

# SIGNS OF THE Times.

YUGTA.CA

**YOUTH  
UNLIMITED**  
TORONTO YFC

2019

EDITION

**YOUTH INTEGRATION INTO LOCAL CHURCHES**

## Making Space For Church Partnerships



**BY CARL NASH | MINISTRY DIRECTOR**

I vividly remember being quite discouraged over the course of several weeks just before Christmas in 2017. This despair was brought on by reflecting about many of our vulnerable young friends that we journey alongside through our YU ministry, and imagining their future circumstances ten, twenty, even thirty years from now.

A couple things had fed that sense of discouragement. Recent research by another Christian youth organization estimated that less than 2% of the youth they connected with through their various programs would go on to engage in a local church for a minimum of one year. Additionally, in my role as Ministry Director I had observed a pattern that many of our own ministries were raising the upper 'age limit' of our program participants, out of love and concern that many of our older friends would have nowhere else to turn.

Certainly we are not the first parachurch youth organization to become aware of these realities, but at that moment in time, it hit me hard. Don't get me wrong, we have many wonderful church partnerships across the city that open their facilities to community youth, have faithful volunteers that engage in ministry alongside our staff, pray for their neighbourhood, generously resource our ministry and in some cases even share workers with us in a missional partnership. But the need is huge. There are over 1 million youth (10-25 years old) in the GTA. Many are vulnerable. Most are unchurched. Where will they be, and where will their faith be in their adult years?

Fifteen months later, I am so grateful to be able to write this short piece today with some renewed hope. As He so often does, God did a wonderful work to redeem my despair. He reminded me of several stories of community youth who have

engaged with our staff, chosen to follow Jesus and found a place of belonging in a local church. He reminded me of Calvin, our DOXA team leader who just over 40 years ago was himself a vulnerable youth in the Jane-Finch community who was reached through one of our community initiatives, disciplined by one of our staff into Northminster Church, chose to remain in that community even after our staff person moved west and now has been faithfully serving in youth ministry for over 30 years. Amazing.

I am even more grateful that God began to give a picture of the road ahead. During a dedicated season of discernment last fall, our Ministry Leadership Team affirmed that one of the ministry directions the Lord is inviting us to over the next four years is to "intentionally come alongside neighbourhood churches to engage in mission together, with the hope that all our youth will find a long-term place of belonging in vibrant local Christian communities".

This will not be an easy journey, and much discernment, prayer, equipping and implementation

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lies ahead of us. Even so, my hope continues to grow as I imagine vulnerable youth walking in relationship with our workers, and being enfolded, dare I even say *adopted* into neighbourhood churches where they finally can feel 'home at last'.



# Youth Story: Meet Anya!



BY ANYA | YOUTH

Hello, my name is Anya Ahmed. I grew up in a family of four in Mississauga. My parents grew up in two very different cultures and held two different religious views - my father is Muslim, and my mom, a Christian.

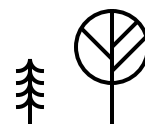
My parents got divorced when I was nine and it was during this time that I began attending a local church's high school youth group on Friday nights. Soon after, I was invited to join a Jiu-Jitsu Program that had started out of the church. Both the Jiu-Jitsu and youth group program showed me kindness, teaching, and patience that I wasn't used to experiencing. I cannot be more grateful for

all the people that taught me what Christ's love and genuine kindness mean and feel like.

After attending the youth group for a year, one of my youth leaders invited me to a Youth Unlimited leadership program in South-Central Etobicoke called Level Up. At this time, I was at a point of limbo in my faith, where there was still something I was missing that I needed before I could completely commit. During a Level Up meeting, I was offered the opportunity to accompany Afifa, a youth mentor to a summer camp in Saskatchewan. At this camp, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour, experiencing a journey I never imagined I

would take. However, I would in the following year find difficulties in sticking to my newly-found faith. Troubles with school, family, and with myself constantly challenged my faith; but through every challenge I have had mentors and friends at both the church and Youth Unlimited who have guided and reminded me that God is there through the thick and thin, when we feel Him the most - and when we feel Him the least. God loves us.

Deuteronomy 31:8 says "The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged". I now understand that wherever we go and whoever we have, we'll always have and need God, and no matter what changes in our lives, He will not. Our God has a plan, and I'm so excited to see what comes next.



I AM SO EXCITED TO SEE HOW GOD IS MOVING IN THE LIVES OF YOUTH IN OUR COMMUNITY. ANYA IS ONE OF THE YOUTH WHO IS A PART OF OUR LEVEL UP YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM THIS YEAR AND HAS ATTENDED OUR CAPSTONE BRAZILLIAN JIU JITSU PROGRAM IN THE PAST. I'M SO THANKFUL ANYA IS WILLING TO SHARE WITH YOU A LITTLE ABOUT HER SPIRITUAL JOURNEY THIS YEAR. MAY IT BE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO YOU!

**Becky Cripps**

Youth Outreach Coordinator  
in South-Central Etobicoke





# Building Church Partnerships In Scarborough



**BY CHARLENE BORELAND**  
**DOXA COMMUNITY OUTREACH WORKER**  
**AND YOUTH DIRECTOR AT WILMAR HEIGHTS**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**

My ultimate goal is to draw youth to Christ and to equip them in developing a deeper relationship with Him. By working in a church partnership model, I am able to better help both Christian and non-Christian youth find opportunities to participate in various church programs. The church provides a loving and caring environment for the youth to worship, go deeper into studying the Bible, and build lasting relationships with one another.

I believe that we partner with churches in order to draw young people to have **Faith In** God with a total **Dependence On** God to direct their lives. I was drawn to the passage in scripture in 1 Timothy that says, “*Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*” (4:12)

We use different ways to connect with community youth and help integrate them into the church, including: a week long basketball camp over March Break that is sponsored by the church and Youth Unlimited, Wednesday night drop in programs for both kids and youth, and 6 weeks of summer programming for both

church and community kids hosted at the church.

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is going into the community and working with schools in the Wexford neighborhood. Building personal relationships with the community youth is critical today as so many of them are isolating themselves and finding it difficult to connect with others. Building personal relationships with them is a bridge into getting them connected to the church. Then we are able to develop and disciple them to grow spiritually through participating in church programs such as Sunday school, Youth Fusion Night, and various DOXA events. The church is uniquely able to help the youth see Jesus as the core part of their lives and to live a life of service for others.

Operating in this partnership model is what enables me to work both in the community and the church, better helping young people find a place of belonging there.



DOXA is a program of Youth Unlimited that pursues partnerships with local churches in Scarborough in order to call young people to centre their lives within the mission and message of Jesus. To learn more about Youth Unlimited's church partnership opportunities visit [yugta.ca](http://yugta.ca)



# YU Team Spotlight – Project Serve



BY PAULA CASTRUCCI  
PROJECT SERVE TORONTO PROGRAM LEAD

Project Serve partners with local churches across the GTA by providing youth with the tools they need to intentionally love and serve both God and others in their daily lives. Through pre-trip workshops, on-site exposure, powerful debriefs, and post-trip meetings, our staff are passionate about helping students recognize God's heart for those on the margins of our society. A typical day on one of our trips is spent

preparing our hearts and minds with bible study and prayer, participating in a service project (cutting vegetables at a soup kitchen, making beds in a homeless shelter, hanging out with elderly people in a retirement home, etc), and then processing what they've experienced through conversation and other educational tools.

There is nothing more exciting for us than when we see a student's "light go on" during a trip and they leave with new knowledge or possessing a fresh passion to serve their own community. Inspiring young people to lead their



own churches into serving others is why we do what we do. Like the time we got word back from a youth group that, following one of our trips, they added a sock drive component to their church's summer camp, collected 500 socks and donated them to their local homeless shelter because "they were deeply moved by the 'sock run' they participated in while on their trip."

These are the moments that keep us fired up!

Would your church benefit from sending a team of young people on a Project Serve trip? We offer day, weekend, or week-long trips.

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

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YOUTH  
TRANSFORMING  
OUR CITY.



## Interested in a Career Change? We're hiring!

We have a vision for seeing transformed youth, transform our city. We're currently running over 65 unique initiatives, reaching over 1400 diverse young people from all across our city, and our team is growing. Check out our current job listings below to see where you can join in.

VISIT [YUGTA.CA/JOBS](http://YUGTA.CA/JOBS)  
TO LEARN MORE.

## Youth Unlimited Staff Updates

- We'd like to welcome **Willy Kim** (The Shop - Manager), **Kayla Verkaik** (The Shop - Outreach Worker), & **Blair Malfara** (LAUNCH Leadership Facilitator) as new additions to our team this year.
- We're also excited to have **Ann Stocker** and **Melissa Williams** join our Personnel Team. Melissa will focus on our interns and Ann will be providing supports to staff as they work with vulnerable youth and families.
- **Sarah Burton** has shifted roles into the Doxa Journey Coordinator and **Anne Lee** is now our LAUNCH Associate Director.