



## **CHAIR'S REPORT 2021 by Dena Comley**

It is my pleasure to present you with the Carleton Place & District Youth Centre Chair of the Board Report for 2020-2021.

This was my first year as the Chair of the Board and it came at a time of unexpected challenges to our organization, as it did for individuals, communities and institutions worldwide. However, the CP Youth Centre met and exceeded expectations for the year, as this report can attest, based on the Centre's diversity of connections, impactful experiences and exceptional attendance growth.

I want to acknowledge the commitment of our board members and thank them for their leadership in the past year. It is only because of our strong team that we have navigated these times with success and continue to meet the needs of our growing youth community.

I am proud of our mission: *"To inspire, engage and celebrate youth through social, educational recreational activities and community participation encouraging a youth base invested in their local community"* and how it continues to guide our decision-making process.

Our updated Strategic Plan has played a pivotal role in shaping the CP Youth Centre in the past year and setting it up for future successes. Our vision of a town which all youth participate in shaping a vibrant community continues to inspire and direct.

We started the year with some challenges and in need of an Executive Director. Thanks to a committed board who put in a lot of volunteer hours in a short period of time, we were able to keep the Centre open for Summer Camps and find our ideal Executive Director. Gail Logan joined our organization in September 2020 with fresh energy, new ideas and the required experience to take us successfully in to the future.

Community collaboration with like-minded organizations was one our strategic goals as it is seen as an efficient way to increase valuable offerings to local youth. This year was no exception with newly initiated and further developed community collaborations.

The Lanark County Youth Centre Coalition is one of those important collaborations that continues to explore ways in which all the youth centres in Lanark can work and share resources. The County wide Virtual Youth Calendar and the successful food grant program to provide meals to vulnerable Lanark County residents were two ways in which the Coalition successfully worked together in the past year.

We are excited to work towards further collaboration between these great organizations in the year to come. As our part of the Food Grant Project, The CP Youth Centre with the help of Black Tartan Kitchen delivered 360 nutritious lunches to local youth in the fall of 2020. This was only a portion of the food grant program which saw hundreds of snacks, freezer meals, kitchen programs and more distributed throughout our community at a time of increasing need. A big thank you to the United Way and the other Lanark County Youth Centres for making this program such a success. I truly hope we can continue this important work.

One of the benefits and attractions to living in a small community like Carleton Place is the ability and desire of people and organizations to come together, especially in a time of crisis and need. During the past year we have seen improved and renewed relationships with a number of fantastic organizations, businesses and community members that share our mission and value the services the CP Youth Centre are offering.

From the Town of Carleton Place and the Hunger Stop Food Bank, to citizen groups like Civitan and Rotary Club. we are looking forward to strengthening our community connections in the year to come. A big thank you also goes out to our local schools for all their support in sharing our programs and activities through their own virtual and social channels. It truly does take a community.

I also want to give a special shout out to Jackson Homes. The financial and in-kind donations provided by this generous local company has been instrumental to helping the CP Youth Centre move forward in a difficult year. We are looking forward to our upcoming 2021 Jackson Homes Charity golf tournament that due to Covid-19m, was cancelled in 2020. Thank you to the entire Jackson Homes team for your hard work and commitment to the CP Youth Centre.

As an organization that relies heavily on fundraising and community support, the CP Youth Centre is excited to implement a new "Friends of Youth" business sponsor program. By connecting and collaborating with successful local businesses, we are able to improve our network of supporters, volunteers and donors. This program is beginning as I write this and I look forward to sharing its successes in the future.

I am incredibly proud of what the CP youth Centre staff and volunteers have accomplished in the past year. They have managed to virtually adapt programs and connect with a new and growing audience. Under Gail's leadership, our program coordinator Ryan has developed new and exciting programs to engage and connect with youth of varying ages and interest.

I am happy to report that during a difficult time of lockdowns and restrictions, the CP Youth Centre continues to experience growth in both new members, attendance and program offerings. Since the beginning of Covid-19 in early 2020, we have experienced over 100% increase in new memberships and this number continues to rise.

While the staff were busy keeping everyone safe by staying in compliance with the frequently changing health guidelines, the board continued to march forward. It was definitely a year of action for this small group of volunteers. From sourcing and setting up a new bookkeeper to updating and revising policy; a renewed focus on good governance kept everyone busy. Our fundraising committee was successful in implementing some virtual fundraising activities including our first virtual auction and a contactless bottle drive. Great work was done by all.

A long-discussed goal of the board also came to fruition with the development of a new logo and branding package. This process included an update of paint colours, which added a fun energy and much needed brightening of our institutional space. A big thank you to Paolo Villa and Villa's Painting for refreshing the centre.

Also, thanks to the talents and generosity of Julie Hunter Graphic Design, the CP Youth Centre has new logos and a full branding package; a tool that staff will be able to utilize for years to come. Thanks to yet another new community connection, you can check out our updated branding on our new website coming soon.

I encourage you to look for the CP Youth Centre in the coming year. Find us out in the community with our new "Youth en Route" trailer, at the Centre located at the rear of Carembeck Community Centre at 360 Edmund St and on social media @cpyouthcentre. If you are looking for volunteer opportunities or would like to support the CP Youth Centre with financial donations we would love to hear from you.

I am looking forward to the year to come and working with our dedicated volunteers and staff who, like me, see the potential this exciting organization has to improve and contribute to this growing community.