

# IN 2008, OVER 52,000 LIVES WERE TOUCHED BY YWCA VANCOUVER

## Safe, Affordable Housing

Without a stable place to live, it's hard to move forward in life. YWCA Vancouver provides safe, affordable housing options - from short-term hotel stays to longer-term housing for single mothers and their children.

129 women and children made their home at Vancouver's Semlin Gardens and Langley's Fraser Gardens. These single mothers and their children benefited from safe, affordable housing and the support of a YWCA Community Development Worker.

YWCA Munroe House provided refuge and services to 152 women and children escaping family violence. Along with housing, emotional support, advocacy and court accompaniment, art/play therapy is provided to children and youth who have witnessed or experienced abuse.

21 pregnant and parenting women dealing with addiction found transitional shelter at YWCA Crabtree Corner Housing. This accommodation, combined with the integrated services at YWCA Crabtree Corner, provides a solid foundation for stable parenting and healthy children.

The YWCA Hotel proved it was "worth checking into" by providing 49,993 room nights of comfortable and affordable accommodation to travellers and locals.

26,965 subsidized room nights were provided to those needing emergency or temporary shelter - women in crisis, families in transition, seniors and others marginalized by the current housing market.

## A Healthy Start for Children

The quality of care children receive when they are young affects them for life.

YWCA Vancouver operates four licensed early learning and care centres that provided quality affordable care to 323 children whose families have diverse backgrounds and needs.

YWCA Crabtree Corner provides a healthy and secure environment to children in the Downtown Eastside. YWCA Emma's Early Learning and Care Centre helps young mothers finish high school while providing a safe, stimulating learning environment for their children.

YWCA Citygate Early Learning and Care specializes in integrating children with special needs, so children of all abilities learn together. Leslie Diamond Early Learning and Care Centre is located in the heart of downtown and provides care for families balancing the challenges of work and parenting.



446 youth submitted entries to the 2008 YWCA Real Story Competition, an annual event that encourages youth to explore their options for the future by writing about the women who inspire them. 330 guests attended a special event night to honour finalists on November 26, 2008.

229 women built lasting friendships through the YWCA High School Mentorship program, where high school girls are matched with volunteer professional women who can inspire and inform them about their desired career path.

## A Safe Haven in the Heart of the Downtown Eastside

Crabtree Corner Family Resource Centre provides programs and services for families who need them the most.

Integrated services - early learning and care for children, transitional housing, food, clothing and parenting support - help build better futures for women and children in one of Canada's poorest neighbourhoods.

In 2008, Crabtree Corner kitchen programs served 33,000 plates of hot, nutritious food to needy families.

## Connecting People to Employment

YWCA Vancouver offers nine employment programs throughout Metro Vancouver that help men and women find meaningful employment and career satisfaction. Mentorship, workshops, hiring fairs and much more are offered, with specialized services available for professionals, immigrants, women and youth.

665 women and men accessed YWCA Career Services on the North Shore, benefiting from a range of job search assistance and career decision-making programs, one of which is the Professional and Technical Workers Program for immigrants.

A total of 4354 youth visited YWCA Career Zone in Downtown Vancouver or One Stop Career Shop for Youth on the North Shore. Both centres work with young

A The kitchen at YWCA Crabtree Corner is run almost entirely by volunteers, who cook breakfast and lunch five days a week for women and their families.

B Iris (left) and her mentor Vynise developed a strong bond through the YWCA's High School Mentorship program.

C Single Mothers' Support Services hosts events for single moms and their children every year, such as this weekend picnic at Trout Lake.

D Enid (right) and Sally (left) have been members at the YWCA Health + Fitness Centre for more than 50 years.

E RBC Olympic athletes dig in the Rooftop Garden with children from Citygate Early Learning and Care as part of the United Way Day of Caring.

F YWCA employment centres help jobseekers of all ages connect with valuable job opportunities.



men and women ages 15 to 30, providing employment counselling, workshops, mentoring opportunities and events such as hiring fairs.

1730 women and men were helped at the YWCA Employment Resource Centre in South Vancouver, accessing a wealth of resources and referrals, as well as one-to-one case management.

136 women of all ages received assistance in connecting to meaningful employment through YWCA Focus at Work.

146 women participated in YWCA Connect to Success, where women entering or re-entering a professional career were matched with mentors - professional women working in their field who can share their experience and insight.

## Support for Families in Need

Support for single mothers is a key focus for the YWCA. These families have the lowest incomes, the highest poverty rates and many barriers to economic independence.

The 180 women and children touched by YWCA Single Mothers' Services had access to weekly support groups where children are cared for while mothers share information, resources and support.

278 families received hampers of food and gifts through the YWCA Presents of Peace program, bringing the holidays alive for the families who access YWCA community programs.

YWCA Vancouver's Legal Educator program enabled over 404 women to access legal advice, support and workshops on important issues like custody and access, employment rights and much more.

## Finding Balance through Health + Fitness

With an ozonated pool, the latest in cardio/weight equipment and innovative programming, this state-of-the-art facility helps hundreds of people 'find their balance' every day, while membership fees help fund YWCA programs and services.

8688 women and men made 502,892 visits to the YWCA Health + Fitness centre, the YWCA's co-ed fitness facility in the heart of Downtown Vancouver.

YWCA Vancouver believes that everyone should have access to the benefits a healthy, active lifestyle brings, which is why 114 annual memberships were subsidized for people in need, and 5789 free visits were provided for clients in YWCA community programs.

## Recognizing Women who Inspire

1030 individuals were in attendance for the YWCA Vancouver Women of Distinction Awards Gala on May 26, 2008. 51 exceptional women were honoured for their contributions to the health and future of our community, and two workplaces were recognized for supporting the wellness and diverse needs of their employees.

## Inviting Community Involvement

Over 26,000 volunteer hours were provided by 506 individuals throughout Metro Vancouver. The youngest volunteer was 12, the oldest was 83 and our longest-serving volunteer has been working with us since 1975.



A YWCA Crabtree Corner is a safe space on the Downtown Eastside where marginalized women can access a wide array of services.

B Rope climbing is one of the many indoor and outdoor activities that are a part of Camp Fun Girl, for ages nine to 13.

C Crabtree Corner Early Learning and Care on the Downtown Eastside provides a stimulating environment where children can thrive.



## Healthy Choices for Youth

Both girls and boys need support, skills and role models to face the challenges of growing up.

245 boys and girls participated in *Welcome to My Life* and *Boys 4 Real*, after-school programs that support Grade 7 students in their transition to high school. They were mentored by 86 volunteers: older high-school students, UBC student facilitators and over-30 "wisdom champions".

50 girls participated in Camp Fun Girl, a summer day camp for girls ages nine to 13 years, helping them on their way to becoming healthy and confident teenagers.

## Message from the Chair and CEO

With the support of our donors, partners and staff, YWCA Vancouver touched the lives of over 52,000 people throughout Metro Vancouver in 2008. From single mothers to jobseekers to families of every kind, YWCA Vancouver continues to provide integrated services that help many people in our community build better lives and achieve economic independence.

A key service focus for our organization is our work with single mothers. These women have great difficulty obtaining affordable housing and their families are amongst the most likely to go hungry.

We are proud to report that in 2008, we made great strides in the development of single mothers' housing in Coquitlam. Working with BC Housing and the City of Coquitlam, our Como Lake Gardens development will include 30 units of housing as well as amenity and program space. The designs have been completed, key municipal approvals are in place and all that's left is to start building - which will commence in the fall of 2009.

In addition, we continued progress on our plans for a new housing development in Surrey, again in partnership with BC Housing and with the City of Surrey as our new partner. Single moms in Surrey need the support - more than 80% of single-parent families in Surrey are led by women, a third of whom live below the poverty line. And the waiting lists for subsidized housing are long.

Our housing in Surrey will include 28 units of housing for single mothers, with priority given to Surrey residents, plus eight units will be reserved for second-stage transition housing for women leaving abusive relationships. The second-stage units will be modeled after YWCA Munroe House, which has been operating since 1979.

YWCA Vancouver is a strong advocate for women's safety. Recently, YWCA Munroe House has seen a growing number of mothers without legal status, most of whom have fled their relationships because of abuse. While trying to rebuild their lives and still adapting to a new country, these women are truly in limbo - unable to work or collect income assistance, yet unable to leave Canada and take their children with them.

In the Fall of 2008, we launched the *Mothers Without Legal Status in Canada* project to examine the gaps between immigration and family law. Funded by the Law Foundation of BC and one of the first studies of its kind in Canada, the study aims to understand the experiences of these women and will make recommendations for changes to policy that can advance and improve the lives of mothers without status.

Crabtree Corner in the Downtown Eastside continues to see increasing demands for its services - a trend that shows no signs of waning.

Women and children living in the Downtown Eastside access vital information, support and resources through Crabtree's numerous community programs, such as the single parents food bank run, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) prevention program, and, last but not least, the hot lunch program. We served over 33,000 hot plates of nutritious food in 2008 to the women and children of the Downtown Eastside through Crabtree's kitchen program. We are also proud that the YWCA's Rooftop Food Garden, located downtown, produced 430kg of fresh, organic produce to further enhance the nutritional content of the meals.

As 2008 drew to a close, many people's thoughts turned to the decline in the global economy. Although no one is unaffected by economic conditions, YWCA Vancouver is strategically positioned to deal with the recent downturn due to our diverse funding sources, our prudent approach to financial management and careful monitoring in the current context. We have established a conservative budget for 2009 and trimmed spending where possible, with the goal of protecting our critical programs and services that help women in need.

In closing the year, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the many volunteers and donors who give generously of their time and financial resources to help us succeed. With the momentum we have achieved in 2008, we look forward to the exciting activities that 2009 will bring.

Janet Austin  
CEO

Denise Turner  
Chair,  
Board of Directors

