

# IMPACT REPORT

2024

 Youth  
Unlimited™  
YFC TORONTO

## Preparing to Launch

—

YU sports and recreation program participation is increasing

—

Find out about the new Hub being piloted in Scarborough

—

What do the bus, Taco Bell, and “the Big Man Upstairs” have in common?

—

Catch up on some key 2024 highlights

—

Find out where interns come from

YUGTA.CA



# Year in Review

I've always been fascinated by 'launching'. Maybe it was visiting Kennedy Space Center as a kid or the intensity of doing a high school science project on the Space Shuttle Challenger tragedy. Or maybe it was the joy of starting the 'LAUNCH' leadership program at YU over 20 years ago! Regardless, here we are in the final weeks of 2024 and I'm delighted to share that our theme for the YU 2024 Annual Impact Report is 'Preparing to Launch'.

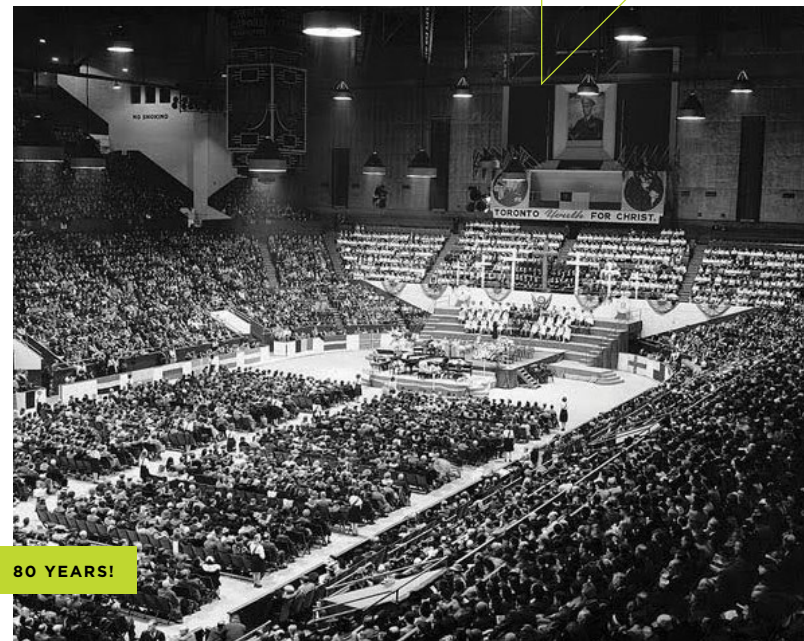
Within these pages we are excited to share how the first year of our Gaining Ground ministry strategy (which runs July 2023 → June 2027) prepared



WRITTEN BY:  
**Carl Nash**  
Ministry Director

the foundation for our year 2 'lift-offs' currently underway.

In addition, although our society often speaks of young adults experiencing 'failure to launch' syndrome, at YU we have so often experienced a different reality. Many of our YU ministries carry a holistic approach towards preparing and shaping young people for launching into adulthood. We believe the best way to accomplish this is through long-term relationships, not simply



YU (then YFC) launched large gatherings in Massey Hall in December 1944. 80 years ago!

reflected by our 80-year presence in the GTA, but more importantly through our commitment to long-term relationships with

individual youth. We want to be with them through the ups and downs of their teenage and young adult years.

The 2023 Toronto Vital Signs research reported a 30% decline in the number of participants in sports and recreational programs between 2018-2023, leading to a recommended city-wide goal to increase youth participation in sports and recreation. However, our YU sports outreach ministries (soccer, basketball, boxing, drop-ins, fitness, and archery) have actually *increased* in participants every single year since 2020. These programs represent wonderful opportunities for us to originally get connected with youth, but our impact doesn't stop there. In 2024, we invested in almost 900 youth 'preparing to launch' through ongoing, meaningful mentoring relationships – a 6-year high!

Many youth experiencing vulnerability lack the support systems around them to launch into healthy adulthood, so we truly celebrate that our new 2024 commitment to 'WrapAround' ministry has allowed us to facilitate 10 support teams (so far!) made up of caring, committed individuals chosen by a youth / young adult to walk alongside them as they actively pursue a key life skill or goal. Additionally, we know that navigating housing challenges are often a 'sticking point' for young adults, yet we had the privilege this year of supporting 43 individuals preparing to launch despite the challenge of a housing crisis or transition. These are just two examples of many 'milestone markers' that we reflect back on

with gratitude from this past year. So, as you settle in to enjoy this brief glimpse of 2024 at YU, please join us in celebrating our theme of 'preparing to launch' – both in terms of our strategic commitments, and especially the many wonderful youth we get to serve. 🌱



Volunteer mentors congratulate graduates of His Royal Diadems Girls Club, Jane-Finch.



Rahab Ministry staff prepare residence for young women exiting the sex-trade.

## Youth We Served:



**3,357**

TOTAL YOUTH ENCOUNTERED



**1,214**

REGULARLY ATTENDING



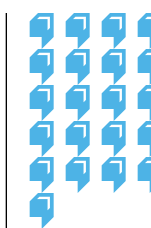
**879**

ENGAGED IN MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP

## How We Reached Them:

61

TOTAL YU INITIATIVES



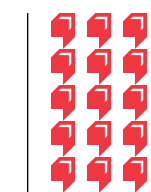
**21**

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



**6**

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



**20**

CRITICAL CARE



**6**

MARKETPLACE INITIATIVES



**7**

TRIPS, CAMPS & EVENTS



**1**

INNOVATIVE CENTRE



# Gaining Ground

Our Gaining Ground Strategy started July 2023, and since then, we've focused on launching our five new strategic pathways – Stable Housing, Multi-Service Spaces, Church Mobilization, New Ministries, and South Sudan. In the first 'foundational' year of Gaining Ground, the focus was laying the groundwork for growth in our reach to young people, our breadth of programming, and our depth of impact.

This four-year chapter-wide strategic ministry plan has been driven by working councils that have helped prioritize, plan, and implement each of the five pathways of growth.



## STABLE HOUSING

### Open up!

The stable housing council spent a lot of the last year learning and planning. They realized the greatest need is for medium term (1-3 months) housing support, and with that in mind, posted a new staff position for an "Open Door Coordinator". This person will help us launch a new ministry initiative designed to mobilize, equip and support the Christian community in the GTA to host youth in need of safe places to stay. Here's a look at the position for more information, or if you know of anyone who might be a good fit.



Scan for information on the new **Open Door Coordinator** staff position!

## MULTI-SERVICE SPACES

### Welcome to the Hub.

STORY SHARED BY:



**Michael Morrison**  
DOXA Outreach Worker



**Sarah Burton**  
DOXA Associate Director

#### Why was DOXA chosen to be a multi-service spaces pilot hub?

**MICHAEL:** DOXA has ministries that serve different parts of Scarborough and it would be wonderful to be able to concentrate our efforts for maximum impact at the Hub. The Hub has been a God-given dream of our team for a long time!

#### What is the Hub?

**M:** We are excited to be able to provide academic support through DOXA PREP, leadership development training for youth (Level Up), and a place that the community can turn to for support in so many other areas. At its core, the Hub will be a space where relationships with Jesus are introduced, nurtured, and deepened, as we invite individuals to experience His transformative love.

#### Why is this type of space important to this community?

**SARAH:** According to statistics, community spaces are among the most trusted places in local communities and families. We see the need for a safe space for young people to feel a sense of belonging and where they can build trusting relationships with their peers and with caring adults in their lives.

#### What have you seen so far as a result of this space?

**M:** There is a young student who initially struggled to focus on his homework. With much of his work being done on a computer, it's easy to see how sitting down to write an essay could quickly turn into a game of Roblox! To help him overcome this challenge, we dedicated time to work with him one-on-one for a season. Although he was resistant at first, his determination grew, and he began to excel in his studies.

**S:** What I have seen in terms of impact has actually been in the growing desire among our staff and volunteers to dream and imagine what further programs and ministries we could offer that would meet the wholistic needs of young people in Scarborough.

## CHURCH MOBILIZATION

### Churches & Young People: What are we hoping to see?

Youth Unlimited's Gaining Ground commitment of mobilizing neighbourhood churches to integrate youth and their families begs the question: What would that look like? As our Church Mobilization Council continues to address this, here's a peek at what they've discovered—and hope—long-term integration for young people in faith communities can look like...

#### Intergenerational Relationships

Youth will experience connectedness and whole-person care from three or more people in a local congregation 'beyond the youth ministry'.

#### Participation

As members of the body of Christ, youth will actively develop their skills, passions and spiritual gifts. Youth will serve in the life and ministry of a local congregation. Their voices will be heard and valued.

#### Spiritual Formation/Spiritual Practices

Youth will commit to learning from and engaging with the local congregation in healthy spiritual practices which will bring healing, reconciliation, and maturity in Christ. As mistakes are made, mutual grace, forgiveness and 'new chances' will be offered.

As we work towards this vision for all young people — those already in church communities and those not yet so — we are excited to have launched one local church pilot partnership and to be exploring two others.



**The Refuge** is a drop-in centre in Oshawa that serves youth age 26 and under by offering programs that meet basic needs, encourage transformation, generate awareness, and teach homelessness prevention.

## NEW MINISTRIES

### New ministries in Oshawa.

STORY SHARED BY:



**Jenn Khan**  
Assistant to the Ministry Director



**Mark Evans**  
Frontiers Team Leader

Mark and Jenn have both played a vital role in researching and launching a new ministry plan in the community of South Oshawa.

#### What drew you to the Oshawa community as a place to launch a new ministry?

**JENN:** YU had just completed a community assessment and was beginning to grow several ministries in the South Oshawa area when the pandemic began, so it was a natural fit to consider this area again when our New Ministries Work Group began researching underserved neighbourhoods.

#### What was the process like for getting this idea and new ministry off the ground?

**J:** Our initial research confirmed what we were hearing through our staff and connections - Oshawa youth and family needs remain high, and while governmental and social service agencies are plentiful, there is space and desire for the unique approach that YU offers - low-cost, community-based programming that allows for the development of long-term mentoring relationships between youth and caring adults.

**MARK:** We have had a number of conversations with local pastors, as well as with **the Refuge**. We met in South Oshawa for a prayer walk through various parts of the city. We have created two job postings – one for an Oshawa Coordinator and the other for an Oshawa Ministry Worker.

#### Q: What did you hear from God as you worked on this and pursued the idea?

**M:** Throughout our research, conversations, and discernment process there was a shared sense that God was inviting us to really focus on South Oshawa. The other thing that has become clear is that, especially for the Ministry Worker position, we are intentionally positioning the role so that it can be filled by a younger person.



**SOUTH SUDAN PARTNERSHIP**

## Taking off to South Sudan.

YU staff Jenn Mikelait and Scott Moore sat on a plane about to leave from Pearson Airport. As the jet engines started to power on and they moved towards the runway, they prepared to launch, literally.

The team's flight to South Sudan was years in the making, but on August 14 the next step of YU's commitment to partnering with YFC South Sudan finally took off.

For the last year the South Sudan team in Canada has been learning and connecting with James Ochuho, National Director of YFC South Sudan and his team in the capital city of Juba. They've become Whatsapp penpals and exchanged encouragement

and prayers on a weekly basis. There were phone calls and FaceTimes, and after many months of partnering virtually, God started to nudge that it was time for real life interaction.

As the team thought about travelling to South Sudan, there were safety concerns and nerves, but overwhelmingly, the team felt that this was the next step in the relationship, and it was the right time to go.

Maimunat (Mimi) Ajayi, also from the YU team, met up with Scott and Jenn once they arrived in Juba. She remembers turning the corner out of arrivals and wondering to herself if she would recognize James in the airport, but

STORY SHARED BY:



**Jenn Mikelait**  
New Ministry Strategist



**Maimunat Ajayi**  
Young Parents Toronto Leader

as she reached the pick-up area and saw him, those worries were gone. One of her favourite memories from the trip remains that moment at the airport because she remembers the anticipation, and appreciates how they were received and the hospitality James and his team showed.

In their time with James, Jenn, Mimi, and Scott met local youth who shared openly about how they believe it's their generation who are the ones who have to build up the country.

The team also visited the plot of land YFC South Sudan had purchased just outside of the main town. The land, because it's not in the populated part of the

village, was very affordable, and as the town grows, it will expand to include the purchased land in its sprawl. At the property, James picked up the soil under their feet, held it in his hands, and prayed for the school and youth centre they hope to build there one day that will equip and help youth in the community.

Jenn shared that it felt like a time of learning paired with a time of launching. Friendships were strengthened, and both teams made a covenant to support each other. It was a time of hope and next steps. Mimi said she felt God affirming that this partnership is what He wants them to do.



## Impacting the trajectory of highschoolers.

STORY SHARED BY:



**Kirushanthan Krishnapillai**  
DOXA Community Youth Worker



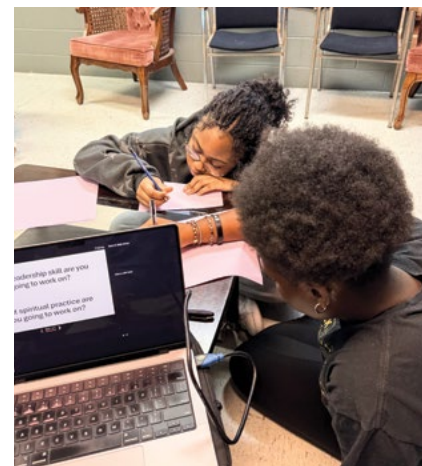
**Tope Barrett**  
Jane-Finch Associate Director



**Andrew Ironside**  
South-Etobicoke Outreach Worker

High school can be an especially challenging time for youth. It's like the countdown before they are launched into the real world. And as youth are in the middle of preparing for what's next, there are so many other factors for them to figure out.

Youth are trying to figure out who they are and who they want to be, and of course, they want to have a good time doing it.



Kirushanthan (Cricket) Krishnapillai organizes a leadership training group of five youth in Scarborough that meets once a month. Together they participate in workshops, pray for each other, and learn what it means to be leaders in their community.

As they explore topics like "Why Leadership," and "Leadership Self Care," the group is building meaningful relationships while figuring out the type of leaders they want to be. This small group of youth have also practiced setting and reaching goals related to personal development and ministry work.

In the Jane and Finch community, Tope Barrett has started a similar initiative for youth volunteering with YU afterschool programming. These high school students were happy and excited to take on more leadership roles with younger kids, but lacked the confidence and preparation to do so. Seeing this gap, Tope started a public speaking and leadership skills program where these young leaders could do devotionals together and practice leading activities.

In South Etobicoke, Andrew Ironside also works with high school students in his soccer programming. On Lakeshore Soccer League nights in the summer, students volunteer to help coach, then in the fall and winter, these same kids

come out to play indoor pick-up games. When Spring comes, Andrew sees many of these same kids on the pitch when he helps coach the local high school team.

The field has become the starting point for long term relationships and growth. As kids graduate from summer participants to high school players, they stay connected. Andrew walks alongside youth through their formative years, wanting to be a part of their journey as they prepare to launch into the next stages of life all while joining them as they play a sport they love.

Across the GTA, these ministries meet youth in the middle of their high school challenges as they try to discover who they are and who they want to be. Whether they want to level up their leadership skills, grow their confidence, or find connections on the field, YU staff are there too, introducing them to Jesus, and helping to launch them into whatever may be next. 🗨️



**Joyful Service**  
Putting Others First



**Rooted Identity**  
Engaging Life with Jesus



**371**  
YOUTH CONNECTED TO LOCAL CHURCH

**186**  
MENTORED IN INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP RELATIONSHIP

**183**  
SERVING IN PEER LEADERSHIP ROLE



# What if young people were supported from all directions?

STORY SHARED BY:



**Judith Otto**  
Jane-Finch Community Development



**Ann Stocker**  
Critical Care Consultant



This year we, as an organization, are grateful to have supported several vulnerable youth and families through WrapAround. WrapAround is a trauma-informed, strength-based planning process that provides youth with support so they can develop an individualized plan for their next steps. Youth and/or their families receive support, have needs met, goals achieved, feel empowered, build a strong support system, and are integrated into community supports and local churches.

Judith Otto, Jane-Finch Community Development Coordinator, and Ann Stocker, Critical Care Consultant have supported some youth and families in Jane-Finch through the WrapAround Care process. One youth shares his testimony in his own words:

**“I didn’t like setting goals, had unrealistic timeframes” and that his life was “discouraging and kind of hopeless. I got some of the people closest to me to wrap around me and**

**support me in my goals that I set and help me set timeframes, and smart goals. Before WrapAround I was really confused, I didn’t have anyone helping me set goals that were realistic and achievable. What makes this program different is that it is very unique, people are there to support you in your goals, you are the main focus of attention, it is not often that you experience that. I wanted to give it my all. It is strength based, people shared my strengths, that I didn’t even know I had, stuff that I didn’t know about myself. I now have goals and clarity.”**

His goals included a focus on time management, building his own business, rebuilding his faith, connection into a local church, and strengthening relationships with his family.

Another single mother and her family were recently supported through WrapAround. The mom began experiencing more peace in her life and developed resilience

**7** EMPOWERED TO EXIT SEX WORK OR OTHER EXPLOITATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES

**57** SUPPORTED THROUGH GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL OR ENTRY INTO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**79** SUPPORTED THROUGH FOOD INSECURITY CHALLENGES

**78** GUIDED THROUGH FAMILY RECONCILIATION OR OTHER FAMILY MATTERS

**46** SUPPORTED THROUGH ISSUES IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

**150** SUPPORTED THROUGH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

**99** HELPED IN FINDING / BEING PLACED IN A JOB

**Renewed Character**  
Growing in Virtue

as she learned how to navigate the school system for her three children who were experiencing various challenges within education. As she became more empowered, her children could better deal with their individual issues. Overcoming all of these feats helped to prepare and shape this young mom and family for a secure, wholistic launch into adulthood and family life.

As WrapAround builds their tenth team to support their next young person, we are encouraged and inspired by the impact we are making in the lives of others.

# Getting there with God might start with taking the bus.

STORY SHARED BY:



**Rob McTaggart**  
The Shop Youth Worker

The Shop is a vehicle donation program based in Newmarket. We work with vulnerable youth to give them experience repairing vehicles. As we work together, this gives them opportunities to experience Jesus’ love through one-on-one mentorship. We hope to launch them not only into a career in the trades, but also a reconciled relationship with their Creator.

Liam’s had some losses in life. Key life figures have abandoned him, and he feels God himself has, too. He currently lives on welfare at home with his dad as they struggle to pay rent. But still, he faithfully shows up for his regular shifts at The Shop with his extra-large double-double, week after week, for a year now. He hoped to get a job, but he didn’t have a license and taking the bus made him nervous.

“I don’t know how it works or what I’m supposed to do,” he’d often tell me.

I offer to ride the bus with him, with the “carrot” at the end of the trip of a meal at his favourite restaurant, Taco Bell. The trip went well, despite my misgivings about what we had for lunch. Since then, he’s able to take the bus when he needs it!

Late this summer, his situation changed and now he may have to move away from access to transit without a license. We offered to pay for his driving school but this means getting into a car with a stranger and driving in a busy town on multiple occasions. His visit to the Shop each week now includes a pep talk to get him ready for his driving lesson.

“Can you ask the Big Man Upstairs to give me peace over this?” he texts one morning before a lesson. I oblige and encourage him to cast his cares upon the Lord, because He cares for him.

Things with Liam move slowly. Some days it feels like his launch has been cancelled all together. But when I reflect on all that God has done in Liam’s life in the last year, I can see God is working in his life, slowly, counting down to launch.

**Clear Purpose**  
Discovering & Utilizing Gifts & Abilities

**Healthy Relationships**  
Seeking Reconciliation & Vibrant Community



**46** SUPPORTED THROUGH ISSUES IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

**150** SUPPORTED THROUGH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

**99** HELPED IN FINDING / BEING PLACED IN A JOB



# Moments & Milestones



## 14 Moms & 7 Babies

went north to Muskoka in May along with the Young Parents team for a special time of retreat. The goal was to help young moms discover fun, rest, and connection - to God and others. The group played a get-to-know-you game when they first joined together and a mom pulled a card that said, "What was your favourite trip?" Her answer was, "This is it! This is the first trip I've been on!"



## 3,931 youth

trained through 4 of our initiatives (Compassion Series, Church & Family Resources, Re-Routed Counselling, and SonLife), which included workshops, speaking engagements, and discipleship training.



## 318 Bikes Sold & 560 Bikes Tuned Up

In 2024, Heartbeat Bikes, one of our social enterprises in Brampton, sold 318 bikes and did 560 tune-ups. 5 young men were employed and learned both the technical skills of bike repair and sales, as well as building their 'soft' employability skills under the mentorship of Mark Eggengoor, Manager of Heartbeat Bikes & Stepping Stones.



## 3,894 financial partners

who form an integral part of the community that it takes to see transformed youth across our city! Largely from our new "Gain Ground" Walk-a-thon event in May 2024, this was an increase of 549 donors from last year! We thank God for each and every one of our supporters.

## 4 of our ministry teams

stepped into unexpected ministry opportunities with newcomers to Canada. As always, we tune into these unplanned shifts God brings before us. This will be an ongoing discernment for our New Ministries Workgroup to consider YU's go-forward approach to serving this demographic in our city.

## 403 Youth

engaged personally with a YU team member about giving their lives to Jesus last year, which is up from 251 last year. 64 of those youth said "Yes" to giving their life to Jesus! Seeing young people engage with Jesus throughout their adult lives is a core part of seeing young people 'launch' into the fullness of life God has for them.



## 15 Staff Celebrating Service Milestones

**5 YEARS**  
Paul Buchan

**10 YEARS**  
Andrew Ironside  
Bianca Armstrong  
Judith Otto  
Lee Sommerfeldt  
Matt Escott  
Nicholas Chang

**20 YEARS**  
Ann Stocker  
Benjamin Osei  
Carl Nash  
Jenn Mikelait  
Karen Joseph  
Kathy Webb  
Mark Dean

**45 YEARS**  
Helen Wyse

## How did we end up with 13 interns?

And where are those interns headed?



STORY SHARED BY:



**Sarah Maat**  
Engagement Team  
Ministry Intern

When I walked into the YU office for our weekly intern meeting a few weeks ago, I quickly realized it was time for me to break the ugly habit of showing up a couple minutes late. Instead of joining three or four other young people around the table, I entered a crowded room as the 13th intern. There was nowhere for me to sit.

The meeting started, and as we introduced ourselves, I was a little distracted. **Where did this record-breaking number of interns come from?**

As the 13 of us, along with Melissa Williams, Elita Fung and Mark Eastwood (the intern supervisors), participated in workshops, and spent time learning from each other, another question crept in: **Where are all of us interns headed?**

A quick chat with Elita, however, helped me get to the bottom of these two wonderings.

Interns come from several places. Some need placement for school, some feel God calling them into ministry but don't know where to start, some are looking for mentorship to discern what's next for their life, and some are pursued by persistent YU staff and volunteers.

Interns are headed in many different directions, but because of YU, interns are going out into the world uniquely equipped to minister while being rooted in Jesus.

As Elita put it in my chat with her, "we're a little bit nosy."

As an intern for the last year, I've experienced this "nosiness" and care firsthand. Melissa has asked me plenty

of questions I didn't want to answer, but did, and that helped me grow in my faith. I've talked honestly with other interns about the challenges of working in ministry and we've prayed for each other. I've been given the chance to use the gifts and skills God's given me to tell stories on the website and plan events like the Directors Dinner.

Through all this, I'm learning to discern and follow God's calling for my life, and although I'm not exactly sure where He's launching me next, I've been equipped through this program to follow His lead.

If you know an intern candidate, or would like more information about our internship program, contact our Internship Director, Melissa Williams at [mwilliams@yugta.ca](mailto:mwilliams@yugta.ca)

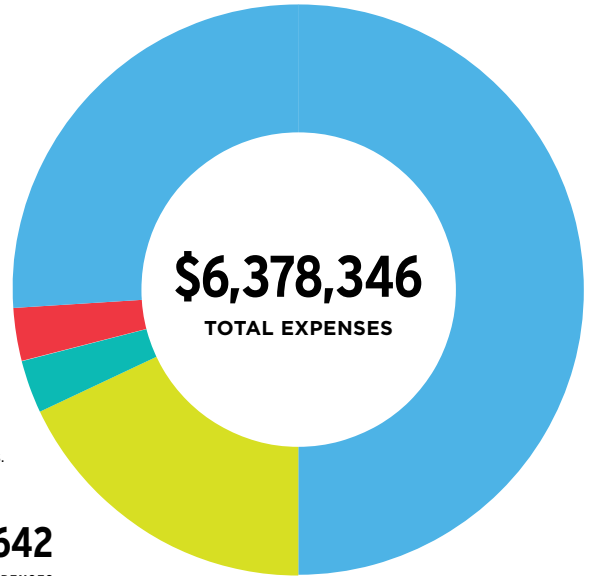


# Financials

Alongside this Impact Report focusing on our field work, we also share our audited financial statements and analysis as part of stewarding every gift we receive with integrity and a desire to maximize the impact of you, our partners.

The following graph is a high-level look at YU's expenses for the year ending June 30, 2024. In this year, **88%** of donated funds were used for our programs and directly related support activities.

**\$4,818,170**  
PROGRAM EXPENSES



**\$211,375**

**GIFTS IN KIND**  
Mostly donated vehicles.

**\$215,642**

**NON-CASH EXPENSES**  
Includes amortization and other accounting charges.

**\$1,133,159**

**OPERATIONS**

**Read more at:**

[yugta.ca/financial-statements](http://yugta.ca/financial-statements)

## Thank You!

We are grateful for the faithful team who partnered with us in 2024.

**37**

FULL-TIME STAFF

**37**

PART-TIME STAFF

**8**

INTERNS

**48**

SUMMER STAFF

**393**

VOLUNTEERS

**168**

ORGANIZATIONAL & CHURCH PARTNERSHIPS

**3,894**

ACTIVE GIVERS



## Join Us in the Work

Youth Unlimited believes everyone has a part to play in seeing young people experience joy in Jesus, wholistic wellbeing, healthy community, and hope for a bright future. We invite you to consider how you might get involved in changing young lives in the year ahead:



### Join our Prayer Team

Receive a short, daily invitation to pray for the work of Youth Unlimited.

**Email:**  
[prayer@yugta.ca](mailto:prayer@yugta.ca) to join



### Partner with Us

We are committed to partnering with local churches and like-minded agencies to collaboratively impact and empower the young people we serve.

**Learn more at:**  
[yugta.ca/partner-with-us](http://yugta.ca/partner-with-us)



### Create Change by Volunteering

Most of our programs rely on a hardworking group of volunteers who invest their time and energy in youth transformation.

**Learn more at:**  
[yugta.ca/volunteer](http://yugta.ca/volunteer)



### Careers with a Calling

Make an impact as part of our growing team of resilient leaders.

**Learn more at:**  
[yugta.ca/careers](http://yugta.ca/careers)



### Donate

Impacting hundreds of young lives with the life-changing love of Jesus requires the faithful and generous financial partnership of people like you.

**Give today at:**  
[yugta.ca/donate](http://yugta.ca/donate)