

CONTACT SPRING/SUMMER 2020 | COVID-19 RESPONSE ISSUE

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



We know that hard times can fall disproportionately on the shoulders of women and COVID-19 is no exception. YWCA Metro Vancouver's vision and mission – to achieve women's equality and build better futures for women and their families – have never been more relevant.

Women who are facing violence at home are in increased danger with fewer options. Women make up most health and social service workers, which places them on the front lines of the crisis and at greater risk of exposure. Women are also disproportionately in low-wage service jobs. And they are also more often unemployed, underemployed or working part-time as they care for children and other family members.

This pandemic has pushed to the forefront some

of the issues we have been raising for a long time: the critical need for universal child care, the importance of social connection for marginalized and isolated communities and the essential need for safe, affordable housing, just to name a few.

In this special issue of Contact Newsletter, you will read more about the gendered impacts of the pandemic and our role during the crisis as an advocate for women and girls. You will also read about how we are responding to our community's needs with new kinds of immediate supports. YWCA Emma's is providing early learning and child care to the children of essential workers; the YWCA Legal Education Program is helping women experiencing intimate partner violence access legal supports and services; and YWCA Crabtree Corner is enhancing food security in the Downtown Eastside by distributing bagged lunches, grocery hampers, fresh produce and grocery gift cards.

As we emerge from this pandemic, we will be rebuilding some areas of society from the ground up. We want to make sure that our new reality is an equal one. We have been presented an opportunity to steer our society forward and I hope you all feel as confident and inspired as I do that we can steer towards a more just future for women.

Finally, I want to thank you – our community of donors, volunteers, partners and friends – for your continued support and trust during this challenging time. The YWCA has seen many changes in our nearly 125 years. Even as we face the challenges of the day, I am confident that we will be here to serve women and families in the years to come, strengthened by what we have learned and even more deeply committed to our mission.

Deb Bryant
Chief Executive Officer
YWCA Metro Vancouver

YWCA HOUSING UPDATE

When asked how mothers are doing in YWCA housing communities, Lisa Rupert, the YWCA's VP of Housing Services and Violence Prevention, was frank. "It's incredibly hard for single moms on multiple fronts," she said. "These moms were already struggling before COVID-19, but now people are losing income, some are out of work, women are not receiving their child support and it took some time for financial help to arrive."

Social distancing also meant that play areas and amenity spaces within the housing communities temporarily closed. These common areas are usually bustling with activity and are a safe space for children to play and moms to connect. The closures created additional pressures for residents, especially being the sole parent, as children get restless indoors.

Staff are doing their best to make situations easier. "Our teams try to check in with the moms every week," said Montana Hauser, YWCA's Community Development Manager. "We send out motivational emails to tenants, and informational emails and resources as updates become available."

Staff also found ways to help meet residents' immediate financial needs. We were grateful to access the Government of Canada - Reaching Home Emergency Response Funds for COVID-19 during the first month of the pandemic as tenants waited for government supports to kick in. YWCA residents received grocery gift cards and we were able to offer some rent relief. The grant also enabled us to get additional cleaning supplies for all our housing locations and purchase diapers and formula, which was especially helpful for mothers at YWCA Crabtree Corner Housing.

COVID-19 Impacts on Metro Vancouver Housing

As the pandemic continues, many construction projects are being delayed. YWCA's housing projects at St. Georges, Arbutus and the YWCA Hotel/Residence are progressing, but completion dates will likely be pushed back.

The delay takes a heavy toll on those waiting for housing, Lisa Rupert said. "In many cases across the region, people are desperately hanging on, waiting for housing projects to be complete, while they continue to live in precarious housing

situations, for example in places they cannot afford.

"It makes them all feel very uncertain about their futures - whereas before they could breathe a bit easier knowing that they at least had a solid plan."

YWCA New Housing Announcement

The YWCA is excited to announce a new housing development in Richmond, in partnership with Keltic Development. The project includes 27 affordable units that will include studios and 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units for women and single mothers and their children.

We are embarking on a capital campaign to raise \$5.9M, and are actively seeking donors to join us in making this housing a reality. Please contact Bobbi Sarai at 604 895 5780 | bsarai@ywcavan.org.

YWCA Housing Project Updates

YWCA St. Georges: This partnership with Chard Development to build 14 units of affordable housing in the City of North Vancouver is scheduled for completion in early 2021. We have raised 97% of our capital and endowment campaign goal. Please contact Brenda Ulmer at 604 895 5764 | bulmer@ywcavan.org to help us raise the remaining \$151,057.

YWCA Arbutus: Construction of 125 social housing units is underway, 32 of which will be operated by the YWCA for single mothers and their children. Completion is expected in winter 2020. We are grateful to the City of Vancouver and our partners, Tikva Housing Society and the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC.

For more information on new YWCA housing developments or to make a donation, contact Brenda Ulmer at 604 895 5764 | bulmer@ywcavan.org.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INCREASED DURING PANDEMIC

It has been widely reported that the pandemic has resulted in increased intimate partner violence. Many women, including those living in YWCA Metro Vancouver's second-stage transition housing, are also experiencing other forms of abuse.

"What we're seeing is that abusive ex-partners are using the COVID-19 situation as a vehicle to further control and manipulate women," said Lisa Rupert, YWCA VP of Violence Prevention and Housing Services. "Particularly, making unsafe requests for the handover of children, refusing to return children after visits or withholding spousal and child support payments while the courts are only dealing with emergency cases," she said.

Help Is Available

With restricted movement, Lisa also said many women 'sheltering in place' are stuck in unsafe or precarious living situations. However, the huge demand on crisis lines – some reporting an increase of 300% – is not translating to the same demand on transition houses, she said. Despite the high numbers of calls to crisis lines, YWCAs across Canada have seen a 20% increase in demand for transition houses.

Lisa believes this may be because first-stage transition houses are communal living situations

and some women may be reluctant to live communally during the pandemic. In addition, if a woman is sheltering at home with an abusive partner, the opportunities to discretely make plans to move locations may be limited.

Making the situation more precarious is that many of the emotional, financial, social and health supports that women used to access have closed or restricted services. YWCA housing and violence prevention staff have been working hard to provide support and resources through phone calls and emails and this work continues.

Thanks to a generous donor, the YWCA can offer hotel rooms* for emergency housing for women and their children. Each room has its own kitchen and washroom suitable for isolating during this time.

The YWCA wants to remind women that safe accommodation is available to them and to reach out if support is needed.

For more information on how to support YWCA housing or Violence Prevention programs, contact Brenda Ulmer at 604 895 5764 | bulmer@ywcavan.org.

**The hotel cannot be named for safety reasons.*



Residents at YWCA Housing Community.

YWCA HOTEL - SHELTER IN THE STORM



Art at YWCA Hotel/Residence.

The YWCA Hotel/Residence is one of the organization's social enterprises, bringing in a steady source of income that directly supports our programs, from child care to single mothers' support groups to youth education and beyond. We also offer stays to people in emergency situations.

When COVID-19 struck, the guests included the usual blend: tourists, students, local workers (many with precarious incomes), out-of-town visitors, people traveling for medical treatment and others in need of affordable accommodation.

As the pandemic unfolded, guests soon realized that they could be grounded in Vancouver. Prices for plane tickets increased while availability went down. Other hotels began to close, leaving many people with nowhere to turn for accommodations. Barbara Lane, Associate Director of the YWCA

Hotel/Residence, recalled the situation in the lobby during the first few days of the pandemic. "It was chaotic and people were under a lot of stress. Guests would communicate six feet apart in the lobby. People were afraid that they would be unable to go home, and the students who were staying with us were afraid of not being able to talk to friends or other students anymore. The Hotel became their only source of support within the city."

The Hotel staff quickly mobilized to make sure everyone was safe and that needs were accounted for and met. Those previously staying in rooms with shared bathrooms were upgraded and moved to rooms with private bathrooms.

Physical distancing guidelines were also in effect and high-traffic touchpoints sanitized frequently. Staff also helped guests convert their rooms into offices, bringing in tables and desks to accommodate work-from-room set ups. The team also began going for physical-distancing walks with guests who felt anxious and afraid. Ingrid, an international student from Colombia who is staying at the Hotel, was one of the guests who enjoyed daily walks with staff.

"Every person who works at the YWCA is like an angel. We feel like we're at home," said Ingrid. "Barbara offered me encouragement. Sometimes we go for a walk together and talk about life and being thankful."

To guests, the YWCA Hotel/Residence is a shelter in the storm.

The YWCA Hotel/Residence is accepting new bookings after a temporary suspension. The Hotel/Residence is also serving our local community and essential travelers who need accommodation while in Vancouver. We look forward to welcoming visitors from further afield as travel restrictions lift.

Please consider recommending YWCA Hotel Vancouver to your family and friends who are visiting Vancouver. For more information, please visit: ywcavan.org/hotel.

LEGAL EDUCATION UPDATE – KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Women dealing with intimate partner violence are facing increasingly distressing situations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who require protection from abusive partners or need help with urgent family law issues related to the parenting and care of a child may find the current circumstances very difficult to navigate.

YWCA Staff Lawyer, River Shannon, delivers the YWCA Legal Education Program, which aims to address the complex legal, financial and emotional challenges facing women and their children leaving violence. The program offers pro bono legal representation to women in YWCA housing communities, as well as advocacy and group-based legal education workshops to the general public.

Due to the pandemic, the Courts closed for in-person hearings but have continued to hear what they deem urgent cases over teleconference. Many of River's clients have either had their matter stalled or are experiencing delays in progressing their legal concerns. River is assisting with filing urgent applications; assisting clients who are self-representing; discussing terms of orders with the other parties' lawyers; and preparing non-urgent court matters to be ready for when they can resume in court.

While June will see further changes and re-opening of the courts, the previous few months have been full of uncertainty, leaving many women unsure of what support they are entitled to and how they can get it. The YWCA's Legal Education team has been working hard to deliver accurate information and support during this period.

Legal Education Workshops

To continue serving the public, River and Jessica West, Outreach Worker with YWCA Seeds of Independence, a violence prevention program, have been offering highly attended online workshops, including:

Talking to Exes: How to Communicate with an Abusive Partner After Separation. The session focused on how to communicate effectively with a former partner – particularly around parenting.



River Shannon, Staff Lawyer, and Lisa Rupert, VP of Housing Services and Violence Prevention.

Sweeping the Mediation Minefield: Navigating Family Case Conferences. The session shared tools and strategies for avoiding the pitfalls of court mandated dispute resolution.

River and Jessica have also been writing [informative blog posts](#) on the YWCA website and have created a helpful [one-page briefing document](#) that deals specifically with urgent family matters*. We also recently published [an interview](#) with River on accessing justice during COVID-19.

Legal Rights

The YWCA has a long history of advocacy and front-line work to ensure that women who have experienced intimate partner violence can access legal supports and services. In the current reality, access has only become more challenging and we will continue to do all we can to ensure women have safe and positive experiences with the legal system.

River and Jessica will be offering [more online workshops in the future](#).

If you are interested in supporting the YWCA Legal Education Program or YWCA Seeds of Independence, please contact Danielle Rana at 604 895 5766 | drana@ywcavan.org.

**information provided in this blog post does not constitute legal advice.*

YWCA CHILD CARE – ESSENTIAL FOR FAMILIES

YWCA Metro Vancouver has long advocated for affordable and accessible child care for families. We operate four early learning and child care centres and offer a range of options, including free short-term care for families in the Downtown Eastside and care for the children of teen mothers working to complete high school.

In 2019, YWCA Emma's Early Learning and Child Care Centre was selected by the Province as a prototype site to trial a \$10 a day system. All our centres operate with support from government funding, parent fees and generous donors.

Child Care and COVID-19

Thousands of families found themselves in a difficult position at the end of March when many child care services across the region closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To keep families and our staff safe, we made the difficult decision to close our centres on March 23rd. We immediately began exploring opportunities to support the child care needs of those who could not stay home with their children. On April 20th, with enhanced protocols in place, we opened Emma's to provide temporary care for the children of essential workers.

Emma's joined a network of child care centres across Vancouver that have come together to support parents working on the pandemic's front lines. We chose Emma's in order to offer \$10 a day child care to these families. The initiative was led by the YWCA's Director of Family Services, Shannon Newman-Bennett, and was a joint effort of the entire child care team.

"We are seeing the challenges of this pandemic affect families across the board," Shannon said. "We have seen the critical role child care has played in our communities' ability to respond to this pandemic, and are proud to be able to provide service to our essential workers during this difficult time. This crisis has highlighted the importance of a universal child care model that is inclusive, accessible and affordable, which is something we have been advocating for at the YWCA for many years."

Eligibility and access to these child care spaces

is facilitated by Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre and are offered on a temporary basis. When we are able to re-open, the child care spaces will be returned to the families who had them prior to the pandemic.

For BC families with young children, child care is the second highest expense after housing. Finding and paying for child care is an enormous obstacle and stressor for families, the burden of which falls disproportionately on women. The YWCA will continue to work as a strong advocate for a universal child care system, and the pandemic strengthens our resolve.

To make a donation for child care for families in the Downtown Eastside, contact Kathy Lilyholm at 604 895 5851 | klilyholm@ywcavan.org. To support a universal early learning and child care system in BC, please [endorse the \\$10A Day plan](#). For more information, contact Amy Juschka at 604 895 5810 | ajuschka@ywcavan.org.



Child at YWCA Emma's Early Learning and Child Care Centre.

YWCA EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS ADAPT

YWCA Metro Vancouver's employment programs have demonstrated incredible adaptability over the last few months. In a matter of days, programs moved their workshops and group activities online, shifted their recruiting strategies and learned how to navigate the challenges of online service delivery - all while striving to maintain the same level of excellence the community has come to expect. We spoke to program managers and facilitators to learn about how they transitioned, as well as their challenges and accomplishments. Here is what they shared*.

YWCA Aspire (for refugee women): "The women that we serve were under extreme financial hardships. Some lost their jobs; some struggled to put food on the table; others didn't have access to the Internet or a computer. It has been amazing to see the YWCA coordinate to support our participants with groceries, technology and other needs. The curriculum was adjusted so that the online workshops would be easy to understand. Because many of our participants are single moms, schedules have also been revised to allow them time to make lunch and support their children with learning at home. The transition was not easy at first - those of us who have young children at home found it even more challenging to keep a work-life balance and fulfill our duties, but we rose to the challenge."

YWCA Elevate Skills (for newcomer women): "The online program created a sense of community and belonging. The women appreciated the chance to improve their digital literacy skills through virtual interviews, online presentations and distance learning. Some women had to drop out because it was too difficult for them to participate with young children at home. On the other hand, women from all parts of Metro Vancouver, including those who lost their jobs because of COVID-19, were able to join the program. We've also talked a lot about self-care and ways to make this experience less exhausting for our team (especially for those with young children at home)."

YWCA Focus@Work (for professional women): "We have successfully created a safe space where women can share their stories and learn together. Learning how to 'read the room' in an online environment is a significant growth edge for us, but we've been up for the challenge. Many women have commented that the online offering was a perfect option for them because they are currently at home with kids and trying to juggle their own career search and family commitments. Others have joined us from communities further afield than our usual Vancouver/Tri-Cities participants."



Focus@Work participants and facilitator connect during an online meeting.

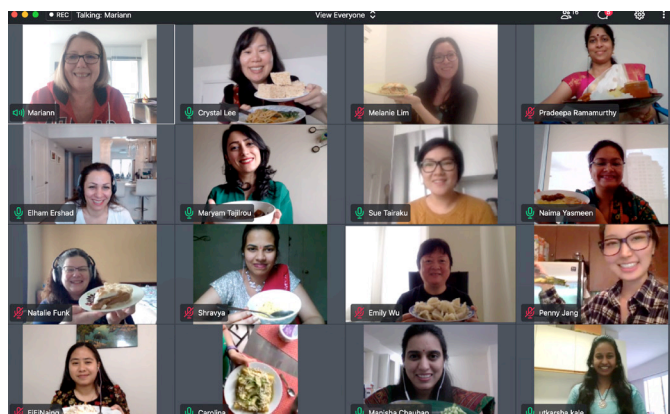
YWCA Job Futures 55+ (for job seekers 55+): "Like the staff, our participants (who are 55+) rose to the challenge of learning new technologies and have embraced the opportunity to meet as a virtual cohort. Sitting the whole day in a virtual environment can also be exhausting, so we are sure to include many breaks in our programming and provide opportunities for fun activities."

YWCA Survive to Thrive (for survivors of violence or abuse): “Participants feel that online interaction has allowed them to find some sense of connection during this time of isolation while working with us on their personal, educational and employment goals. Physical distancing measures have impacted mental health as well as caused emotional and physical safety concerns for survivors of violence who already experienced isolation. Other mental health impacts were due to a pause or interruption of in-person community services. So far, the current participants are actively participating and engaged in the program.”

YWCA Strive (for youth transitioning out of foster care): “Our youth were grappling with new obstacles: where to buy groceries, where to get reputable information about the pandemic and creating a budget for an unknown period with small amounts of money. They also had to cope with stress responses caused by the pandemic such as anxiety, depression, increased substance use, difficulty sleeping, etc. We offered resource referrals, a safe space to talk and tailored our online workshops to be relevant for our current situation. Most of our youth have kept engaged and have used us as a support network.”

YWCA Tourism Essentials (for women 15-29 years old): “To adapt to changes in the job market, we’ve rebranded Tourism Essentials as Online Essentials and are offering a broader range of training options. In addition to tourism and hospitality, we’ve added training for administration, customer service and telecommunication roles. These will help build skills and better prepare our participants for the demands of today’s job market.”

YWCA Tech Connect (for newcomer women in tech): “The in-person engagements with our participants used to be one of the best parts of our days. However, with some creativity and adding more activities, we ended up having excellent feedback from the participants. We revised our workshops and included updates about the pandemic and how the participants should adjust their job search approaches, sharpen their online interview skills and connect with employers.”



Tech Connect participants and facilitators enjoy a “potluck” to celebrate their graduation.

WorkBC Programs: From May 25th, YWCA-operated WorkBC Centres resumed in-person service for job seekers who cannot access our virtual services. Physical distancing and sanitation measures are in place for appointment-based access only. Most clients will continue to access virtual services, and the reopening will continue gradually. The centres have been hosting online workshops and events, such as “How to Prepare for Virtual Job Fairs” and “Navigating your Job Search Through COVID-19,” as well as employer-specific hiring info sessions.

**The interviews with program staff have been condensed.*

To learn more or join an employment program, contact Marina Arnaud at 604 895 5852 | marnaud@ywcavan.org. To support our employment programs, contact Vanessa Wellington-Clark at 604 895 5826 | vwellington@ywcavan.org.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FROM BEHIND THE SCENES

Every evening at 7pm, the beat of drums, horns and cheers gives us an opportunity to show our appreciation to those courageous front-line workers who are saving lives, cleaning and keeping food on our grocery store shelves. This includes the YWCA staff who are keeping our programs running and serving our community.

We are incredibly grateful to our many generous donors. This is a shout out to those individuals who are reaching out and asking how they can help those most in need during these challenging times. The following are but two YWCA supporters out of many who fundraised on their own, but each of you has made a difference in our community.

Carry It Forward

Mary-Jo Dionne, YWCA Women of Distinction 2018 recipient, writer, speaker and mother of two young children, recognized that with schools closed, so too are daily meal programs. Thousands of low-income parents in BC struggle to provide breakfast and lunch for their children. Of lone-parent families, 50% live in poverty and now many face unemployment, unpaid sick leave or reduced work hours.

Mary-Jo, herself the daughter of a single mom, reached out to her networks to fundraise on behalf of The Mary-Jo Productions Fund at the Vancity Community Foundation Fund. Thanks to her outreach, she contributed \$15,000 to YWCA Metro Vancouver and several other local non-profits.

It Started With an Email

According to Amanda Ross, she simply sent out an email to a few friends. Soon she and her community had raised enough in donations to provide grocery gift cards for all 30 participants connected to the YWCA Strive Program.

Strive is an employment and life skills program for youth aging out of foster care and receives funding from the Ministry of Child and Family Development and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills & Training.

Many Strive participants are ineligible for government financial assistance, are without

families to fall back on for financial support or see few job opportunities to sustain them through this time.

"Your generosity has made a true impact in my life through this difficult time, and the graciousness you've displayed has not only given me strength but happiness, and for that you are appreciated. Thank you so much." – Summer, Strive program participant

We would like to thank those who have supported us with phone calls, offers to help and gifts to support YWCA programs and program participants. The community outreach has been inspiring, and shows how much stronger we are working together, even when we are apart.

If you would like to support the YWCA through your own fundraiser, please contact Vanessa Wellington-Clark at 604 895 5826 | vwellington@ywcavan.org.



Brenda Ulmer, VP of Fund Development, collects a generous donation from Lori Shewan of The Shewan Foundation while physical distancing during the pandemic.

STAYING HEALTHY + FIT WITH YWCA HEALTH + FITNESS

The YWCA Health + Fitness Centre temporarily closed due to COVID-19 on March 19th, 2020. We were so appreciative of members' support and were moved when many offered to donate their membership fees instead of taking our offer to freeze them.

We wanted to stay connected, so we began offering free online fitness classes on the YWCA Health + Fitness Facebook page. We started posting classes Monday to Friday, offering Pilates, Yoga Dance, strength and cardio workouts.

Although our online workouts are not professionally edited videos, they are the same high-quality workouts with excellent instructors that one can expect in person at the facility.

You don't need to be a member to enjoy the workouts – they are available to everyone. And the response has been great. People have told us they tried new classes while others used the videos to workout with their kids.

A New Phase

In preparation to re-open the YWCA Health + Fitness Centre in Phase 2 of the BC ReStart program, we are following the guidelines set out by the public health authorities and WorkSafeBC. We are focusing on creating space for our members

to have a great workout while maintaining two metres from each other. Fortunately we have a large facility with big studios, but there will still be fewer people exercising at one time. We are making new class schedules, moving equipment around, adding new signage and providing extra cleaning supplies.

We are also training our member services staff and lifeguards in new first aid protocols and training our cleaning staff in advanced cleaning protocols. And our new online booking system is coming soon. It's been a busy time for us as we re-imagine our business and create a safe and healthy environment for all.

We do expect to continue virtual workouts for our membership and the public in some way when the gym re-opens, so please stay connected.

We are grateful that we have been able to serve our community and members, and for the ongoing support from everyone during this time.

For more information on YWCA Health + Fitness, contact member services at 604 895 5777 | memberservices@ywcavan.org or visit our [Facebook page](#).



Sandy Reimer, Director of Health + Fitness, oversees the preparations to reopen the H+F Centre. | Photo by Angela Sterritt, Reporter/Editor, CBC News.

LEGACY GIVING – REFLECTIONS AND REACTIONS

With all the uncertainty in the world, many of us are thinking about our own mortality – and the mortality of those we love – in a way we’ve never done before. We are asking existential questions like, ‘What matters most in my life?’ and ‘How do I want to be remembered when I’m gone?’

Suddenly will-makers and updaters are younger (aged 45-60) than usual (aged 60+) as many are experiencing anxiety about the future and wanting to act.

Reflective or Reactive

We recently heard an insightful observation that will underlie planned giving in the months to come. Legacy giving is diverging into two paths, reflective and reactive testators. (Note: a testator is the formal term for a person making a will.)

We typically think of legacy giving as being a thoughtful process of reflection and proactive planning for a somewhat distant future. This would be the path of the reflective will-maker and legacy donor. These decisions are made over time and based on long-held relationships and values.

In today’s environment, however, many people are in reactive mode. People are feeling a sudden urgency to get their affairs in order in case of a sudden turn of health.

Have You Thought About Your Legacy Today?

A global pandemic changed the world nearly overnight, catching most people completely off guard.

It does make clear the need for each of us to examine our legacy — what we leave to whom and to what organizations. To know that our financial contributions are carrying on to make a difference relieves a certain burden of worry, so we can focus on other things that matter here and now.

If you are interested in legacy giving, please contact JoAnne Fahr at 604 895 5829 | jfahr@ywcavan.org or Arden Sutherland at 604 895 5859 | ardensutherland@ywcavan.org.



Children play at YWCA Crabtree Corner.

THE NEXT 125

In 2022, YWCA Metro Vancouver will celebrate 125 years of changing lives. While this recent crisis has tested our resilience, we have shown again and again that the YWCA has the capacity and foresight to weather difficult storms.

In 2018, we launched a five-year fundraising and engagement campaign called The Next 125.

The Next 125 is driven by a group of passionate individuals and families who are transforming their communities through donations of \$25,000 or more.

To date, we have raised more than \$9.4M of our \$10M goal, exceeding expectations. We are humbled by our community, the trust in our work and the focus on our future. To further our impact and ensure our work continues for another 125 years, we are thrilled to announce that we are increasing our goal to raise \$12.5M by 2022.

We don’t know what the future holds, but we do know that our work will continue.

If you have any questions about The Next 125 or would like to join the campaign, contact Natasha Krotez at 604-895-5823 | nkrotez@ywcavan.org.

ADAPTING FOOD PROGRAMS TO FEED FAMILIES

When times are tough, putting food on the table can be an overwhelming stressor for families. One in six children in the province live in food-insecure households, which is why most YWCA Metro Vancouver programs address food security, either directly or indirectly.

Food is served as a component of programs like Single Mothers' Support Groups, while it is the sole purpose of others like the Drop-In Hot Lunch or Family Breakfast at Crabtree Corner Community Resource Centre in the Downtown Eastside.

Food security is also why we maintain and continue to expand the Rooftop Garden at the Program Centre downtown, and it was one of the first things we thought about when the pandemic struck.

The effects of the lockdown were swift. Families were immediately reluctant to travel by transit or wait in lines with children at the grocery store or food bank. Since low-income families can't stock up on groceries and were suddenly unable to shop around as usual to purchase items on sale, concern grew quickly.

Thanks to many generous donors and incredible staff and volunteers, we have adapted to ensure that mothers and their children are still able to access healthy meals during this difficult time.

A Collective Effort

The dining room at Crabtree Corner is normally bustling with people of all ages during breakfast and lunch; the hot lunch program (bagged lunches on Fridays) is one of the few women-only lunch offerings in the neighbourhood.

When the pandemic struck, the dining room fell practically silent, but Crabtree Corner staff and volunteers immediately pivoted. To respect social distancing protocol, they staggered work shifts and began making takeaway meals. As the weeks unfolded and staff were better able to understand the needs of the individual families, the food programs evolved.

The first new food program that sprouted up provided families with bags of fresh produce, as well as gift cards and bus passes that would

usually be given out during programs.

As donations steadily came in, grocery bags became food hampers. We were able to include grains and pasta so families could make complete dinners, and we began receiving donations of frozen ready-made meals and single serve meals we could include. When we are able, we add milk and eggs to these hampers.

As mobility affects many families, we were happy to receive a grant to now be able to deliver 40 hampers a week to families. As of May 25, Crabtree served 1,163 individuals (approximately 640 children) through 342 hampers.

Much of this has been made possible by generous donations from FreshPoint, Vancouver Foundation, Canucks for Kids, Vancouver Food Runners (and the Giustra Foundation), Uber Eats, Luvo Inc., Community Food Centres Canada's Good Food Access Fund, National Bank, Coho Commissary and many online donors.

Rooftop Garden

The YWCA Rooftop Garden produced more than 1,600 lbs of fresh fruit and vegetables in 2019, and is tended to by YWCA Rooftop Coordinator, Kim Peterson. The Rooftop Garden is a direct source of nutritious produce for food programs at Crabtree Corner and is a beautiful and beloved oasis in Vancouver's downtown core. Rumour has it that even a certain CEO can be spotted pulling weeds and planting seedlings when no one else is around.

To give to Crabtree Corner food programs, please contact Kathy Lilyholm at 604 895 5851 | klilyholm@ywcavan.org or [donate online](#).



Food hamper distributed at YWCA Crabtree Corner.

A TRIBUTE TO THE WOMEN OF DISTINCTION SPONSORS

YWCA Metro Vancouver remains committed to honouring the strong leaders and innovative organizations that we announced at the nominees' reception on March 4th, 2020. We are excited to announce that we will be celebrating the recipients with a virtual Women of Distinction Awards this fall.

To highlight this year's virtual Awards, we will be launching a **#WeAreStillIn** social media campaign

to highlight our sponsors and guests who have continued their commitment to celebrate and support the Women of Distinction Awards nominees and the YWCA.

We would like to thank our sponsors for their continued support for the 2020 Women of Distinction Awards.

Presented by: **Scotiabank®**



YWCA MISSION

To achieve women's equality.



YWCA VISION

To touch lives and build better futures for women and their families through advocacy and integrated services that foster economic independence, wellness and equal opportunities.

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