

The Y saves lives

The Y helped me rebuild
my life.



The Campaign for the YMCA of Hamilton | Burlington | Brantford



Tom:

The Y gave me a home.

On a cold November night in 2022, Genevieve Hladysz was leaving work at the Y when she noticed someone sleeping under the stairs by the back alley. She asked his name and thus began a conversation that would change Tom's life.

He had fallen on hard times – living on the streets after a violent home invasion left him fearing for his safety, in and out of the shelter system, and battling a drug addiction. He told Genevieve that he was in the alley hoping for a room at the Y. "What struck me was how kind and respectful Tom was," says Genevieve. "Living on the streets can be very challenging. Trusting people and services are not easy."

The next day, Tom met with a Mental Health and Addiction worker from the Y's Social Navigator Program. "She was so great to me," says Tom. "She and the Y team helped me with the forms to get everything set up, and then made it happen. **I finally had a roof over my head.**"

In under five days, Tom went from sleeping under the stairs to having a place to call home. He's also gotten clean. "Drugs numb the pain and loneliness of the streets," he says. "But now I have amenities like the gym that help keep me focused on positive behaviours. My next goal is to get off government assistance and find a job. The Y team is helping me to get connected to those resources."

Most important of all, says Tom, he now has a home where people know his name.

The Y saves lives campaign

Everyone deserves a chance to have a healthy life, connected to community and meaningful relationships.

It's proven that we have a better chance of doing so when we have a YMCA in our community. In fact, the Y saves lives.

Across more than 120 locations, the YMCA of Hamilton|Burlington|Brantford is a place where all can find belonging. We provide a social network and reduce isolation. For some the Y is home, for many we are a second home.

We are founded on promoting equity and improving the health and well-being of all members of our community. To do so, we must reach more people, break down barriers to access, and provide increased programming that is responsive to people from all backgrounds, abilities, and life situations.

That's why the YMCA of Hamilton|Burlington|Brantford is launching The Y Saves Lives Campaign to raise \$25 million to make bold and targeted investments to double the number of people we serve from 270,000 to 550,000.

Will you join us in saving more lives in our community?



An investment in our community

The Y is a hub for individuals, a convener for the community, and a driver in addressing issues of inequality, poverty, and lack of opportunities.

We provide services to people of all ages – from child care to healthy living for seniors – with programs that are aimed at supporting them at all stages and situations.

The campaign will help the Y double our impact by:

- Giving youth and families skills and opportunities for success
- Creating space to find connection, belonging, and community
- Supporting healthy, engaged living for our seniors

Olga:

The Y
helped me settle
in Hamilton
after fleeing the
war in Ukraine.





Campaign Priority 1:

\$16 M

Give young people and families the skills and opportunities for success

From child care to supporting seniors, the Y is here for community members throughout their lives. We are here when they need us most, helping to establish the fundamentals for healthy, thriving futures.

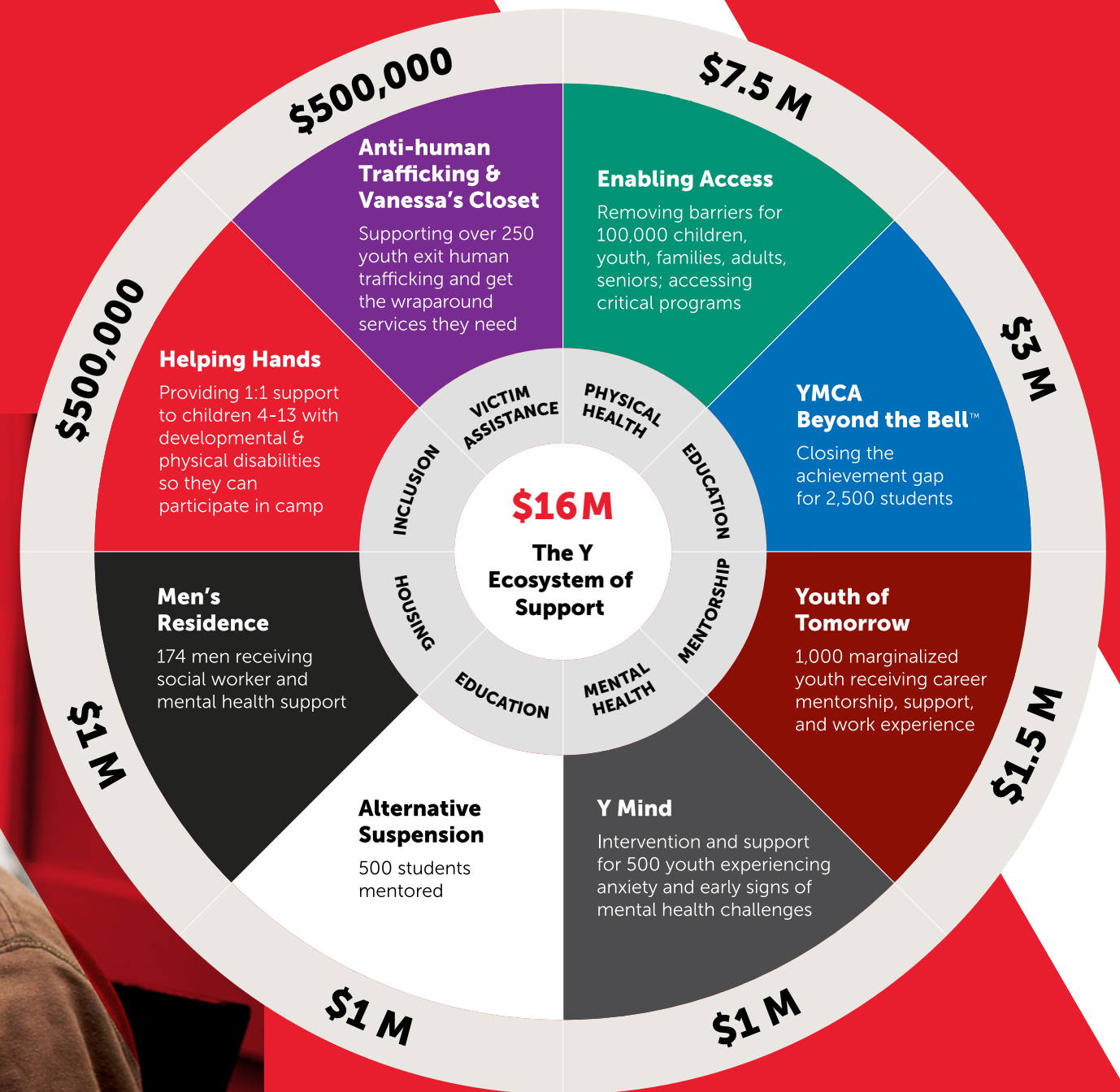
We offer an ecosystem of support: programs that improve physical and mental health, support success at school, and offer mentorship and work experiences that prepare young people for employment.

These services are more important than ever. Our community members are facing increased challenges in the post-COVID world.

With your help, we can double our impact on youth and families.

The campaign investments will:

- Significantly increase access to core Y programs, including health, fitness, aquatics, and day and overnight camps
- Enhance programs designed to deepen community connection and inclusion
- Expand programs that promote success for youth by reaching more people, working with more schools, and ensuring programs are available across all three of our communities



Kayla*:

The Y helped me rebuild my life.

It was trust that opened the door for Kayla* to start rebuilding her life.

Having faced unimaginable challenges throughout her young life, she had reached a point of despair. Hospitalized after a suicide attempt, she disclosed that she had been sexually exploited. Victims Services offered to connect her to the Y's Anti-Human Trafficking team, but it was only when she was forced to leave a shelter because of severe mental health and addiction issues that she agreed to meet.

The Y's team started by building trust and rapport. "Yes, we were there to connect Kayla to services," says Candace Morley, a Program Manager at the Y. "But our role is also to walk alongside her and to guide her to independence without judgment or hesitation."

The Y team was able to provide practical and emotional support, and to encourage Kayla's growing confidence and determination. Within six months, she had steady employment, had re-enrolled in school, and had maintained her sobriety.

That's not to say the road was easy for Kayla. The pandemic brought increased isolation, the loss of a close friend to an overdose, and the inability to work.

"We got creative to keep a meaningful connection," says Candace. "We went on virtual walks together and cooked together virtually from our own homes (one of her family recipes has become a staple of mine)."

Candace was cheering in the audience when Kayla, the valedictorian of her class, graduated from high school. Candace and the Y team are still here for Kayla, mostly as a safe team rooting for her.

"To say that we are proud of Kayla would be an understatement," says Candace. **"She is an amazing human, someone who deserved a chance to be seen, someone who has so much offer to."**

**To protect her privacy we are not using her real name or image.*



Laura*:

The Y supported me through virtual school.



When Chris Hunt rang the doorbell, he wasn't sure if Laura* would recognize him.

Chris is the Manager, Beyond the Bell™ and Indigenous Partnerships for Six Nations and he was delivering Learning Toolkits to program participants at the height of pandemic. "With schools closed and children from vulnerable groups at greater risk of falling behind, our Learning Toolkits were an urgent support," explains Chris. "When a child falls behind in school their future can be at risk of early drop-out, high-risk behaviour, and health challenges."

Although it had been several years since Laura had seen Chris, she recognized him right away and greeted him with a beaming smile. As her family watched her excitedly rifle through the healthy snacks, learning activities, and – best of all – her graduation certificate, they told Chris how much these deliveries and the program had meant to all of them. It was then that Chris realized Laura was wearing the shoes they had delivered the previous Christmas. "The Toolkit wasn't just a bag of things," he says. **"It was a care package, offering children an opportunity to thrive and meet their potential."**

Now BTB is back in schools delivering in-person programming across Hamilton, Burlington, Brantford and Six Nations with plans to expand to new schools and communities.

**To protect her privacy we are not using her real name.*

Myles:

The Y helped me overcome depression.

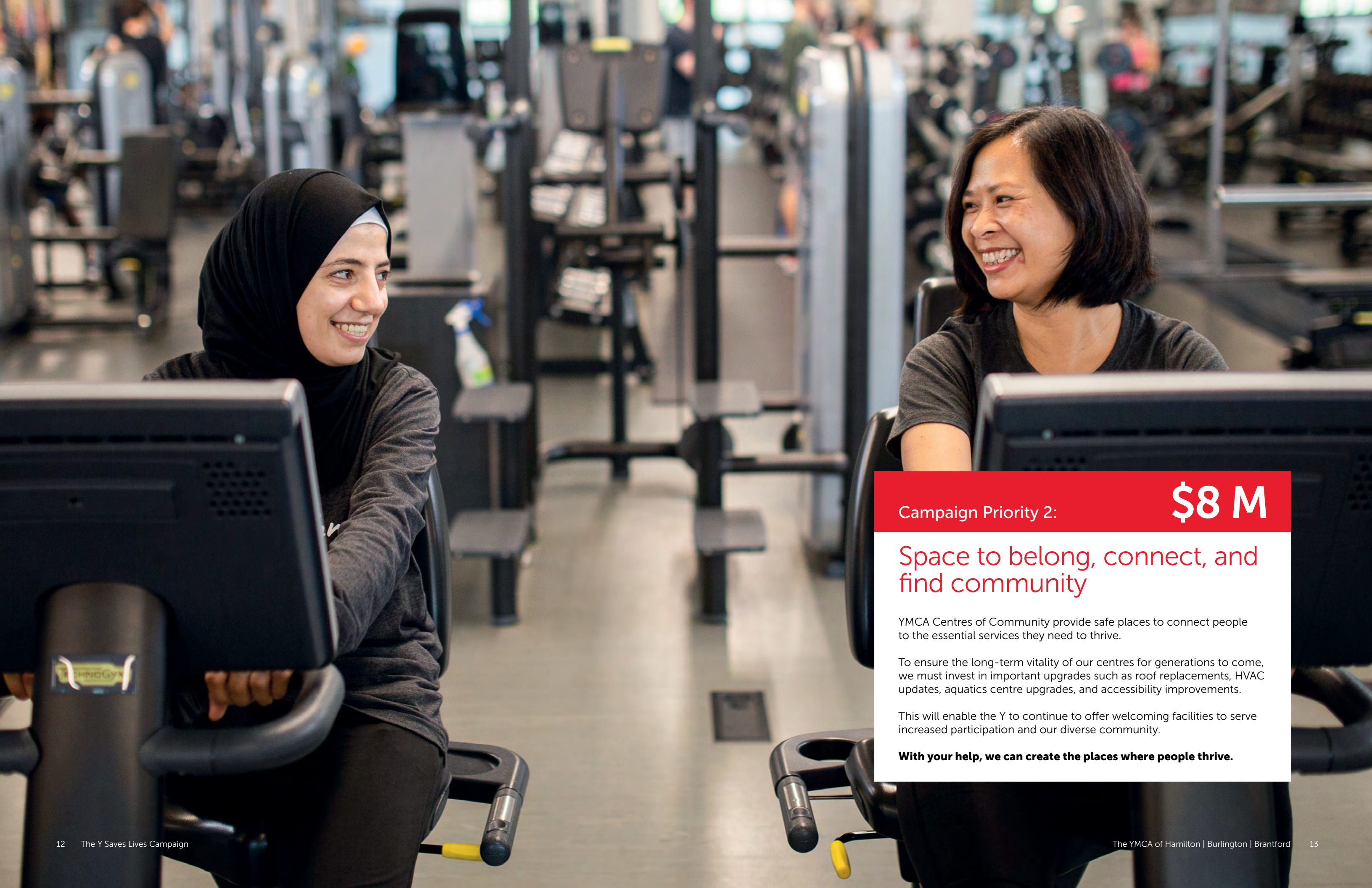


The pandemic was a turning point for Myles.

He went from being a friendly, happy, outgoing middle-grader to being alone and depressed. He was homeschooled for Grade 8 and then started a new school. According to his mother, "he was struggling at school and life."

But then another turning point: he joined the Y with a student membership. "I took inspiration from my cousin and started working out. I got stronger and more confident. **I felt like I'd found myself and had meaning to my life.** I also met one of my best friends at the Y – we continue to work out together and I've met many more people. The Y has helped me overcome depression and anxiety."

Myles is now happy and thriving in high school. He says the Y saved his life. But he's thinking about the others who could benefit from the Y. "All these great things happened to me, but I know there are other kids struggling who are less fortunate. My hope is that every youth who wants to can come to the Y and participate, even if they need financial assistance."



Campaign Priority 2:

\$8 M

Space to belong, connect, and find community

YMCA Centres of Community provide safe places to connect people to the essential services they need to thrive.

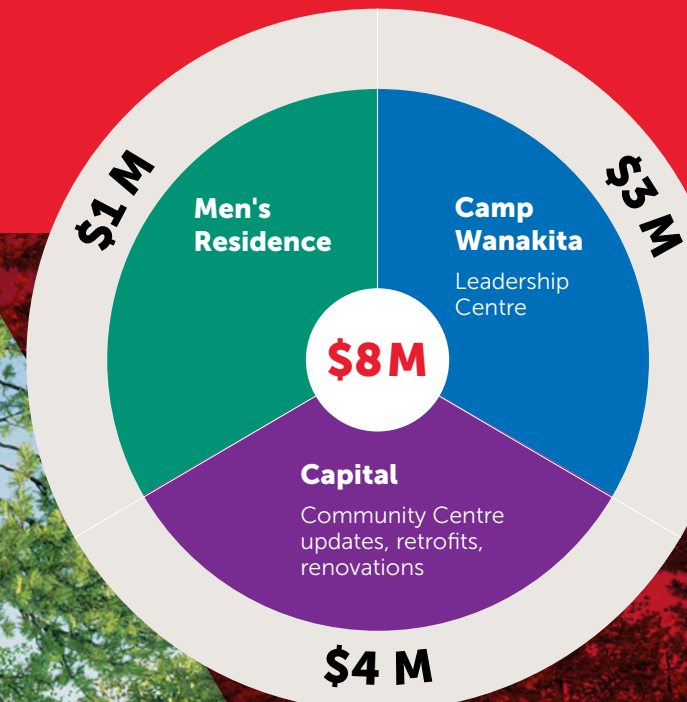
To ensure the long-term vitality of our centres for generations to come, we must invest in important upgrades such as roof replacements, HVAC updates, aquatics centre upgrades, and accessibility improvements.

This will enable the Y to continue to offer welcoming facilities to serve increased participation and our diverse community.

With your help, we can create the places where people thrive.

The campaign investments will:

- Enable the Y to be the centre of community for all with accessible, welcoming facilities that are equipped to serve increased participation and our diverse community
- Create spaces specifically for young people to flourish
 - > Rebuild the leadership centre at Camp YMCA Wanakita and invest in the Leadership Program so we can increase participation and expand to more high schools
 - > Design innovative shared spaces specifically for young people, incorporating STEM, e-sports, gaming, and social aspects
- Update the men's residence, provide essential services, and ensure integrated, wrap-around supports allowing residents to live with dignity



Barb and Scott:

The Y is part of our family legacy.

For Barb (Cole) Allan and her husband, Scott, YMCA Wanakita is more than a lively neighbour on Koshlong Lake, where Barb's family has had a cottage since the 1960s. It is also the site of big moments for generations of Coles and Allans.

Barb's sister Cathy was among the first female counsellors when the camp went co-ed; Barb and her other sister Janet quickly followed. When Cathy passed away at 25, a trail was named in her honour. Barb and Scott's own three daughters Caitlin, Meredith, and Laura were all campers. Through Wanakita's partnership with the former Reach for the Rainbow, Meredith, who has Down Syndrome, participated in all aspects of camp with her sisters. Caitlin and Laura became counsellors and Meredith became a Reach volunteer.

"All three of our daughters have gone on to choose leadership roles as adults," says Scott. "They are all adventurous in life and independent, and the Wanakita experience contributed significantly to their future personal growth and development. The Y not only saves lives, it *makes* lives."

It was ensuring that future generations had those experiences that prompted Barb and Scott to make a donation to support revitalizing the Longhouse and naming it in honour of Steve and Rob Heming's 40 years of leadership at Wanakita.

"The Hemings have made a huge impact on our family and thousands of others," says Scott. **"It's our hope that the Heming Welcome Centre will encourage others to give to Wanakita. We want camp to remain a great place to get those experiences and build strong leadership skills and relationships like it has for our family."**

Campaign Priority 3: **\$1 M**

Supporting healthy, engaged living for our seniors

Canada's seniors are the fastest growing demographic in the country. Their needs are different than in the past – they are living longer but also expecting to remain active and engaged in their communities. That's where the Y makes a life-changing difference.

The Y's LiveWell is an evidence-based community health partnership with Hamilton Health Sciences and McMaster University. LiveWell programs target improving health outcomes for those with chronic conditions, focusing on secondary prevention, self-management, and easing the transition from hospital to community.

And there's another benefit to growing these programs at the Y. Studies show that programs that blend generations help all ages – they diminish age-related stereotypes on both sides, strengthen communities and lead to improved services for children and older adults.

With your help, we can reach more seniors – serving 20,000 in the next five years – and bring the full complement of LiveWell programs to all five Centres of Community.



The campaign investments will:

- Expand LiveWell to all YMCA Centres of Community
- Design a YMCA Healthy Aging Centre with activities focused on social interaction, arts, and education

\$1 M

Seniors

LiveWell expansion

- CanWell
- Fit for Function
- In Motion
- Healthy Hearts
- Balance+
- GERAS Dance



Armando and Jim:
**The Y
brought us
together.**



Armando and Jim are both long-standing Hamiltonians, but they might not have met – and forged a lasting, supportive friendship – if it weren't for the Y.

Armando, now an active and engaged nonagenarian, came to Canada from Italy in the 1950s. A tailor for more than 40 years, he and wife Isabella, also from Italy, raised their family in a home they built and where they still live.

Jim is a retired Fire Captain who served 34 years with the Hamilton Fire Department. He's been a member of the Y for more than 40 years.

Armando and Jim share a commitment to working out. So when a fellow member introduced them more than seven years ago, and Jim found that changes to bus routes were hampering Armando's ability to get to the Y, he offered to bring Armando himself. He's been doing so ever since, five days a week, for a couple of hours each day.

What started as helping out a fellow workout enthusiast has become a close friendship. "I would be lost without Jim," says Armando. Or his part, Jim enjoys spending time with Armando and his family. "I love hearing their stories about coming to Canada," he says.

Jim and Armando stayed in touch by phone and visited with masks during the pandemic. But they were both thrilled to be back to their normal routine once the Y re-opened. **"The Y is very important to both of us for physical and mental health,"** says Jim. "And it's not just the activity – the staff always keep an eye out for Armando. His family appreciates the team's kindness. They tell me so on a regular basis."

Join us

The YMCA's vision is to create vibrant and healthy communities, where everyone belongs, in Hamilton, Burlington, and Brantford.

We are proud of the impact we have annually:



1,300+
passionate and committed employees



Almost **\$2M** annually in enabled access to people across our communities



15,000+ individuals supported by the YMCA Employment and Immigrant Services



20,000+ members across our communities served in health, fitness, and aquatic centres



5,300+ families supported in a safe, affordable child care program



1,500 children learning to swim and developed life-saving skills



200+ people escaping exploitation through our Anti-Human Trafficking Program

The need for critical YMCA programs and services is greater than we can currently provide. We have the opportunity to address some of the most significant issues facing our communities, but we can't do it without donors like you.

We can't do it without donors like you.



Help us save more lives



ymcahbb.ca

905-977-1791
donation@ymcahbb.ca



United Way

Charitable Registration
#10808 3825 RR0001

Please join us in the Campaign for the YMCA Hamilton|Burlington|Brantford