In Transition

March 2018

We spent early morning sunrises and late evening sunsets out on the African Savanna

Thank you to The Pinball Clemons Foundation for recently providing a once in a lifetime opportunity for a Youth Without Shelter resident to accompany them on a ME TO WE trip to Kenya. Youth applicants submitted to the YWS Team a letter/resume outlining why they aspired to go on the trip and the personal skills/talents they would bring to the experience. The applications of the ten youth who applied and their presentations during interviews awed the YWS Team. How did the trip go? Read on to hear from the youth who travelled to Kenya.

Our world is growing in its demand for globally like-minded people, and one of the best ways to achieve this is through travel and education. Most importantly, however, investing in travel is the future of one’s education - the results are intangible but extremely valuable. Students will learn so much more than you do from a textbook, or from a class lecture, or from taking test after test. Through travel, you have the opportunity to see first-hand the things you’ve learned, and to put into practice the skills you’ve acquired. I had the wonderful opportunity of joining Jennifer Branco (Executive Director, Pinball Clemons Foundation) as well as Michael and Diane Clemons (founders, Pinball Clemons Foundation) and I would like to take this time to thank them for their hard work and continual support. I have learned a lot from these three individuals and I would have to say that their personalities are authentic and adaptable.

The drive is a long and bumpy road from Nairobi to the Wilson Airport where we took a small plane to the Masai Mara Region where Masai warriors greeted us. We then arrived at Bogini where there was another welcoming to the campgrounds. We spent early morning sunrises and late evening sunsets out on the African Savanna learning about new things each day. I had a great time visiting the Kisaruni Girls High School where I was able to assist in building the Kisaruni Girls College. This was a once in a lifetime experience for me, it was well researched and met all my expectations. The Kenyan people as expected have smiles as wide as the Mara, so proud, so friendly and so very eager to help.

One is able to gain a global perspective and a strong independence that no other teaching method can give. Furthermore, seeing the world provides a source of education absolutely impossible to get in school, teaching you things like economy, politics, history, geography and sociology.

- A YWS resident
T4C has become something of an annual fixture for Toronto’s subway commuters, and people are digging deeper and deeper every year.

I’ve been involved with Tokens4Change since its first year and my husband Mike has volunteered for the past 5 years. My brother Conor and sister Laura have also volunteered at Tokens4 Change since 2012. Since we all started, it has been incredible to see how the event has expanded in both scope and volunteer participation. T4C has become something of an annual fixture for Toronto’s subway commuters, and people are digging deeper and deeper every year. It’s always exciting to get the email after the event with the final total, especially when we know how far Youth Without Shelter is able to stretch every dollar raised.

At the root of it, the main reason we continue to volunteer for Tokens for Change is that we are effective in raising money for an amazing organization. Every year, volunteers with buckets in hand, creating awareness and collecting change is what helps pay the bills. But over the years, it has become so much more than this to us.

The stories we hear from former residents of YWS who have turned their lives around (and who often dig the deepest into their pockets) remind us of the incredible influence and impact YWS has on a local level, and instills us with a sense of gratitude for how good life has been to us. We were all raised in great neighbourhoods, in loving homes with great parents, and looking back we really had very few worries growing up. We had great childhoods, and not through any merit of our own. We didn’t “earn” the upbringings we had – we just lucked out. The residents of YWS do not enjoy the same good fortune we had, and coming back year after year gives us a powerful reminder of how lucky we’ve been in life, and that it is our obligation and truly should be the obligation of anyone of privilege to help support and elevate those who are less fortunate.

Some years are colder than others, and some years there are challenging interactions with people, but we can say without exception that year after year we leave the event feeling great; not just for the money we helped raise but for hearing these stories and for seeing firsthand the generosity of the public. We have so many great and inspiring stories from over the years, but one that really stuck out happened last winter. It was near the end of the event, and a man who appeared to be homeless was quickly walking towards us in an erratic manner. Mike stepped in front of me as this individual looked very intimidating. He reached into his pocket, put whatever loose change he had into our bucket, and said “This is all I have. I don’t want kids to end up like me”. It was a very emotional and humbling interaction, and we were grateful and honoured to accept his donation, knowing full well that Youth Without Shelter is doing everything in their power to prevent just that.

- Erin and Mike Ring

It felt amazing to be in public and raise awareness for those whose voices need to be heard.

Participating and preparing for the Tokens4Change on February 2, 2018 was an eye opening experience for myself and my peers. First and foremost, we were involved in multiple workshops to educate us on the topic of homelessness in Toronto, specifically youth. The information conveyed really gave me a much better understanding of the struggles homeless youth in Toronto go through and what the organization of Youth Without Shelter is all about.

On February 2nd we travelled to One Dundas East and began rallying for Tokens4Change. Being able to paint in front of others and collect donations for a great cause was so rewarding, not only for myself but for all the youth whom we were supporting.

It felt amazing to be in public and raise awareness for those whose voices need to be heard. When people donated money, it was exciting, because it was a small step to making a huge difference, and the finished paintings were not only beautiful but were made in support of T4C.

After leaving One Dundas East, our class went to the Tangerine Downtown Toronto Café to watch unique performances. The message of the songs, dance and plays really resonated with me and so many others. I’m very glad that I was able to be a part of this entire incredible experience.

- Angela, Grade 8 Student, Hodgson Middle School
My best and most effective gifts are the ones that I have committed to monthly

Charitable giving is important to me and is something that I wish to do year round.

There are a lot of well-run charities doing very worthwhile work. It can be tempting to give scattershot and impulsively without a long term commitment. I try to give to charities, like Youth Without Shelter, that I wish to give continuing support. Checking their website to ensure they are financially transparent and Charity Intelligence Canada (www.charityintelligence) helps me to feel confident choosing an organization for which I feel personal empathy.

Having determined to be an ongoing supporter I want to give effectively. I have concluded that monthly giving is the right course. It keeps me focused on the charity that has become important to me, makes me feel like a regular member of the organization and enhances my commitment.

Monthly giving is easier than other methods as it is done automatically. This gives me the peace of mind that I don’t have to remember when the next donation needs to be made. Regular smaller donations are easier for me to budget than annual larger amounts and I find that I am able to give more when it is incremental.

I am not a super donor. I am a retired person who has to watch my money. What I do give, I want it to have the greatest possible effect. It’s important to me that, as much as possible, the money I give goes to programming. Monthly giving reduces administrative costs, making the charity more efficient and effective. Don’t get me wrong. I’m very happy to give to youths selling apples or tags at the supermarket to support the scouts, cadets, swim team or whatever. I also do give impulsively on occasion when something hits me emotionally such as a natural disaster.

I know though that my best and most effective gifts are the ones that I have committed to monthly like at Youth Without Shelter.

- Brent Lawson, retired YWS Food Services Manager

More than an annual fundraiser

April 11 marks the fifth annual Cover Me Urban, presented by Tangerine Bank. Celebrating the diversity of our city and the eclectic neighborhoods that bring us the best in arts, food, and culture. Since its inception in 2014, what started as a guest list of 200 has now grown to over 400 guests transforming Maison Mercer into a multicultural cosmopolitan. All while raising integral funds for Youth Without Shelter’s Life Skills & Employment and Housing & After-Care Programs. In a recent study with homeless youth, 75.7% of youth indicated they were unemployed, 53.2% dropped out but would like to return to school, and 75.9% had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness*. Cover Me Urban is more than just a fundraiser, the programs it supports will equip more than 1,000 youth each year with the life skills, resources, education and social supports to foster a safe and nurturing transition to adulthood, independence and sustainable living.

Whether you join us because you are a philanthropist, wanderlust or proud Torontonian, your ticket means a young person will be given a chance to thrive and be successful in their endeavours.

Get your tickets today at: https://yws.akaraisin.com/covermeurban


Notes from the kids you’ve helped

“Many things have changed since my last stay but the one thing that never changes is the YWS vision: Ending homelessness, one youth at a time, one step at a time.”

“I am everyday grateful for your existance for you have made a difference in my life. I am now an individual of a specialized profession.”

“We need programs like this for kids out there who need support in bad times until they can believe in themselves again.”

“I am the impact of donations to the shelter. What I have achieved would not have been possible without all those who support YWS.”

“I want you all to know....you mean a lot to me and you were my real and true family while I was in Canada. You never judged me, left me in my hard times...for which I really admire you! You guys make our days better and we need you,”
Yes! I/We would like to provide a safe haven for a youth tonight at Youth Without Shelter.

- $25 will provide a youth with a safe place to sleep for one night at YWS.
- $75 will provide a Stay in School Starter Package including a blanket, pillow, sheets, towel, alarm clock, hygiene kit.
- $127 will provide milk with each meal for one week for all 53 youth.
- $160 will an “Equipped for Employment” Package including safety shoes, transit fare and any required work clothing.
- $206 will provide juice for one week for Youth Without Shelter’s 53 youth.

I prefer to contribute $ _______  I would like to Adopt-A-Bed by contributing monthly $ _______

Name: ___________________________ Address: ___________________________
Credit card: circle MasterCard/VISA no. ___________ Expiration date: ___________
Signature: ___________________________ E-mail: ___________________________
Phone number: ___________________________

You can make a difference in a youth’s life by returning this form with cheque (payable to Youth Without Shelter) or credit card information to: Youth Without Shelter, 6 Warrendale Court, Etobicoke, ON M9V 1P9 or donate online at: www.yws.on.ca

YWS respects your privacy and adheres to all legislative requirements with respect to privacy. We protect your personal information and do not rent, sell or trade our mailing lists. From time to time YWS will send you updates on our solutions to homelessness and other opportunities for your involvement. If at any time you would like to be removed from our list, please call 416.748.0110 ext. 26.

Thank you for “ending homelessness, one youth at a time, one step at a time.”