



WINTER NEWSLETTER 2019

YES works to reduce and prevent homelessness by providing shelter, education and transitional supports for youth and families in Peterborough and the Kawarthas.

FINALLY HOME; CAT'S STORY

Cat's kind face and gentle demeanor have been around YES' emergency shelter for a long time.

Cat's family moved to Canada from the U.S. when she was young, and when things fell apart at home, Cat ended up in the child welfare system.

At 15, "I was in a group home for about three years. I was sick of being beat up by the kids there. I was sick of living that life and I just wanted to go out on my own and live my life without any abuse," said Cat.

So, when she was 17, she ended up at YES' Emergency Shelter.

When youth and families arrive at YES, a team of people go into action to help connect those people with the supports they need to address what made them homeless and find them stable housing. But with Cat, there was a problem.

"When she was 17, she ended up at YES' Emergency Shelter."

Cat's family hadn't secured her Canadian citizenship before she entered the child welfare system, so even though she had been in the country for most of her life, she didn't have access to any of the supports we have in place to help youth/people out of

homelessness.

This meant that Cat had no straightforward access to employment, health care, schooling, or technically even shelter.

But YES helped. Throughout Cat's time experiencing homelessness, YES staff advocated for her in ways that helped her access the health care, education, financial and legal help she needed to continue to have hope, while giving her a bed and three daily meals at our emergency shelter.

"I just wanted to go out on my own and live my life without any abuse"

This past September, almost 6 years after she first came to YES, we were able to secure the supports Cat needed to enter into our Rise Youth Housing Program.

For youth to spend that long in a housing emergency is not fair. And now finally, thanks to community support, Cat is housed in a secure place, and getting the help she needs. "I feel safe there," said Cat about her new housing.

Cat now has her own room, in an apartment shared by other youth who have experienced homelessness.



Cat is learning life skills with YES staff and housemates, such as how to keep a home, work together, and cook meals while YES supports her to get her permanent residency status, finish high school and stabilize. "Their support is phenomenal. They are very good. We make dinners and stuff. It's fun," says Cat.

The Rise Youth Housing program is crucial to youth experiencing homelessness. But currently, YES is only able to provide this to a fraction of the youth experiencing homelessness in Peterborough due to lack of funding. But, with your support, we can continue to expand.

Eventually, Cat wants to become a social worker. And when asked what her favorite thing about her new home is, Cat said, "my own space." You deserve it, Cat.

If you or someone you know could be at risk of becoming homeless, call 211. You'll be connected to someone at YES, and we'll come up with a plan.



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After the emergency; a family's resilience

In the winter of 2016, a family of four found themselves in a situation no family ever wants to find themselves in. There had been a change in their income that left them behind in paying their rent. The landlord had served them an eviction notice and with no family or friends able to house them, they found themselves at the YES Shelter for Youth and Families' emergency shelter.

The family was in the shelter for about 2 months, over which time a YES outreach worker organized rides to school, drove them to house viewings, and even made them Christmas breakfast on the morning of December 25.

Finally, the call came in that a house with rent subsidy was available and they were able to move out of the shelter into their own home.

"I want you to know that a week doesn't go by when the children don't ask about stopping by to say hello."

Fast forward 19 months later, dad and the children are walking into the grocery store on Brock St. when they notice a familiar face across the street standing in front of the YES Shelter for Youth and Families. The familiar face belonged to their outreach worker. They came over to say an enthusiastic hello and when they went inside to chat the outreach worker asked what the children remember about being at the shelter.

Dad speaks up and says "I want you to know that not a week goes by when the children don't ask about stopping by to say hello. That's the impact YES had on my kids." He proceeded to talk about how the youth staying in the shelter during the family's time were so good with his children.

Dad goes on to tell the worker that her hard work to help support the family is the reason they found housing and the reason they have been able to stay housed.

"This is the first time we are able to be living within our budget. It's an opportunity to 'live' not just maintain. It has given us the opportunity to do things with the kids. Go to movies, go shopping, and not have to worry about whether we are going to be able to pay all our bills this month."

Dad and the children talk about their goals for the future; a new vehicle, summer camps for next summer and maybe a new home some time in the future. Finally it's time to go and the family walks down the hall of a place they once stayed. The worker tells the family to stop by again soon and off the family goes, out the door and on their way home.

Did you hear? YES purchased a 12 plex to help expand our Rise Youth Housing Program. But here's the catch: We need your help to keep it going. Becoming a monthly donor will help us continue to solve youth homelessness in Peterborough. To become a monthly donor or to make a one time donation, visit yesshelter.ca.

YES would not exist without community support. An enormous thank you to the following people and organizations:

McDonalds in Peterborough and Lakefield
The students of Trent University
Michael Evans and Heather Gardiner Foundation
Carol McPherson
Royal Bank Wealth Management Peterborough
Home Depot Peterborough
In From the Cold organizers and performers
Murray St. Baptist Church
Peterborough and the Kawarthas Association of REALTORS
Cambium Consulting and Engineering
Kawartha Credit Union

Need a cool gift idea? Wild Rock Outfitters is hosting a special showing of the Banff Mountain Film Festival on Monday, January 13 at Market Hall with hors d'oeuvres served at intermission and door prizes. The cost is \$50/person and all proceeds go to YES. It's going to be a great night! Buy tickets in store or at Wildrock.net

