

2024 has been off to a great start!

We're continuing to see new faces at drop-in, which allows us to chat with teens about life and faith (ask us about it sometime - we'd love to share what this looks like!).

We're continuing to coach sports and mentor students throughout their high school years - awesome ways to help students develop strong character.

We have the privilege of ongoing collaboration with local youth pastors at ONE Night Youth Rallies, and we love seeing teens embracing the diversity of the body of Christ in these environments.

There's a lot of good stuff in this letter: individual staff updates, information about upcoming fundraisers, and various ways that you can get involved in our ministry.

None of this exciting work could happen without you, our amazing community. We are so grateful to have you as our partners, and we are delighted to share with you how we see God at work!

Want to connect with us?

Phone: 519-272-1614

Email: info@yfcstratford.com

Each staff member's email address is at the end of their update section.

Our amazing financial partners make it possible for us to serve local teens every day. Thank you for your financial partnership in this work!

If you would like to become a monthly financial partner with us, please fill out and return the enclosed donation form, or scan the QR code to donate online.

SCAN ME



UPCOMING FUNDRAISERS



Fundraisers don't just raise money to support our ministry - they're also an amazing way to connect with other people in our community who love and want to support youth! We'd love to have you join us at these upcoming community events!



Ministry Celebration Banquet

Saturday, April 13th, 2024

6:00 PM

Stratford Country Club

53 Romeo St. North, Stratford

Join us for a delicious meal, encouraging ministry updates, a silent auction, and great times with family and friends.

For more information, visit: www.yfcstratford.com

2024 Tour for Teens

If you love biking, this fundraiser is for you! Ride 25, 50 or 100 KM to raise funds for our local ministry.

Saturday, June 8th, 2024

Ride begins at 8:00 AM

Start & End Location: Stratford Christian Reformed Church. Lunch is provided.



There are several ways that you can help support this event:

- Register to ride, and invite friends and family to join you!
- Volunteer as a crossing guard, or to help with rest stops & lunch.
- Become a corporate sponsor for the ride.
- Donate, and ask others to donate!

To sign up as a volunteer, please email kate.h@yfcstratford.com.

To find more information, register, become a sponsor, or donate, please go to www.yfcstratford.com.

GRANT'S UPDATE

Somehow, February is almost over already, and spring is just around the corner! Time really does fly by! I am so thankful for each and every one of you and the support and partnership you have shown to us as we continue to love, serve, and support the youth, families, churches, and schools of Stratford and area!



As I look back on this winter season that we are just wrapping up, I am so thankful for all the different ways God has been at work, including, but not limited to the following:

- Basketball Coaching - I am so thankful to have had the opportunity to serve Stratford District Secondary School again this year by helping to coach their junior boys basketball team. This was an amazing group of students, and we had a great season!
- The Drop - Our drop in program continues to be a fantastic success, with four different drop in times throughout the week. We have a great, and very diverse group of students that come out for lunch hour and after school drop in!
- Regional Support & Leadership - I continue to serve and support our chapter by helping to lead and support the work we are doing in other communities throughout Southwestern Ontario.

While I'm generally not a huge fan of the winter season, I'm so thankful that as I look back on it, there were some things I really enjoyed and am thankful for.

"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven."
- Ecclesiastes 3:1

As the seasons change, I'm so thankful that while we might not know everything that is going to happen in this upcoming season, we know that God is good and he can be trusted, because he loves us all and has amazing plans for us!

Grant Dodson
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KATE'S UPDATE

How can I possibly fit everything from months of ministry into a short paragraph? I can't. But I *can* tell you one story.

There are only a few students who I've worked with since I first came on staff. As I prepare to see them move on after graduation, I feel some heartache. I also have questions! Will they keep in touch? How can I help them continue the discipleship process? If they haven't surrendered their lives to Christ yet, will I ever know if (or when) they do? There's no way to know now, but God's been giving me glimpses of what he is doing.

One of these students who I'm especially close with has been particularly curious in the last couple years about God, faith, and how Jesus has changed my life. I don't know if he's surrendered his life to Christ yet, but these ongoing conversations bring me along on his journey.

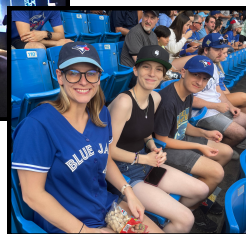
Recently, he asked if I would be comfortable with him referring to me as his faith mentor on his application to a Christian college. Of course, I said yes, and asked him for follow-up conversations. God is so faithful!

"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." – Philippians 1: 4-6 NRSV (emphasis mine)

The time we have with these teens is a privilege and a gift. The transformation we see isn't always instantaneous – often, it feels like a slow process – but as I continue to pray for these kids, who I love so much, I have confidence that God will complete the good work he's started in them. If it's not good, God's not done!



Students leading & participating in worship at ONE Night - Feb. 7 2024



Attending a Jays game with students - July 2023

Kate Heyen
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SUZI'S UPDATE

It's awards season in Hollywood. January and February are full of awards shows that celebrate movies, actors, lighting, directing movies, scripts and storytelling, music and singing and so much more. There are indeed A LOT of awards shows, some I have never heard of.



I remember watching some of the shows over the years, and I remember hearing many times, "It's an honour just to be nominated" as the nominees walked the red carpet, pausing to smile for a camera or answer a few questions from reporters.

"It's an honour just to be nominated." Well, I suppose it is. You've been noticed by someone. Someone thinks you did, or are currently doing, a good job. They like the work you are involved in.

The problem is I never really believed anyone who said that. Let's be honest, we all want to win and be number one, right?

Recently, I had a conversation with one of the students who attends our drop-in programs. We were chatting and I made a comment about being happy he likes to hang out with us. He said "Of course, you guys are like in my top 3, ok maybe my top 2." With so many other options available today, our little drop-in program that runs weekly made his top 2 list of important things that he prioritizes. Showing up on program days is important to him. He knows he is welcome. He knows it's a safe place to be. He has noticed us and continues to engage with us. He remembers us. In that moment, I understood the words, "It's an honour just to be nominated."

"He remembered us in our low estate His love endures forever." - Psalm 136:23

Suzi Higgins
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WE WANT TO SEE YOU BECOME PART OF OUR MINISTRY!

You may be thinking, "Really? How could I help with *youth* ministry??" Face-to-face ministry isn't the only thing volunteers can do! We want to help you find an area suited to your skills and gifts. There are various ways you can help us - and we believe you can learn and grow through volunteering, too!

We're Looking for Volunteers!

Everyone can make a difference in this ministry with their unique gifts and skills!

Areas we are seeking volunteers for:

- Assistance with student registration at drop-in
- People to supply/bake snacks for program
- Fundraiser planning team members
- Special event and/or program leaders

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, or finding out more about the opportunities listed above, please fill out our sign-up form at: <https://tinyurl.com/ye26wt3n>. You can also connect with us using the contact information found on the front page of this update letter.

Donate Program Supplies:

As our program has grown, so have our needs!

We are regularly in need of:

- Gift cards for Domino's Pizza
- Gatorade
- Nestle Splash Blast (flavoured water)
- Bottled water
- Pre-packaged snacks, such as Cheesestrings, Bear Paws, granola bars, Fruit to Go bars, etc.
- Fresh fruit and/or vegetables
- Store-bought or homemade baked goods (cookies, banana bread, etc.)
- Cupcakes and/or cakes for student birthday parties

If you are interested in donating one or more of these items, please fill out our sign-up form at: <https://tinyurl.com/ye26wt3n>. You can also connect with us using the contact information found on the front page.