



# A Charity Igniting Potential

YMCA OF THREE RIVERS

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

At the YMCA of Three Rivers, we believe everyone has an inner spark waiting to ignite.

In 2024, we saw many sparks turn into flames, thanks to the unwavering support of our amazing community. You, our donors, members, volunteers, and staff, are why we can offer diverse programs that empower people of all ages to discover their potential.

From new Canadians learning to swim and feeling at home in their community to seniors finding connection and vitality to families finding balance with quality childcare and enriching youth programs, the Y is about more than fitness; it's where friendships are formed, lives are transformed, and memories are made.

THIS IS YOUR YMCA OF THREE RIVERS.



# Message from the Board of Directors

CONNECTION. IT'S IN THE SMILES SHARED IN FITNESS CLASSES, A SUPPORTIVE HAND FOR NEWCOMERS, AND THE FRIENDSHIPS MADE AT CAMP. THESE CONNECTIONS BUILD OUR COMMUNITY, AND WE'RE SO PROUD TO VOLUNTEER AT THE YMCA OF THREE RIVERS.

As a charity that ignites change, we're always looking forward, working to make our community brighter. But it's important to celebrate what's already been done.

Reading the 2024 Impact Report, we hope you feel a sense of ownership. It's a true team effort, and we're so proud of everyone who makes our Y shine: volunteers, staff, members, and the people we serve. Thank you for being part of the change.

**Anne Eaton & Kelly Schultz**

Chair and Vice-Chair, YMCA of Three Rivers Board of Directors





# Message from our CEO



2024 HAS BEEN ANOTHER YEAR OF GROWTH, RESILIENCE, AND IMPACT FOR THE YMCA OF THREE RIVERS. AS WE REFLECT ON THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS, IT'S CLEAR THAT OUR MISSION TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES HAS NEVER BEEN MORE CRITICAL—OR MORE FULFILLING.

In the preparatory work of building our next strategic plan, I spent a lot of time consulting with our community, engaging our partner agencies and fellow Y associations, and listening to staff, volunteers, and donors. There was a strong theme around how we are part of our communities' critical social infrastructure and lots of appreciation for our impact locally.

But there was also worry. This is a challenging time for our community. Families are struggling with affordability. Physical and mental health are deteriorating faster than our health care system can keep up, and the economy can't support nonprofits the way we need.

Although our Strategic Plan will be officially unveiled in 2025, the work is already underway. Guided by your feedback, we've started laying the foundation for bold initiatives to help us continue serving the Three Rivers region. I'm excited to see the impact we can create together as we bring this vision to life.

Because of you, we are bridging gaps and building bridges—creating connections that will shape brighter futures for generations to come.

**Mike Ennis**  
CEO, YMCA of Three Rivers

# Donors Make the Difference

BEHIND EVERY PROGRAM, EVERY SMILE, AND EVERY TRANSFORMED LIFE AT THE YMCA OF THREE RIVERS IS A COMMUNITY OF DONORS WHO BELIEVE IN OUR MISSION.

In 2024, donor generosity continued to fuel our work, with contributions totaling over \$1.8 million that directly impacted thousands of lives across our region.

To every one of our donors, thank you. Your support enabled 5,684 financially assisted members to access our services, including nearly 2,000 youth who discovered new strengths and abilities. You helped provide camp experiences for 600 subsidized campers, creating memories that will last a lifetime. Across our region, you made it possible for individuals to turn challenges into opportunities through programs like Alternative Suspension, Rock Steady Boxing, and Just Hangin' Out.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to our Greatest Needs Fund donors. Your unrestricted gifts allow us to respond when new priorities arise and empower us to direct resources exactly where they will make the greatest difference in our community.

Every dollar donated creates a ripple effect, and this report's highlights would not be possible without the individuals, staff members, foundations, government partners, and corporate supporters who stand alongside us in this important work.



## COMMUNITY

We welcomed 449 new donors in 2024.



## COMMITMENT

30% of donors made multiple gifts in 2024, including 142 loyal staff who give via payroll.



## COLLECTIVE IMPACT

\$76,000+ raised from donations of \$150 or less.





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“As parents of two children under 4, we have experienced first-hand how difficult it can be to access quality childcare services regardless of household means. With the birth of our second child and having recently read Dr. Peter Attia's book Outlive, personal fitness has become a priority for us as we look to maximize the decades ahead. Joining the Guelph Y on a family membership has enabled us to reach our personal goals such that we can show up for the duties of parenting as our healthiest selves and set positive examples for our kids. Supporting the Y in our annual giving was a no-brainer given their mission to serve as broad a swath of our community as possible, allowing more families somewhere safe to be together and benefit from good health”.

BEN CULLEN,  
Parent, Member and Donor

# 2024 Highlights

Behind every statistic we share is a story you helped write. United by a shared vision for our community, the generous donors, enthusiastic members, dedicated staff, and passionate volunteers at your Y are making a difference.

Here's a glimpse of what was achieved together in 2024.



**3,618**

children from 2,797 families in Child Care



**23,204**

people served in EarlyON programs



**4,531**

unique individuals enjoyed our Camp programs



**27,079**

Youth Program touchpoints



**1,484**

clients served in Employment Services and 80% gained employment



**13,618**

clients served in Immigrant Services



**100,706**

students are fed every school day within our Student Nutrition Program



**85,000**

Employee & Member Insights Surveys completed



**1,971**

participants in Health Management



**35,923**

members served in Health & Wellness



**5,684**

financially assisted members (1,997 youth)



**\$1.5M+**

raised in donations and support



# YMCA Child Care

With programming based on the latest research in child development and rooted in community engagement, the YMCA of Three Rivers is proud to provide exceptional child care. We're committed to improving accessibility for families across our communities, giving them peace of mind, and ensuring bright, engaging environments for children to grow and discover.



## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- We continue to invest in our childcare leaders' professional development and support. In 2024, we offered Mental Health First Aid certification, enhancing their ability to build caring and supportive environments that meet the needs of both the children and the childcare team.
- Building on the success of our Waterloo Region programs, we worked with Wellington County to start an access program. The program reserves a percentage of spaces for subsidy families, increasing accessibility for the community.
- Our Wellington County centres went live on OneHSN, an online system that streamlines the process of finding and applying for licensed Child Care. This was a big step forward in helping the community, and families manage the wait lists for care.





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“What I appreciate most is the personalized attention given to each child. The caregivers take the time to understand my daughter's unique interests, strengths, and areas for growth. They tailor activities and guidance to suit her individual needs, fostering a sense of confidence and self-discovery. Beyond the exceptional care provided... We've had the opportunity to connect with other parents and witness the genuine camaraderie within the daycare's supportive environment.”

CHILD CARE PARENT

# EarlyON Child & Family Centres

EarlyON Centres are community hubs that ignite potential in families and children. YMCA of Three Rivers is an EarlyON Operator in Stratford and the Lead Agency delivering EarlyON Child and Family Centres in the Waterloo Region. Free to all Ontario families, Centres offer play-based learning, expert advice, and connections to other parents. In 2024, we focused on expanding our reach through a comprehensive promotional campaign highlighting locations and extended hours. We also focused on expanding the hub of services provided by onsite community partners at EarlyON Centres and mobile sites to meet the needs of families attending and deepening our community partnerships to provide even greater support.



## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- EarlyON opened doors at the Stratford YMCA and the SERC YMCA Child Care in January and welcomed 297 people into these new locations in the first month alone.
- Waterloo Region boosted family support by increasing the availability of onsite resources and developing new community tools and lines of communication for families with unique needs. This was supported by a returning partnership with KidsAbility, a new partnership with Special Needs Resourcing in Waterloo Region, and developing new partnerships in Stratford with Community Health Teams, La Leche League, and Resource Consultants.
- New mobile sites were added in the Waterloo Region Townships, Stratford, and Cambridge to better serve our communities.



# Early Years Child Care Navigators

EYCC Navigators, funded by Region of Waterloo Community Services, assist families in accessing Early Years and Child Care Services. They provide information on licensed child care, help with subsidy applications, aid in applying for child care through OneList Waterloo Region, and support accessing other resources like special needs support and EarlyOn Child and Family Centres.



## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- 908 adults and 701 children were supported by the EYCC Navigator program in 2024.
- The Early Years and Child Care Navigators service contract with the Region of Waterloo has been extended to December 31st, 2025.
- Many families new to the region seek Early Years and Child Care Navigator (EYCCN) support but are unclear on the process for signing up for child care or applying for subsidies. These families want to follow the process correctly to avoid jeopardizing their applications and potentially having to start over or lose their spot on the waitlist. Families new to child care in Waterloo Region often reach out due to a lack of awareness about the sign-up process, with many overlooking the number of programs they can apply to.
- With waitlists for centre-based care remaining high, the team has increasingly referred families to home child care programs (31 referrals in Q4 alone), placing three children into Home Child Care through the subsidy access pilot in December alone.
- The EYCC Navigator team worked closely with YMCA Child Care and the Region of Waterloo Subsidy Access Pilot to create a process and pathway for quickly identifying subsidy spaces available and matching families to them.



# Overnight & Day Camps

We are proud to be a leader in providing valuable camp and outdoor recreation experiences for people of all ages since 1924. Our camps inspire love and stewardship of the outdoors, build skills and confidence, and nurture belonging. YMCA Camp is a place to return: You are welcome today, tomorrow, and 50 years from now as a camper, camper family, camp staff, or camp alumni.



## The Donor Difference

\$170,000+ to Operations

\$30,000+ to Camper Fee Assistance

## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Through our land-sharing agreement, Camp Ki-Wa-Y became an official site partner of Crow Shield Lodge, welcoming traditional Indigenous lodges and land-based programs for all nations. This meaningful partnership strengthens our commitment to reconciliation and builds a foundation for shared learning and growth.
- YMCA Camp Ki-Wa-Y celebrated 100 years in 2024! Our centennial reinforced community bonds and underscored our commitment to adventure, belonging, and environmental stewardship. This milestone celebrated our rich history and brought the community together, envisioning what's possible for future generations.
- Thanks to a collaboration with 11 community agencies and the generous support of hundreds of Y donors, the YMCA of Three Rivers staff provided vital camp subsidies to over 600 campers, ensuring every child could experience the joy of camp.
- Thanks to the support of Y donors, 29 newcomer children could attend camp and experience its life-changing impact.



# A Special Celebration

## CAMP KI-WA-Y TURNS 100

On June 15th, we gathered with hearts full of gratitude and excitement to acknowledge 100 years of camping at Camp Ki-Wa-Y. Over 300 campers, past and present, alumni, friends of camp, and visitors joined us in celebrating. The day was designed for folks to come together and enjoy the beauty of Ki-Wa-Y, walk down memory lane, and connect with friends – old and new.

We were enormously proud to welcome our partners from Crow Shield Lodge and introduce them during our opening ceremonies. It was a day for the memory books – filled with laughter, sunshine, great stories, and good old camp fun for everyone.





# Student Nutrition Program

Children who struggle academically, have trouble focusing, exhibit behavioral challenges, or lack energy throughout the school day often face a simple but critical barrier: hunger. Research consistently shows that proper nutrition is fundamental to student success. As a Lead Agency, the YMCA of Three Rivers leads over 650 Student Nutrition Ontario programs across Wellington/Dufferin/Guelph, Halton, Peel, and Waterloo Regions.



## The Donor Difference

Over \$475,000+ donated in addition to government funding

## IN 2024 OUR STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS PROUDLY:

- Served more than 694 schools
- Fed 100,706 students on average every school day
- Provided 9,521,847 meals or snacks

*"It's bittersweet when you overhear a student whisper down the hall after leaving the breakfast club, I wish we ate like that at home, Mom says maybe next month will be better."*

— Student Nutrition Program volunteer, Guelph



# Alternative Suspension

The YMCA Alternative Suspension Program provides a transformative experience for youth who are suspended or at risk of suspension from school. We aim to turn these challenging periods into opportunities for personal growth, fostering resilience, independence, and positive decision-making skills. By offering a safe and supportive environment, we empower students to overcome obstacles, build self-esteem, and develop essential social skills that support their successful return and engagement with school.

## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Launched our second location of the Alternative Suspension Program at the A.R. Kaufman Family YMCA in partnership with the Waterloo Catholic District School Board.
- The Alternative Suspension program has accepted 62 Waterloo Catholic District School Board students this school year.
- 21 Elementary and High Schools within the Waterloo Catholic District School Board partnered with Alternative Suspension this year to prepare and boost students' confidence in returning to school.

*"I loved the Y program, it was great and you guys are awesome. Really understanding and welcoming, I felt like I could talk and not be judged and work through my problems with your help and bring the things I learned back to school with me and use in my life too."*

— Alternative Suspension Participant



# Employment Services

Connecting employers and job seekers is the goal of YMCA Employment Services. Whether you're looking to develop job search skills, apply for training, create a resume and cover letter, or prepare for an interview, our employment specialists are here to help you every step of the way. We provide a wide range of free and personalized services to help overcome barriers to entering the labour market.

## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Serco (our Service System Manager for Employment Ontario) chose us as a model site within the Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie catchment. We participated in a roadshow, sharing our transformation successes and insights to date.
- Employment services staff were active in the community, hosting job fairs and delivering info sessions to job seekers at the request of two community organizations: Muslim Social Services of Waterloo Region and Camino Wellbeing and Mental Health.

*"When I arrived in Canada in February 2024, everything was new and overwhelming until a friend recommended YMCA's services. My employment coach guided me through job searching and helped me discover the medical device training program. Thanks to YMCA's support and guidance I secured a position in a hospital setting with growth opportunities. YMCA not only helped me professionally but also supported my wellbeing through fitness programs. Their comprehensive support transformed my newcomer experience."*

— Employment Services Participant





# Immigrant Services

The Y is a place where everyone belongs. Thanks to the generous support from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada) and our other funders, we provide free services for all newcomers in Stratford-Perth and Waterloo Region. Our team helps with language assessments, school, employment, and more so newcomers can feel at home.



## The Donor Difference

\$106,000+ to The Newcomer Journey

## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- The Immigrant Services team partnered to offer income tax clinics to Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) in their first year in Canada. We received a list of over 500 individuals and supported with completing 565 returns.
- Our Health Clinics continued to be offered in Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge, and in partnership with Huron Perth Public Health, they were expanded to the Stratford YMCA.
- In consultation with school boards, our Settlement team worked with families to ensure immunization records were updated with public health or the necessary vaccines were received, keeping kids in school.
- We held incredible Newcomer Theatre performances, during which students shared their incredible stories. This partnership with MT Space continues to showcase the power of the arts and gives many students the confidence to use their voices.
- Over 400 individuals registered for our Summer English Conversation Circles. This program allows newcomers to meet other newcomers, make new friends, learn about Waterloo and Stratford Region, and build confidence while practicing their spoken English or French.





When I signed up for the GCI Newcomer Theatre Project, I was unsure if I could do it and was ready to opt-out quickly. Never had I imagined that I would be performing on stage in front of so many people, especially in a language (English) that was new to me. However, after attending the first two sessions, everything changed. Gary and Lily from MT Space, along with my teacher Ms. Adesso, created an environment that was supportive and encouraging. They worked tirelessly to help me develop my skills and build my confidence. Being part of this project has been a life-changing experience for me. It not only improved my public speaking abilities, but I also gained a newfound sense of self-assurance. As a newcomer youth, I felt my voice was heard and valued. This project has empowered me to express myself more freely and to embrace new challenges with confidence."

**RANIAH,**

Galt Collegiate Institute &

Newcomer Youth Theatre Project Participant

# Youth Programs

New friends, new skills, and new confidence. Our diverse range of programs, catering to general interests and identity groups, including 2SLGBTQ+, Black, and Newcomer Youth, strives to offer something for ALL youth in our region. In 2024, we worked behind the scenes to ensure our youth programs remain sustainable and reflect the needs of our communities.



## The Donor Difference

\$350,000+ to Youth Programs

## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Hosted March Break events across our five communities, providing to 650 youth throughout the week. Events included a Basketball Tournament at Chaplin Family YMCA and Stork Family YMCA, Youth Volleyball in Guelph, a JHO event, a trip to the KW Titans games, Safe Sisters events, TAPPs events, Newcomer youth events, Moving Black Lives Forward – Black History Month event, a FIFA Tournament at ARK, and more!
- Our youth participants in Moving Black Lives Forward applied the skills they gained through the program to develop a project serving Waterloo Region youth. Their initiative was recognized with a \$7,300 award, highlighting their dedication and impact on the community.
- Provided Newcomer Camp youth leaders with first aid training to support their future employment pursuits in Canada.

*“One of my favorite things about coming to the YMCA is the opportunity to meet and connect with speakers from various organizations and fields. I love learning about different resources and gaining new insights from their experiences.”*

— Barok, Youth Program Participant





# Health Management

Our health management programs empower you to take control of your well-being. Whether you're experiencing a chronic condition and need support, are looking to change your lifestyle to include healthy habits, or want to meet new friends, our evidence-based programs are designed to help individuals at risk of or living with chronic illness continue to live actively.



## The Donor Difference

\$133,000+ to Health Management

## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Supported by the Government of Ontario, KW4 OHT, and Sun Life Financial, we delivered 20 Diabetes Fit programs, engaging 250 participants virtually and across five locations.
- We expanded our network of community contacts who refer and share program information within their networks, focusing on increasing participation from equity-deserving and underserved groups.
- We launched "Small Steps to Big Changes," a new diabetes prevention program at the A.R. Kaufman Family YMCA. This program, which partners with UBC, YMCA Canada, and Diabetes Canada, is part of research to prevent type-2 diabetes.
- 141 individuals living with conditions including MS, Parkinson's disease, stroke, spinal cord injury, and physical disabilities participated in our neuro-based and accessible exercise support programs, including Neuro Fit, Rock Steady Boxing, and Wellness Centre Support.
- To support people with dementia and their caregivers, we partnered with the Alzheimer's Society and the University of Waterloo to deliver three 8-week DELIGHT sessions. We continue to offer Minds in Motion® with the Alzheimer's Society at the Chaplin and Stork Family YMCA locations.
- Focused on enriching seniors' connections and well-being, we implemented a bi-monthly 'Active Seniors Connection' at our Stork Family YMCA and Stratford centres with support from the Government of Ontario.





# Health and Wellness

Fitness is more than just working out and eating right. It's a lifestyle that can be hard to navigate alone. At the Y, we approach fitness differently, offering a variety of programs and services tailored to help individuals of all ages and abilities learn the skills they need to be healthier.



## The Donor Difference

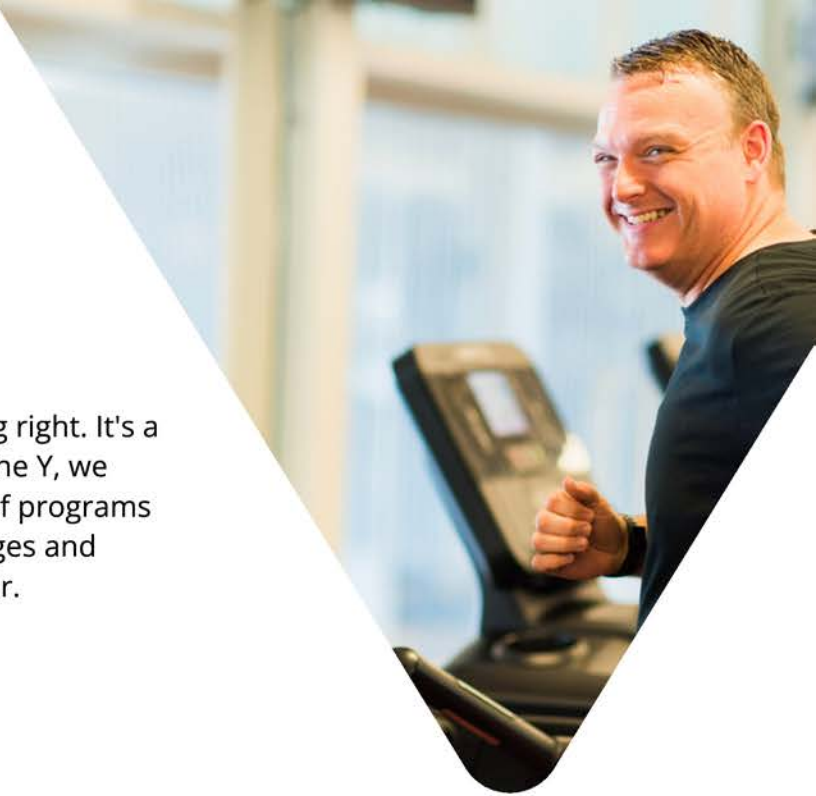
\$21,000+ to Member Fee Assistance

## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- With a focus on water safety and building self-esteem, over 9,000 children participated in our nationally recognized swimming lessons.
- We remained committed to community well-being, offering financial membership assistance to over 5,500 individuals.
- Completed a Change Room and Washroom Inclusivity Assessment Framework in partnership with members and employees with lived experience and made capital renovation improvements for change room spaces at our Chaplin Family YMCA and Stratford centres.

*"I just wanted to share how much I love our cycle and power classes! The energy and enthusiasm from the instructors are truly inspiring. Their guidance and charisma make every session not only challenging but also incredibly fun. They always push us to reach our full potential and keep us motivated throughout."*

— Member, Stork Family YMCA



# YMCA Work Well

Our commitment to holistic well-being extends beyond what happens in our buildings and programs. YMCA WorkWell works internally and with community organizations and businesses to create supportive workplace cultures where employees feel seen, valued, and appreciated. We help unlock each team's full potential using data-driven insights and tailored solutions, building a more resilient and engaged workforce.



## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- We continued and expanded our partnership with YMCA Canada, collecting Employee, Member, and Child Care Insights from YMCAs across Canada.
- We launched our WorkWell Community Hub - a place where WorkWell partners across the country can access resources, share stories, and discuss how to create healthier workplaces and communities.
- Partnering with Y Canada, we presented our national Child Care employee and participant experience data to the Federal Government to advocate for the child care sector in Canada and the challenges that the sector is facing.
- We released our sixth Workplace Well-Being Report, focusing specifically on employee well-being in the nonprofit sector. (<https://www.ymcaworkwell.com/insights-to-impact-2024>)
- We worked with 70 organizations in 2024, including 36 of the 37 YMCAs in Canada.





**JUSTICE.  
ACCESS.  
INCLUSION.  
DIVERSITY.  
EQUITY.**



# JAIDE

Throughout 2024, the YMCA of Three Rivers has built significant momentum in our JAIDE (Justice, Access, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity) journey, transitioning from our initial 2022 Action Plan to a more comprehensive approach. Our JAIDE journey remains grounded in the principle that "progress outweighs perfection." We continue to listen, learn, and act with intention, creating spaces where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and empowered to reach their full potential, regardless of their background or identity.



## **The Donor Difference**

\$30,000 to JAIDE

### **2024 HIGHLIGHTS**

- Continue to promote inclusive language and remove gender designations from our membership system.
- Established Rainbow Family drop-in programs at our EarlyON centers.
- Created a Smudging framework for our spaces.
- Introduced website translation for multiple languages.
- Completed a Change Room & Washroom Inclusivity Assessment Framework in partnership with members and employees with lived experience and made capital renovation improvements for change room spaces at our Chaplin Family YMCA and Stratford centres.



