2016-2017 Youth and Children’s Service Committee Report

Our Mandate: The YCS 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 2016-2017 year is attributable to our dedicated members and friends of YCS. A special thanks to our members for playing an active role in all initiatives: Lorraine Lloyd, Catherine Woodford (played a key role as Secretary for many of the meetings), Prince Kumar (Board Liasion), Jeff Dobson, Pat Neuman, Edvard Ryder (Director of Community Outreach), Brent Thomas (Chair), Binoy Luckoo , Dawn-Marie King (incoming chair for 2017-2018) , Ross Amos, and Annie Chu (who was our Vice Chair for majority of the year and helped immensely in reviewing various proposals and assisting with Youth Exchange). Thank you to our many Friends of YCS for continuing to support and volunteering on an as needed basis.

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 (Chair – Lorraine Lloyd), Youth Exchange, Youth Initiatives, and Youth Leadership Expo (Chair – Binoy Luckoo), Youth Civic Leadership Awards, Youth Day Luncheon, and Healthy Beginnings (Chair – Kerry Bowser).

A special thanks to all the members of the The Rotaract Club of Toronto and The Rotaract Club of University of Toronto who have provided immense support to our projects. Also, a special thank you to Rotaractors Anthony Siu, Catherine Woodford, and Jessica Besaw for their continued attendance and support for YCS initiatives.

2016-17 Highlights:

This year we continued to take our committee meetings directly to where it all happens – our community partners. We saw first-hand the impact our Rotary dollars were having. We thank Unity Charity and The Toronto Tool Library for hosting the community outreach meetings. We learned how the two organizations had used the funds to improve the lives of youth, and heard first hand from the youth participants of both organizations.

Annual Children’s Christmas Party – In its 87th 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 the sub-committee did a phenomenal job in ensuring hundreds of children with various abilities are provided with a day to remember. The event sees about 200 volunteers, including police officers, firemen, auxiliary officers, Rotarians and their families, Rotaractors and District Youth Exchange Students. In total about 600 guests are facilitated in this iconic Christmas party. It is heartwarming to see the Children in their element and actively participating and enjoying the event, irrespective of the immense daily challenges they face – they are the true heroes and we as Rotarians are honoured to have this opportunity to celebrate with them.

Annual Youth Leadership Expo (YLE) – In its 5th year, our club has continued a partnership with the Toronto District School Board and with the Toronto Catholic District School Board.  We bring together many community partners, hands on workshops, and motivational speakers to inspire, empower and build leadership skills for up to 300 Toronto’s Grade 7 to 8 students.  A YouTube video shot by youth, featuring youth says it all: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vV1aApM_MU>.  The Rotaractors take on a lead role in organizing the event and select grade 11 - 12 students to facilitate interactive sessions with small groups of grade 7-8 students to help encourage them to build an action plans, engage with community partners and develop community leadership ideas.

Annual Youth Day Luncheon and Youth Civic Leadership Awards (YCLA) – High school students from the City of Toronto with the help of their guidance councillors and teachers apply for these awards.  We experience so many amazing and inspiring student applicants.  The award recipients and finalists are recognized at our Rotary Youth Day luncheon.  Congratulations to the award recipients: Karina Dubrovskaya, Samantha Ling, Sarah McFarlan, Hilary Tieu My Thi Nguyen, and Christine Mau.

Both executive from TDSB and TCDSB were present at the event to support their students.  Youth entertainers engaged and entertained the Rotary audience.

In total for YLE, Youth Day Luncheon and YCLA we spent $13,213. Special thank you to The Rotary Club of Toronto, YCS committee, The Rotaract Club of Toronto, The Rotaract Club of University of Toronto and Toronto Community Housing for making this happen.

The Healthy Beginnings Sub-Committee worked diligently to support 12 community agencies in providing much needed Baby Essentials to moms in need. Diapers, wipes and sleepers made up the bulk of the deliveries to each of these agencies. Over 1,000 moms were assisted last year many of whom would otherwise not have been able to afford these essentials for their infants and small children. One mom said, “Without these diapers given to us by Rotary, I often don’t have enough diapers to change my child when she needs changing because I just can’t afford them.”

Through the Philanthropic Fund and the Pauline Hill Fund, the Healthy Beginnings Sub-Committee, in partnership with the Bargains Group turned $14,000 into a generous supply of necessary items for children across the core of our city. Thanks to the members who worked to organize and arrange for these deliveries four times a year.

This year we also supported several worthy projects including:

* Youth Assisting Youth: $5,000 in support of the Group Mentoring Program which provides ongoing structured activities for their “mentor matches”, as well as the youth on our waiting list.
* George Hull Centre: $8,000 to be used for 1 personnel training and approx. 1 year worth of group therapy sessions for 10 family units in the PPP program, shown to improve the relationships between guardians and children with behavioral and emotional issues.
* CameronHelps: $3,000 to be used for purchasing sneakers for low-income students so they can participate in their running program.
* Toronto Tool Library: $2,500 in support of seed money for starting a new facility on St. Clair W. to serve the local community

We successfully carried out our plan to work with the Rotaract Clubs to engage in a partnership granting model to make a hands-on positive impact with the youth and children of our great Toronto community. Our first year was focused on Improving Mental Health which provided the funding noted above for both George Hull Centre and CameronHelps. Supporting our decision to focus on Mental Health, It's estimated that 1/4 people will experience moderate to severe mental health issues in their lifetime and most of these issues stem in childhood. To assist in the improvement of the quality of life for youth and their families who suffer from mental health issues, youth at risk for mental health issues, and for the overall social and emotional well-being of youth in the GTA.

We were also fortunate to help review larger asks and provide our recommendations to the board and the club foundation.

The YCS committee wrapped up our year with our annual potluck celebratory event at the rooftop gardens of Carrot Commons. Even though it was a rainy night, it was a night enjoyed and celebrated by all. Rotarians, Rotaractors, and our community partners were all in attendance.

For Rotarians, we encourage you to find out more about our committee by coming to our monthly meetings at the Royal York Hotel every third Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm. For our youth and community partners, we thank you for the great work you do in making an impact in the lives of the youth and children of our wonderful community.

With thanks and in service,

Brent Thomas - Chair