

FEBRUARY 2020



# turning points

IMPACT  
REPORT

SAFETY,  
SUPPORT &  
COMMUNITY

WHY I BECAME A  
YWCA TORONTO TURNING  
POINT PARTNER



A TURNING POINT  
FOR WOMEN



## A NOTE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

We live in challenging times. Government funding is shrinking while poverty, gender-based violence and a severe lack of affordable housing continue to push the homelessness crisis in our city to unprecedented levels.

But you make these challenging times into transformational ones. Because of you, the over 13,000 women and their families whom we are privileged to serve at YWCA Toronto every year, can find emergency shelter when in crisis, get the training and employment help they need to build bright futures and access the myriad of supports necessary to find and keep an affordable place to call home.

I am forever grateful for you, your compassion and your commitment to transforming the lives of women and girls in Toronto.



*Heather M. McGregor*

Heather M. McGregor,  
Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Toronto

I hope it makes you proud to read about your incredible impact on so many lives which are better because you cared. In this issue: Kayla Chambers, our Davenport Shelter's Community Liaison Worker tells you about building community through programming; a new Turning Point Partner shares their story of what inspired them to give; our 2019 Shelter Snapshot shows your impact in just one area of our work; and more.

As we head into a new decade, I am very thankful to know that you will continue to stand with us to champion women and girls. Together, we will work to make hope possible and make our city, and our world, more equitable.



PHOTO | KAYLA CHAMBERS, COMMUNITY LIAISON WORKER,  
YWCA TORONTO DAVENPORT SHELTER

## SAFETY, SUPPORT & COMMUNITY

*A year ago, YWCA Toronto opened its newest emergency shelter, in response to the city's critical shortage of shelter beds. Since then, Davenport Shelter has provided safety, support and community to more than 400 residents. Kayla Chambers, the Shelter's Community Liaison Worker, talks about its impact.*

As the Community Liaison Worker at YWCA Toronto Davenport Shelter, my focus is on building community through programming and developing relationships within the wider neighbourhood. Living in a shelter can be stressful and isolating, and finding ways for our residents to connect is important. I am passionate about the power of shared experiences to bring people together.

At the shelter, we run approximately 15 programs a month, from expressive arts, mindfulness and yoga, to more practical workshops like budgeting and job search support. Often, community partners visit to present on topics such as healthy relationships and trans-inclusion. It's rewarding seeing our residents engaging in something new and sharing knowledge with each other.

We work with residents to reduce barriers and build a supportive community. Staff care about building positive rapport with residents by actively listening, joining in programming, or just sharing a laugh. We have a diverse population, which includes people of varied ages, cultural backgrounds, and gender identities and expressions.

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We are also one of very few shelters that allow pets, so we see many people who have had difficulties finding a bed because they are worried about leaving their animal companions.

The sense of community here is unique. It's often the reason people feel able to stay and access support. Many of our residents who reach the end of their six-month stay return almost immediately because they feel safer here. Last year, 55 of our residents found housing. That's something we're really proud of.



in the dining area. That can make it difficult for participants to be vulnerable, but at the same time it means group activities are more open and inclusive.

More than anything else, I'm really struck by the way residents look out for one another. We have residents offering free haircuts, helping with pet sitting, or providing tutoring support. There are even a few people who have met at the shelter, become close friends and eventually found housing together. That really speaks to the strength of our community.

We have also had a great response from the wider community since we opened. Our neighbours and community partners are eager to connect, and there have been lots of donations and requests to volunteer, especially around the holidays. I am focused on continuing to strengthen those relationships in the coming months.

There are definitely challenges, too. Meeting residents' diverse needs isn't always easy in a communal environment. Space is currently limited, so we hold all our programs

Renovations are currently underway to expand Davenport Shelter, adding almost 20 extra beds, a brand new kitchen and dining area, and more communal space for residents. Kayla is particularly excited about a learning kitchen for residents, where she will be able to run cooking workshops, plan shared meals, and further strengthen the shelter community.



## YWCA TORONTO 2019 SHELTER SNAPSHOT

**4** YWCA Toronto emergency shelters

**177** shelter beds

**963** people supported

**60,448** meals & snacks served

**19,191** transport supports provided

**500+** programs & workshops provided

Because of your generous support in 2019, YWCA Toronto shelters were able to provide hundreds of women, children and marginalized people with a warm bed, safe refuge and a caring community at their time of need.

**Thank you.**

# WHY I BECAME A YWCA TORONTO TURNING POINT PARTNER

*We are grateful for the support of all of our Turning Point Partners. Here, a new Turning Point Partner shares their story of what inspired them to give.*

YWCA Toronto was there for me at one of the most difficult times of my life.

As a child, my mother, my younger sister and I found ourselves in a YWCA Toronto emergency shelter. We were fleeing from a dangerous situation and needed a safe place to stay.

One of the hardest things was being away from family and friends during the holidays. The staff at the shelter tried so hard to make those moments still feel special. I remember coming downstairs, not expecting anything, and finding decorations and even gifts

waiting for us. That meant so much to me. At an awful moment, it helped me to forget where I was.

I made a promise to myself then that I would try to give back in some way. Over the years, I have donated clothing, food or money. I am lucky enough to be in a fortunate position now. At the end of last year, I decided to make a significant gift to YWCA Toronto in my mother's name.

We spent a few months at the shelter. Because of YWCA Toronto, we were eventually able to find affordable housing and go home together, as a family.

I am so thankful to all the YWCA Toronto staff who helped us – I still remember their names, all these years later. I will forever be grateful and continue to support YWCA Toronto in any way I can.

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***We love hearing from our supporters! Tell us about why you became a YWCA Toronto donor. Contact Mitzi Reinsilber at 416.961.8101 x359 or MReinsilber@ywcatoronto.org to share your story or be featured in a future Turning Points Impact Report.***

MAKE **YOUR VALUES**  
**YOUR LEGACY** AT  
YWCA TORONTO



A gift in your will has the power to transform the lives of women and girls in our community.



SManes@ywcatoronto.org  
416.961.8101 x365



'Y' MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

*Looking for a way to champion women? Become a 2020 member of YWCA Toronto - for a \$20 annual membership fee.*

JHaylock@ywcatoronto.org  
416.961.8101 x352 or  
ywcatoronto.org/membership

SAVE THE DATE  
**MAY 28, 2020**  
Fairmont Royal  
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YWCA TORONTO  
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40TH ANNIVERSARY

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