CFY she knew her past experiences and degree in sociology would be a perfect fit. Over the years, Shirley has worked directly with hundreds of young people and notes that “each youth is memorable in their own individual way.” The connection that she has formed with youth over her years of service remains strong to this day. Most recently, she was invited by a former CFY youth to their child’s christening.

One of Shirley’s fondest memories dates back to when CFY had a very small office on the second floor of the S’Pairs Optical building on LeMarchant Road. She recalls the tiny kitchen and cramped dining space that would fill up with young people as the staff prepared turkey dinner for special occasions. CFY has since moved on to bigger spaces, but the relationship with community partners like S’Pairs Optical still remain. Recently, Shirley took a young person to S’Pairs for a pair of glasses. After all those years, the young person received a fantastic price simply because the business remembered the work of CFY and why it was important to support at-risk youth. Shirley expresses that partnerships like these are instrumental because so often we rely on the local community as a part of the broader support network available to our youth.

“Organizations like Stella Burry, the Murphy Centre... and Eastern Health are imperative to the services we provide to young people. These partnerships have often allowed me to connect a young person to support groups, or secure funding for school and health services that would otherwise have been difficult for them to navigate.” Shirley goes on to say, “Partnerships, donations, gifts – these things give young people a sense of community and a chance to witness the kindness within it.”

Reflecting on her work, Shirley says she is motivated largely by the amazing team that surrounds her. Their unity and dedication in making sure young people are supported is immeasurable and is the main reason that she’s been with CFY for so many years. In addition to a great team, Shirley recognizes the organization’s leadership. The former Executive Director, Wanda Crocker, current Executive Director, Sheldon Pollett, past Lilly Coordinator Jenny Wright, and current Lilly Coordinator Heather Roberts, have all contributed in enormous ways and have helped to create a more positive and hopeful landscape for at-risk youth. Shirley has also found a lifelong friend and mentor in colleague Kathy Noble. Having started together as part of a small team, their relationship has transformed into an important and treasured friendship.

Perhaps most notable about Shirley’s journey with CFY is that it isn’t even close to being over. She looks ahead, 5 to 10 years from now, with optimism and anticipation. She believes the organization is growing in the right direction and though she remains concerned about on-going issues impacting youth in our community, it’s these same young people and their resilience that give her hope.

“There are opportunities to learn from young people each and every day, and the connections that I make are rewarding and last a lifetime. I see a lot of our young people leaving this organization stronger and better prepared to handle the challenges that life often throws at you, and I think that these young people are doing the same for me.”

Our programs

THE LILLY



CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORTS

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

For many of the youth we work with, living in unstable and unsafe conditions has been the only life they have known. To us, housing is the first priority and is an essential step in making a healthy transition to stability and independence.

The Lilly is a housing model for at-risk youth that works. Both the programming and the physical layout of the building promote a sense of community, while maintaining individual home spaces in a youth-friendly environment. Residents work with staff through individual support models targeted at removing lifestyle, housing, educational, and employment barriers to finding security and stability.

“

The Lilly has become the first place, in 17 years and 16 different homes, where I can actually be myself, trust the adults around me, feel safe, smile and laugh more than frown and cry, a place where I feel like not only do I belong, but I am wanted. It's the first place where I'm learning that I really am loveable and that I'm loved by so many... the thought of that is so surreal but I actually feel it. I feel loved. I feel wanted. I feel like I'm actually just as good for this building as this building is for me... This program, the staff that run this program and the overall atmosphere of this building has not only created a safe place for me to live but also a safe feeling inside where I am able to really work on myself and my mental health.”

– Jessica Wall

Youth Resident at The Lilly

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

In 2014, the Lilly housed **21 residents**, all working towards personal goals.

- 4 youth graduated from high school
- 3 youth worked on completing employment programming
- 1 youth worked on completing semesters at MUN
- 1 youth worked on completing their GED

This past year, the Lilly was home to 21 amazing youth who were immensely motivated to accomplish their goals and make meaningful life changes in their lives. Each youth worked on their personal goals while attending employment and educational programs or while working – in some cases both.

This determination has resulted in numerous successes and proud moments. We've had 4 youth graduate from high school, one of which was awarded with a scholarship to attend MUN in September.

Our programs

OUTREACH & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

“ We see an average of 60 young people each day for a warm meal, a listening ear, or just a place to feel safe.

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORTS

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

The Outreach and Youth Engagement (OYE) Program is often the first point of contact with the most vulnerable young people in our community. Every day, we meet individuals seeking anything from personal care items to access to a phone; from medical care to legal assistance; or from a hot meal to a meaningful conversation. In all of this, OYE is consistently working longer term, helping youth work toward safe and supportive housing, improved wellness, and increased support systems. In addition to general programming and supports, the OYE program hosts our drop-in meals, weekly community suppers, and the Youth in Transitions, Momma Moments, and Jumpstart programs.

Outreach and Youth Engagement is a lively, spirited program that continues to engage youth from across the community. We pride ourselves in helping youth at various stages of their life, and try to find the best-suited program for them, or, we connect them with community partners who are able to help them in whatever capacity they need. We see an average of 60 young people each day for a warm meal, a listening ear, or just a place to feel safe.

MOMMA MOMENTS

The programming that operates out of the Outreach Centre continues to be a vital part of the work done at Choices for Youth. The Momma Moments program is thriving, and has had tremendous success in supporting young mothers with housing, education, employment, and the everyday trials of being a young mom. Each mother in the program has experienced her own success this year, whether it be in finding safe, suitable housing; being reunited with family; or completing a post-secondary trade program and finding full-time employment.

A highlight from this past year is the Wellness Retreat planned for the young moms with the support of community partners. This was an opportunity for the moms to regroup and take some time to focus on being their best selves. With a focus on healthy living, food safety, and vision boards for each young mom, this was an invaluable experience for the group. Many thanks to The Wilds, Legal Aid, At Your Service Food Industry Training, Costco, Pirate Cabs, and the United Way of Newfoundland and Labrador for making this experience possible.

IN THE PAST YEAR

- 42 Moms, 54 Babies and Children
- 100% reporting healthier eating habits
- 98% have received support to access additional resources in the community
- 95% participate in peer-to-peer discussion during facilitated sessions
- 89% have received access to public health and counseling
- 83% have received access to legal aid
- 41% are actively pursuing education opportunities
- 33% participate in group activities beyond formal sessions
- 17% have secured safe and affordable housing
- 14% have secured employment
- 10% are actively planning for their child's education

JUMPSTART

This year we operated two semesters of Jumpstart, a pre-employment program that teaches young people life skills that are useful in gaining employment and entrance to educational programs. Youth in this program were exposed to sessions focusing on workplace responsibility, team work, and financial management. These opportunities are hosted at CFY's Outreach Kitchen, where the Jumpstart participants plan, prepare, and cook daily meals for drop-in over the course of the program. Additionally, this past year has had a large emphasis on artwork – painting to help beautify and build collective ownership of the space at the Outreach Centre.

At the close of each program cycle, our Jumpstart graduation ceremonies bring together community partners, staff, family, and friends to celebrate the successes of the youth who have completed Jumpstart and are ready to take on new challenges of personal development.

IN THE PAST YEAR

- 29 Youth have completed the program
- 16 Have continued to further their education
- 23 Have gone on to gain stable employment
- 28 Have been able to secure stable housing
- 29 have successfully accessed financial supports

YOUTH IN TRANSITIONS

The Youth in Transitions program also operates out of the Outreach Centre in partnership with the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. This program gives training in life skills to up to 60 individuals, while also providing them with individualized support as necessary. This year, there was a shy young man referred to our Youth in Transitions program. During his time with the program, he focused on his self-worth and building self-esteem, and navigated through his education and future employment goals. While participating in the Youth in Transitions program, this young man was able to obtain his high school credits, and was referred to the Train for Trades (T4T) program at Choices for Youth. Since moving on to T4T, he has been reliable and dedicated to both the educational and the hands-on trade components of the program.

IN THE PAST YEAR

- 61 youth have been referred into the program and are accessing supports based on their unique circumstance
- 91% have created Individual Life Skills Support Plans

OYE OVERALL

Close to 1,000 youth have come seeking supports

- 12,777 Meals Served
- 624 Requests for Housing Assistance
- 515 Requests for Employment Supports
- 383 Requests for Education Supports



A FULL HOUSE AT THE JUMPSTART GRADUATION CEREMONY ►



Our programs

YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORTS

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

Partnerships with national and community agencies, local businesses, researchers, and government are absolutely critical to our work. The fact is, however, that none of these can substitute the knowledge, perspective and insight that come from lived experiences.

While our organization consistently works to bring youth voices to our decision-making table and ensures that their unique lived realities inform and critique the programs that exist for them, the Youth Leadership Council is a formalized structure to ensure this practice is consistent and top of mind.

The Council is a group of self-identified leaders who avail of various services from Choices for Youth. Through their work, they spread awareness on the realities of living at-risk and facing homelessness, educate people on the impact that resources and programming can have, and direct a model of collaboration that we believe can make our work truly transformative.

Today, the Youth Leadership Council (YLC) is operating as a formalized, embedded and critical piece of the Choices for Youth ecosystem. With dedicated staff support, an operating budget and guidance from leaders across the sector, the YLC is positioned to deliver tremendous impact through the power of their lived experiences. From workshops designed for healthcare professionals, to organizing awareness campaigns, to helping community agencies better understand the challenges facing at-risk youth, the YLC is a powerful part of what it means to truly focus on the needs of young people.

The past year has been amazing for the Youth Leadership Council. The Council became the newest official program at Choices for Youth, and they created a formal structure, executive, and policies to ensure that the work they do can someday be considered a promising practice for many youth-based organizations. The group gained 6 new members, and brought the Council to its maximum capacity of 12 individuals who are eager to create change both within CFY and in the community.

In addition to new members, the YLC launched their social media accounts in hopes of broadening their reach. These communications strategies increase awareness of the YLC, as well as give the Council opportunities to voice their opinions and experiences on the issues they face as at-risk youth. During the youth mental health conference held in St. John's this year – which the YLC was actively involved in executing – the YLC promoted #YouthMatter to help engage students in awareness activities. This hashtag has evolved to **#YouthMatterNL** and will continue to be used to spread awareness about the importance of youth-based engagement and support.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

- The group planned and executed two successful strategic planning days
- 9 presentations of the YLC Self Injury Prevention Workshops
- 5 youth created and presented a Bullying Workshop at a local high school
- 4 youth presented at the Youth Mental Wellness Conference through MHCC
- 4 youth travelled to represent the YLC at national conferences and summits



Our programs

SHELTER FOR YOUNG MEN



“ We go above and beyond whenever possible to help them in whatever aspect of their life that they need support.

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORTS

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

Setting aside the hard work and incredible resilience it takes to change one's life for the better, many of the youth we meet are living in a state of crisis. In this reality, decisions are focused on the immediate needs of food, safety and shelter, rather than goals that could lead to overall healthier lives.

The Shelter for Young Men is an intervention point for youth between the ages of 16 and 29 who identify as male. Youth are able to stay at the shelter for up to a month, while working on their housing plan and connecting to other financial or support services.

One experience that stands out this year involves a young man who had stayed at the shelter for just over a month. By the end of his stay we had connected him to community supports with Eastern Health, and helped him patch up his relationship with his mother. He was eventually able to return home, and this time with the supports he needed in place.

Generally, there is so much more to what's going on with each young person we encounter beyond the basic lack of shelter. We go above and beyond whenever possible to help them in whatever aspect of their life that they need support. There have been a few young men that were really struggling with addictions, and it was really important to us to be able to keep them safe and eventually see them go to residential treatment.

Part of the reason the Shelter exists is the lack of suitable and safe housing in the market – this is a constant challenge. The apartments and houses youth have access to are often terrible, and they face a lot of prejudice if they mention their time with Choices for Youth, or that they are on income support. This is really unfortunate, as these are young men who are trying to improve their lives and being judged negatively for accessing supports that will help them succeed.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

In 2014, we had a **92.82% Occupancy Rate**

- 149 Shelter Stays (98 individuals)
- 139 Turn Aways (primarily due to lack of available beds)
- Average Length of Stay: 20.46 days
- Average Age of Residents: 21.66
- 1928 Interventions (legal, housing supports, etc.)*
- Provided over 3200 meals to young people

** Note that the interventions are only from the period of October 1st, 2014-March 31, 2015*

AN END TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

As an organization working in this field for 25 years, we can say with certainty that youth homelessness can be ended. It is a problem born out of a series of complex factors that contribute to the tragedy of young people not having a roof over their heads, and it is a problem that we've all helped create.

Here's the silver lining – if we created the problem, we can create the solution.

On December 4 and 5 2014, with the support of local and national partners, the first-ever Community Planning Institute on Youth Homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador was held in St. John's, led by Choices for Youth. This Institute was an opportunity to learn from communities across the country and to see how we can mobilize our energy, creativity, resources and political will to ensure that every youth has a safe place to live and a supportive community to care for them.

- The objectives:
1. Obtain a clear understanding of the causes, impacts and costs of youth homelessness
 2. Learn how other Canadian communities are planning to end youth homelessness
 3. Frame out what a Newfoundland and Labrador plan should include
 4. Lay the foundation for the development of a unified and integrated response to preventing and ending youth homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador

In an effort to seed such a vision, the forum brought together senior officials of all three levels of government, service agencies working in the field of homelessness across Canada, groups representing youth and Aboriginal members, post-secondary institutions, the business community, and other interested persons and organizations.

In Canada, there are approximately 65,000 homeless youth. This represents the fastest growing and most underserved segments of the homeless population across the country¹. In Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), while many of these at-risk youth congregate in city centers, the issue is truly provincial in scope.

According to End Homelessness St. John's, shelter statistics from 2012 reveal that youth ages 16-24 comprise 30% of St. John's emergency shelter population. This is 10% higher than the national average and a number that is growing.

“

No single entity, organization, or even level of government can end homelessness. It's not about shelters retooling or the housing sector doing more – it's about prisons not releasing people without a release plan. It's about child and youth welfare not delivering individuals into the adult system without the necessary bridging supports – this is where we see significant entry points into homelessness.

It's been a creation of many hands, and it takes all those many hands to craft an effective response to the problem. It takes trust, understanding, and respect to bring those silos together.

– **Bruce Pearce**, *End Homelessness St. John's*

¹ Government of Alberta, "Supporting Healthy and Successful Transitions to Adulthood: A Plan to Prevent and Reduce Youth Homelessness" vibrantcanada.ca/files/plan-to-prevent-and-reduce-youth-homelessness.pdf

To address the issues that entrench youth in cycles of homelessness and create barriers to individual success, we must embrace a Housing First Approach, adapted to meet the unique needs of youth². This approach acknowledges the tremendous need to house young people as quickly as possible, and provides a cohesive system of supports around each youth. Mitigating further issues from arising while alleviating the stress of homelessness, these intensive models of support invariably lead to increased engagement, options, stability, independence, and ultimately, a more successful and healthy transition to adulthood.

In addition to a Housing First Framework for Youth³, we must also re-examine traditional approaches to homelessness. Traditional efforts have focused on providing emergency services – shelter, food, clothing, etc. While critical, these components are insufficient on their own, and do not address the scope of individual issues. There is a need to shift our thinking, resources and investment away from such emergency responses and toward a strategy that focuses primarily on prevention, housing, and supports.

If we compare these traditional responses to medicine, it is difficult to imagine delivering all health care exclusively through the Emergency Room. Like responses to homelessness, emergency care is a necessary crisis response – but not a long term solution.

A SHIFT IN APPROACH (FROM GAETZ, STEPHEN, “A SAFE AND DECENT PLACE TO LIVE - TOWARDS A HOUSING FIRST FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH”)

Traditional Response



Strategic Response



Many Canadian communities have taken steps to create plans to end youth homelessness. It is our belief that through careful review of these plans, open dialogue with peers, and a focus on learning, that we can do the same in Newfoundland and Labrador. To that effect, Choices for Youth recently launched a new report titled “Towards a Solution – Creating a Plan to End Youth Homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador.” Right now, conversations across agencies and all levels of government, sparked by this document, are leading us towards an integrative and collaborative plan to end youth homelessness formalized in our province by the summer of 2016.

² Gaetz, Stephen, “A Safe and Decent Place to Live | Towards a Housing First Framework for Youth”, Report 12, Homeless Hub Report Series, York University, homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/HFFWYouth-FullReport_0.pdf

³ *Ibid.*

Find the full report at
choicesforyouth.ca/tas

TRAVIS FOWLER

TIER 3 MEMBER WITH TRAIN FOR TRADES, YLC
MEMBER AT LARGE, ASPIRING HOME BUILDING



Travis has been involved with Choices for Youth since 2008. An unstable home life and volatile family relationships found him out on the streets at the age of 17. He didn't know of any place in his hometown to get help, so he reached out to Eastern Health which put him in contact with Choices for Youth.

As a young man struggling to combat many of life's challenges, Travis' move to St. John's in order to get help from CFY was not easy. His first living arrangement in St. John's found him surrounded with people who were tangled up in drugs, violence, and

regular visits from the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. These tumultuous circumstances were compacted by the struggle of moving to a new city, attending a new school, and having to make new friends – all while suffering from depression and anxiety.

Through CFY, Travis was able to find safer, stable housing with the Lilly and Transitional Housing (now RallyHaven). Travis recognizes that accessing suitable housing played a large role in changing his life. While at the Lilly, Travis was connected with a Skills Link program to learn essential employment skills. He was able to gain entry to the Murphy Centre to upgrade and finish his high school education, and became a Train for Trades participant where he is now a Tier 3 member. Beyond specific programming, Travis was able to access counselling for mental health and addictions issues, participate in workshops to become a more confident and motivational public speaker, and build personal relationships with other CFY participants, many of whom he now considers to be his family. He is incredibly thankful to the Choices staff for helping him see his own potential and never letting him give up. Raylene, Shirley, Lisa, Ronnie, Corey, and Ros are just a few of the staff who helped him turn his life around.

“

Some days are rough but if you fight through it, there's something always worth it in the end!

Since first encountering CFY almost 7 years ago, Travis has worked hard to transform into a man of many skills and achievements. His day-to-day struggles have been challenging, but in many ways they have made his achievements and positive memories even more worthwhile and impressive. He fondly recalls Christmases at the Lilly, which were so festive and warm, and so different than Christmases of his childhood. He has won numerous awards and accolades at Choices for Youth, and has co-hosted the CFY Annual General Meeting for two consecutive years. Furthermore, Travis is an active member of the Youth Leadership Council (YLC), where serves as the substitute Co-Director. Recently, Travis also led a session at the provincial MHCC HeadStrong Summit, where he shared his personal story in order to inspire and motivate young people to see the opportunity to change their own stories.

Despite a challenging past, Travis has an incredibly bright future ahead of him. In May, Travis was accepted into a post-secondary program to become a carpenter. He intends to complete his education and one day design and build his own dream home. He is appreciative of all the lessons he has learned, and intends to continue to advocate for young people facing the struggles that he has experienced himself. He knows that he is only at the beginning of his journey, and takes it one day at a time. "Some days are rough but if you fight through it, there's something always worth it in the end!"

Our programs

TRAIN FOR TRADES

“

We've done a lot of work to understand how to best structure the team and manage our projects to both maximize the impact and supports for youth.

CRISIS RESPONSE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

TARGETED SUPPORTS

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

A crucial phase in our employment programming is an individual's transition from dependency on income support, and other support systems, to long-term sustainable and viable employment. This is essential in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Train for Trades provides basic safety, construction training and employment for at-risk youth. As an emerging social enterprise, we work on energy retrofits, custom contracts, as well as modernization and improvement projects. Youth are provided supports to help them progress with their training and well-being, allowing them to take on varying level of responsibility for any given project.

Representing a powerful combination of skills training, employment supports and individualized personal supports, this is truly a unique program. The combination of a structured work environment and a comprehensive and consistent continuum of support options help youth achieve their long term goals and realize their potential.

We've been really busy as a team. With over 65 projects completed in the past year, we've learned quite a bit on how to best support at-risk youth while providing a meaningful employment opportunity. The value of the training and experiences we're offering is evident through conversations with our clients. Recently, we actually had to say goodbye to an incredible young individual. He was so successful in progressing through his challenges and work that he proceeded to be hired in partnership with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. This was a huge success for him and for us.

One of the exciting challenges for Train for Trades has been making the shift to operate sustainably as a social enterprise. We've done a lot of work to understand how to best structure the team and manage our projects to both maximize the impact and supports for youth, and operate efficiently and effectively in a competitive market. The transition to a social enterprise is exactly what Train for Trades needed to inject fresh perspective and motivation in both our staff and youth.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

Since its inception, 49 youth have completed the T4T Program.

- 55% of program alumni are employed
- 9% of program alumni are enrolled in post-secondary education
- 2% of program alumni are also enrolled in other programming

- 56 Energy Retrofit projects completed
- 60 Energy Retrofit projects currently in progress
- 2 Full Modernization and Improvement projects completed
- 1 Full Modernization and Improvement project in progress
- Completed upgrades at the Native Friendship Center & Choices for Youth's Outreach Centre
- Completed numerous internal maintenance contracts
- Building of new housing units for RallyHaven in progress

SHARING BEST PRACTICES & LEADING BY EXAMPLE

TRAIN FOR TRADES FEATURED IN HOMELESS HUB'S NATIONAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT TOOLKIT

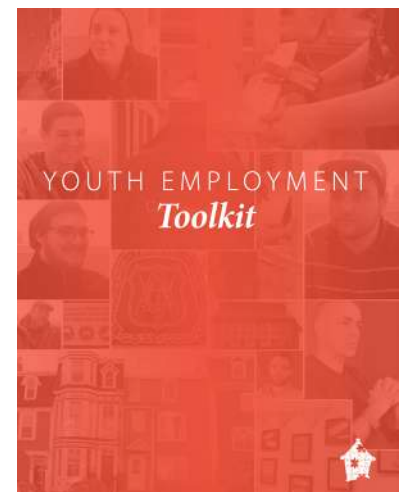
This year, Train for Trades was showcased in a national learning toolkit, produced by the Homeless Hub, as a model for effective employment for at-risk youth. The development of the toolkit required heavy consultation with Train for Trades staff and participants, as well as involvement of CFY Executive Director, community partners from the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, the Carpenters Millwright College, and the Homeless Hub.

The toolkit serves as a guide to allow service providers, employers, and support workers across the country to apply a base model to create and effectively operate a youth employment program for at-risk youth. Train for Trades is offered as a case study, with an in-depth analysis of structure, financials, outcomes and strategy. It demonstrates clearly that at-risk youth can obtain, maintain and thrive if given employment opportunities, while simultaneously being offered individualized supports.

To be featured in this way, to be showcased as a best practice across the country, and to promote a culture of sharing and learning among organizations both large and small is a tremendous accomplishment for us, and one that we are incredibly proud of. Not only does it validate the successes of the program participants, but it reinforces the need for key partnerships on a local and national level in order to provide the best possible opportunities for at-risk youth in our communities.

As youth homelessness is different from adult homelessness, so is youth and adult unemployment. Youth face higher rates of unemployment, tend to experience more frequent periods of unemployment, and face barriers linked to education levels. Paired with the complex factors associated with youth homelessness – the possibility of trauma, family breakdown, mental health challenges, addictions, and involvement with the justice system – these employment challenges present numerous problems for youth in our province.

Train for Trades differs from traditional employment programs in that it responds to the needs of at-risk youth. To break it down: a young person will find it difficult to show up to work on Monday morning if they are focused on where they will sleep on Sunday night. Train for Trades does not just provide employment – it also provides support. This may involve housing support, educational or legal intervention, connections to mental health and addictions resources – whatever a youth needs to help them come to work. The result is that the longer the young person is employed, the more motivation they have to stay employed and reap the benefits of stable employment along with a more stable lifestyle. Train for Trades accomplishes this by providing employment, training, and support under the umbrella of one program.



Find the full toolkit at homelesshub.ca

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PARTNERS FOR MAKING THIS WORK POSSIBLE

We especially acknowledge those who have supported us financially. Your generous contributions have a direct impact on the lives of young people.



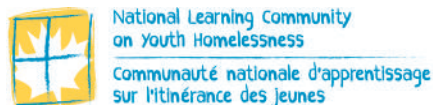
THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PARTNERS
FOR MAKING THIS WORK POSSIBLE



ST. JOHN'S



JUMPING BEAN COFFEE COMPANY 100 WOMEN WHO GIVE A DAMN
COFFEE MATTERS GROUP M5
JJ'S SERVICE CENTRE THE ELKS OF CANADA
100 MEN WHO GIVE A DAMN MOKSHA YOGA ST. JOHN'S



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