**Youth and Children`s Service Committee**

Our Mandate: The committee focuses on the health, education, abuse and neglect, social development and life enrichment of youth and children in our community. Our Membership: The success of our 2017-2018 year is attributable to our dedicated members and friends of Youth and Children`s Service (YCS). A special thank-you to our members for playing an active role in all initiatives: Lorraine Lloyd (Chair of the Children’s Christmas Party subcommittee), Jeff Dobson, Brent Thomas (Chair of Youth Initiatives subcommittee), Barbara Thomson (Board Liaison), Derek Matisz (Secretary), Mary Bennett (Youth Civic Leadership Awards Chair) Annie Chu (Youth Exchange Program Liaison), Kerry Bowser (Healthy Beginnings Lead), Krystyna Benyak (friend of YCS), Catherine Woodford (Rotaract Club of Toronto representative), Prince Kumar, Edvard Ryder, Anthony Siu (Ryerson Rotaract Club representative), Stephanie Kroone (University of Toronto Rotaract Club representative).

Our Sub-Committees: We thank all our sub-committee members and volunteers for making a difference in impacting the lives of the youth and children of our community. The sub-committees include – Children’s Christmas Party, Youth Exchange, Youth Leadership Expo, Youth Civic Leadership Awards and Youth Day Luncheon. A special thanks to all the members of The Rotaract Club of Toronto, The Rotaract Club of University of Toronto and The Rotaract Club of Ryerson who have provided immense support to our projects.

**2017-2018 Highlights:**

Annual Children’s Christmas Party – in its 88th year, this amazing event has become a trademark at the Royal York Hotel and touches the hearts of so many wonderful children, youth, parents, volunteers and community organizations. With a $20,000 budget provided from the philanthropic fund and supplemented with the proceeds from the silent auction at the Rotary Club Christmas party the sub-committee provided a festive experience to over 200 children with various abilities. In total about 700 guests enjoyed the music, arts and crafts, storytelling and Santa visit.

Annual Youth Day Luncheon and Youth Civic Leadership Awards (YCLA) – High school students from the City of Toronto with the help of their guidance counselors and teachers apply for these awards. We experience so many amazing and inspiring student applicants. The award recipients and finalists were recognized during our Rotary Youth Day Luncheon. Congratulations to the award recipients: Taylor Dallin, Alice Cheng, Emily Tu and Julia Menezes.

Youth Leadership Expo – The 6th annual expo slated for May 2018 was postponed (with Board approval) to October 2018. After consultation with the Toronto School Boards, it was determined that April and May is a very busy time in the school year when a lot of activities like sports and exam preparations are going on and that the fall would be a better time of year to hold the expo. An initial deposit to hold the venue was spent and the remainder of the budget was returned to the Philanthropic fund ($2486.90). Our Healthy Beginnings team supported many charities and initiatives with a total giving of $9,022.45.

Our focus for grant giving was improving youth mental health and we had several applications to review to award our two grants of $9,000 and $3,000. The grants were awarded to Dr. Jays Grief Centre and Shift Happens respectively.

The Dr. Jay Children’s Grief Centre objectives are directed at increasing the self-efficacy of children, youth and families by supporting the development of coping and communication strategies to preventing enduring, negative impacts of early loss and traumatic grief. One of the key factors to facilitate healing is to increase exposure to medical play to reduce the anxiety and fear children face when exposed to unfamiliar experiences in hospital and hospice settings. Our grant funding went to equipping a medical play space with the following real life pieces of medical equipment: hospital bed, IV bags and stand, sphygmomanometer, soft foam sculpted blocks and mats to create and mimic spaces. This helps children to prepare for difficult life transitions so that precious moments can be best used to connect and share.

Shift Happens is a group of professionally certified coaches who provide evidence-based coaching specifically for youth and young adults aged 12 to 25 to vulnerable clients from low-income and high-priority neighbourhoods facing barriers in their lives. Our grant funding provided a 10 week program to the girls of Regent Park, in collaboration with Toronto Police Services 51 Division. The program was offered to 12 girls in Grades 6 to 8 (ages 12 to 14) from the Fit Club, Lord Dufferin Public School, Toronto. The project gives at-risk youth the opportunity to reconnect with their true selves, change the way they interact with others, and have an opportunity to move into leadership positions within a safe environment.

VIBE Arts Project - In collaboration with the Indigenous Committee and the Community Services Committee we sponsored a VIBE Arts Mural for the 2018 Rotary International convention. The Mural was in partnership with 7th Generation Image Makers at the Native Youth Resource Centre and was showcased at the Ossington Subway station for the month of June.

Youth Exchange Program – Our committee had the opportunity to sponsor a student from France through the Youth Exchange Program. Antoine Rys had an opportunity to live with two of our Rotary families, Anny-Sandra Hamel and Catherine Lloyd. Antoine participated in many of our club functions and is already missed by his Rotary families. We sincerely thank Anny-Sandra and Catherine for hosting Antoine and enriching our lives by getting to know him.

With a short hiatus during the convention, the YCS Committee wrapped up our year with our annual potluck celebratory event on the rooftop gardens of Carrot Commons.

Dawn-Marie King, Chair