



2023 YOUTH DEPARTMENT SUMMARY REPORT

YMCA of Southwest
Nova Scotia



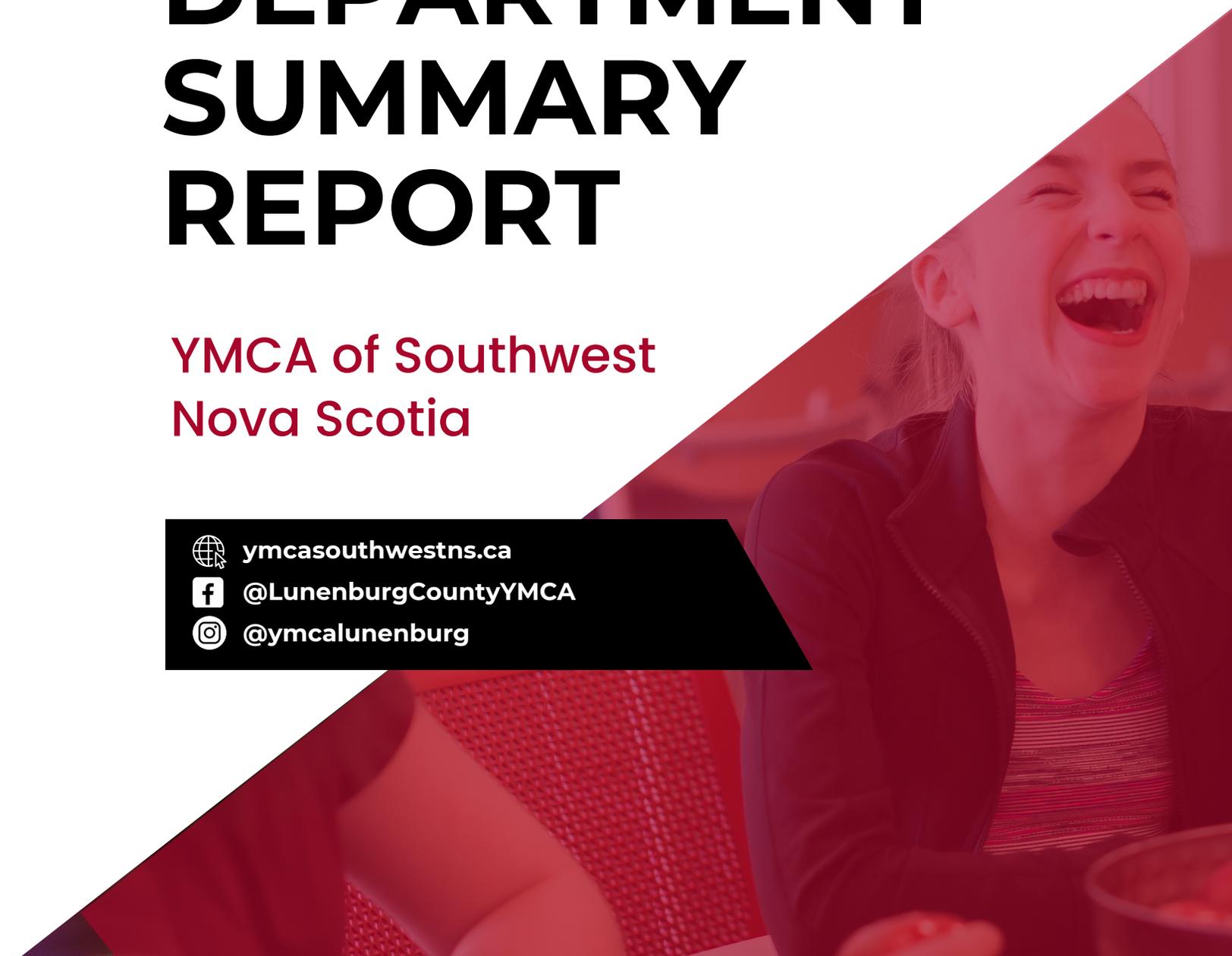
ymcasouthwestns.ca



[@LunenburgCountyYMCA](https://www.facebook.com/LunenburgCountyYMCA)



[@ymcalunenburg](https://www.instagram.com/ymcalunenburg)



A MESSAGE FROM THE YOUTH DIRECTOR

In the 14 years we have operated youth programs, the YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia continues to demonstrate a focus on increasing opportunities for children and youth. Over the past year, the Youth Department has seen remarkable growth, marked by the expansion into Queens County with the addition of a third Youth Outreach Program and the opening of the Liverpool YMCA Youth Centre. Additionally, we continued to expand our program offerings in schools by partnering on the development of new curriculum; and in more ruralized communities within Lunenburg County by developing new recreation and sport initiatives.

We as an organization are committed to meeting the needs of our region's rural areas so all children and youth are connected and feel a sense of belonging; and we continually adapt programs and find innovative ways to support youth in the communities we serve. We believe everyone has the innate potential to thrive, and we want to give everyone the opportunities to overcome obstacles so they can tap into their full abilities. While we are fueled by our successes over the past year, we are driven by the potential for even more growth in 2024.



Kim Whitman-Mansfield
Youth Program Director

GRATEFUL TO OUR FUNDERS

The YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia Youth Department relies solely on grants, donations, and fundraising for its programming. All the programs detailed in this report were offered free of charge to any young person interested in participating. By leveraging our strengths, and collaborating with partners, we pursue funding opportunities to strengthen our youth programs and facilities. Thank you to our 2023 supporters whose contributions have been instrumental in the success of our programs and services.



SCHEDULED PROGRAMS

Free drop-in programs for youth, 11-18 years old

KING STREET YOUTH CENTRE



Programs offered in 2023 include: Cook it up!; Food & Fun; Chill Zone; Crafty Time; Budgeting For Youth; Board Game Night; and Youth Leader Program. The Youth Centre is a safe space for youth to socialize, make new friends, and participate in a variety of activities.

Accessed: **1,788 times in 2023** and 16,560 times since opening in October 2012.

PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN

- Town of Bridgewater: 76%
- Lunenburg county: 22%
- Other: 2%

YOUTH CONDITIONING



Features 5 unique streams of workouts for youth based on their health & fitness goals. A dedicated team of YThrive coaches are on site to support youth find their ideal program.

Accessed: **207 times in 2023** & 1,297 times since launch in November 2015:

PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN

- Town of Bridgewater: 69%
- Lunenburg County: 30%
- Other: 1%

YOUTH BASKETBALL

Provides opportunities for youth to be active, have fun and enhance their skills in a supervised setting.

Accessed: **892 times in 2023** and 5,371 times since launch of program in May 2012:

PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN

- Town of Bridgewater: 79%
- Lunenburg county: 19%
- Other: 2%



Fun Fact: 737 Volunteer Hours were provided by adults in support of Youth Dept. Programming



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Testimonial from youth age, 15 who participates in youth centre programs:

“...this is a place where I can have fun, I belong, it's interesting, and I got to meet a lot of cool people through it...I love the Y because it's a safe space. It's a place where I can come, not be afraid to be myself, because as an autistic person, you know, and especially for autistic females or girls, we mask a lot, and we, there's not really many chances where we can really be ourselves, but the Y gives me a place where I can feel I can be myself.”

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COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

Free for all ages

DROP-IN STREET HOCKEY & OUTDOOR BASKETBALL

Provides opportunities for folks of all ages and abilities to enjoy pick up hockey and basketball in an outdoor setting from May - October.

Accessed: **171 times in 2023** & 308 times since launch in May 2022.

PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN

- Town of Bridgewater: 51%
- Lunenburg County: 49%



GET MOVING! COMMUNITY BIKE LOAN PROGRAM

In partnership with the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre and the Town of Bridgewater, bikes for all ages are available to borrow for free. Working with a local Videographer, the YMCA completed six promo videos promoting Lunenburg County as a Cycle Tourism Destination.

Videos are available at ymcasouthwestns.ca/getmoving



PARTICIPATION COMMUNITY BETTER TOGETHER CHALLENGE 2023

The YMCA secured funding for the fourth edition of the ParticipACTION Community Challenge, a national physical activity and sport initiative that encourages everyone in Canada to get active throughout June. Several recreational opportunities were held for all ages to participate in and help contribute active minutes to their respective communities. **Together, YMCA members and youth tracked 412, 570 active minutes.**

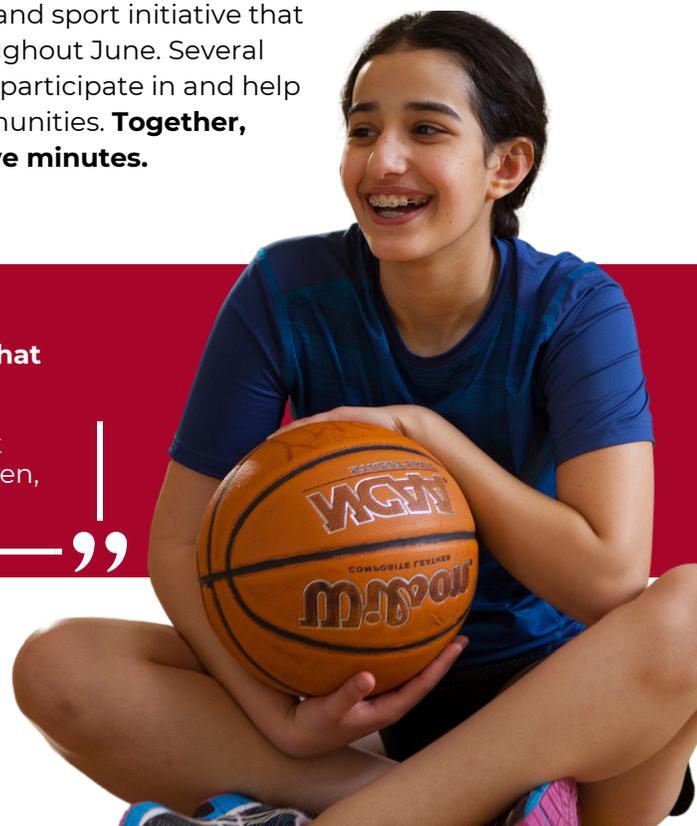


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Testimonial from 13 year old participant when asked what the YMCA means to them:

“It’s just a good spot to play basketball, and I used to work out here, my dad used to work out here when he was a teen, so it means a good amount to my family and us.”

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YOUTH LEADER PROGRAM

With funding generously donated by United Way Lunenburg County, aspiring youth volunteers are provided an opportunity to participate in leadership training, gain developmentally appropriate skills, learn to get along with and appreciate others, gain self-confidence, and volunteer with YMCA led youth programming and community events.

- 40 Active Youth Leaders in 2023
- A total of 120 Youth have completed all requirements for Level 1 leadership, with 193 certificates issued to youth attaining a higher level of achievement

Since 2009, members of the Youth Leader Program have provided more than 18,920 volunteer hours, with **over 660 of those in 2023.**

YOUTH LEADERS VOLUNTEERED AT THESE EVENTS IN 2023:

- MODL Easter Egg Hunt
- Heartland Tour
- United Way Bike for Kids Storage
- Healthy Family Days
- Canada Day Multicultural Festival
- Lunenburg County Pride Parade
- South Shore Exhibition Parade
- Car Wash & Yard Sale Fundraising
- MODL Pumpkin Party in Dayspring

- MODL Pumpkin Party in Parkdale/Maplewood
- Run the River Race
- YMCA Trick or Treat Trot
- Lahave Parade of Lights

YOUTH LEADERS ALSO:

- Took part in YMCA National Youth Advisory Meeting evaluating the Youth Transition Program
- Attended the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo as guests of the RCMP "H" Division in celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the RCMP

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Testimonial from Youth Leader age 14:

There's a lot of things I appreciate about the Y. For example, I appreciate that the YMCA is welcoming and open as it is...Anyone can be a leader if they, you know, want to. Youth leaders do so much to help around the community, and mostly just be a positive influence...I appreciate getting to go out and help people...around school, I've noticed that I've started to lead a little bit more...I've gotten a little more confident. I would most definitely recommend that others join the youth leader program. It is incredible to join this program, and get to talk to people, and...learning how to be a leader, learning new skills.

”



YOUTH TRANSITION PROGRAM

The YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia was part of a national team of 22 YMCAs in 7 provinces to deliver the YTP program which empowers young people by offering tailored workshops and personalized support. Through engaging activities and comprehensive mentorship, supportive counseling, life skills and mental well-being programs, YTP fosters a sense of belonging and expands each student's social network. We are proud of our rural YMCA's ability to surpass the urban centres in program outreach, demonstrating the collaborative relationships we have built in the schools and with our community youth serving partners.

875

Youth served making up 11% of national numbers.

212

1:1 Counseling Sessions Provided, representing 14% of National numbers.

114

Workshops provided to 766 youth participants comprising 9% of national numbers

11

Mentor relationships providing 402 mentorship hours, leading all YMCA's.

41

Youth connected to technology.

220

Service referrals connecting participants to networks of support.

183

Supportive counseling hours offered to youth.

39

Unique youth participants received counseling.

“

Testimonial from a Guidance Counsellor for a group of grade 9 students who participated in the How to Adult programming:

I just wanted to thank you. This group you have right now are on the ball to show up for your sessions more than anything else - they remember when I forget. And they look forward to it. Just wanted to let you know that whatever you're doing is working. :)

”



YOUTH OUTREACH PROGRAM

This all-gender community-based program improves the immediate and long-term social, educational/vocational, economic and health outcomes for vulnerable youth. In 2023, we expanded with the addition of a third Youth Outreach Program in Queens County. We also expanded our program supports with access to: home cooked meals, essentials & laundry, internet & technology, mentoring, and life skills training. We opened a new Drop-In location (Liverpool YMCA Youth Center) in August which officially opened in September, 2023.

General Stream: Youth who are 16-24 years old experiencing risk factors, and who may, or may not be connected to Child Welfare programs. 81% of participants are in General Stream.

Youth In Care Stream: Youth 12- 19 yrs old in the Minister's care, in a number of settings across the Welfare Placement continuum including temporary and permanent care. 9% participants are in Youth in Care Stream.

DATA COLLECTED FROM JANUARY - DECEMBER 2023

66

Referrals received.

278

Times Liverpool YMCA Youth Center Drop-in accessed. Offered 2 days a week Aug. - Dec.

83%

Referrals came from service providers.

284

Times Y Our Safe Space Drop-in was accessed. Offered 1 day a week Jan - July and increased to 2 days Aug. - Dec.

74

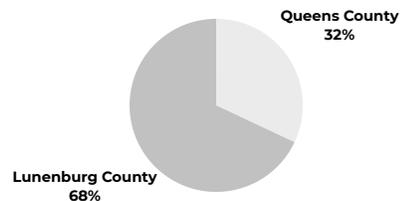
Times Liverpool Curling Club Drop-in accessed. Offered 1 day a week from Jan. - July.

17%

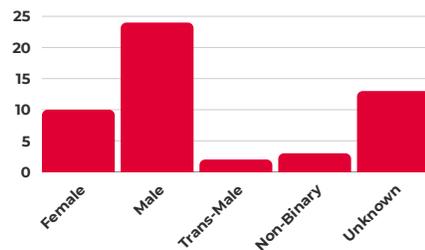
Referrals were made as self-referrals and/or parental/guardian referrals

Period Poverty Funding: The YMCA Youth Outreach Program received funding through the Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia as part of the cost-of-living support to help lower-income people with period poverty (the financial inability to purchase menstrual products).

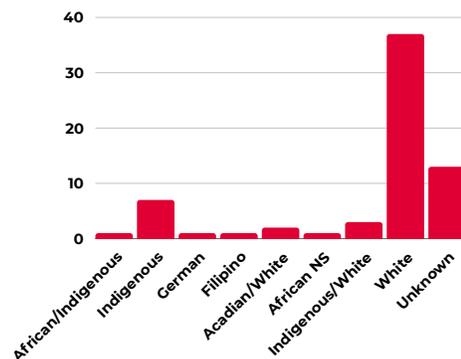
Counties Represented:



Gender Represented:



Cultural Demographics:



SPECIAL PROJECTS UPDATES

MEDIA LITERACY & DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP IN YOUTH

Begun in 2021 with funding from the Government of Canada, Anti-Racism Action Program, 2023 brought the final year of funding for the “Media Literacy & Digital Citizenship in Youth” initiative. The project promoted digital literacy and targeted on-line hate through skill development programming culminating in the creation of a multi-cultural podcast, documenting the stories of racialized communities for young people not to be influenced by hate whether on-line or off-line.

Outcomes:

- Thirty-Nine (39) skill development sessions completed and are now part of the YMCA Youth Leader program curriculum.
- Podcast editing completed with support from three students enrolled in the Co-operative Education program.
- 29 episodes of the podcast Varying Voices: Dispelling Common Misconceptions launched.
- 5 episodes of the podcast Connective Perspectives - A Youth's Point of View (Season 3), were released on streaming services.
- Participated in the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Event facilitated by Veronica Merryfield
- Participated in YMCA Canada Black History Month National Webinar
- YMCA Youth Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator attended the Activating Voice at 2023 YMCA Canada AGM and the YMCA Canada Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Oppression Forum
- Participated in the Youth Led Event as part of International Day of the Child

INSPIRING EQUITABLE CONVERSATIONS: PEER TO PEER VIOLENCE PREVENTION PILOT PROGRAM FOR LGBTQIA2S+ YOUTH

Funded through NS Department of Community Services, Sexual Violence Prevention Innovation Grant in late 2022, this project resulted in the development and delivery of a pilot program called “Let's Talk Choices” - an open conversation for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and their allies aimed at generating meaningful conversations amongst youth with a major focus on inclusivity, ensuring participants personal narratives are reflected throughout sessions. Topics include setting boundaries, coping mechanisms and healthy relationships; with a focus on language, coming out, ally-ship and intersectionality – areas most often left out when discussing peer violence.

Outcomes:

- Piloted twice in 2023, once in Chester Area Middle School and once at the King Street Youth Centre, this program was accessed 132 times.
- YMCA Youth Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator was one of three keynote speakers as part of YMCA Canada: Promoting 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion across Federation – Fireside Chat
- Success of “Let's Talk Choices” program resulted in requests to be provided in two schools in 2024

WORKSHOPS

BASIC BUDGETING FOR YOUTH- TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR MONEY

With supportive funding from: Employment Support & Income Assistance, Youth Development Initiative - Department of Community Services, and Region of Queens, the YMCA provided FREE opportunities for youth, ages 15-25, to better understand finances and empower them with the knowledge to transition into independent living. A total of 23 youth participated in three workshop opportunities offered in Liverpool & Caledonia, Queens County and New Germany, Lunenburg County.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

This 13-session program empowers youth to make healthy choices regarding a wide range of topics often relevant for most youth including dating and peer violence, gender stereotyping, influence of media, awareness of substance use, and what a healthy relationship or friendship looks, feels and sounds like. With support from SchoolsPlus at Forest Heights Community School and two programs were offered at New Germany Regional High School. Youth in grade 7-9 accessed this program 629 times.

JOB SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH

With supportive funding from: Employment Support & Income Assistance, Youth Development Initiative - Department of Community Services; the YMCA provided a 4-day FREE workshop in New Germany, Lunenburg County for 8 youth in grades 9-12 covering a variety of topics with a focus on goals and job readiness skills.

2023 DIGITAL DISCOVERY CAMP - LUNENBURG COUNTY

The King Street YMCA Youth Centre hosted a FREE 4-day camp in-person experience for 15 youth. Facilitated by the Discovery Centre in partnership with Digital Nova Scotia, youth explored everything from robotics and coding to 3D printing and video game development.

NEW PROJECTS 2023

COORDINATED ACCESS TO SUPPORT EXIT (CASE) HOST AGENCY

The YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia partnered with YWCA Halifax to administer the CASE Pilot in Lunenburg County. The purpose of CASE is to facilitate access to an integrated, trauma-informed, and inclusive wrap around model of service delivery intended to support survivors of sexual exploitation and human trafficking, as well as people who identify as sex workers, who are thinking about, ready, or exiting the sex trade. The King Street Youth Centre was designated a CASE Meet-and Greet Safe Space.

NEW GERMANY MULTISPORT PROGRAM: BUILDING PHYSICAL LITERACY & SPORT SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL LUNENBURG COUNTY

The YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia was awarded funding from the Government of Canada, in partnership with Canada Parks and Recreation Association through the Reaching Each and Every One: A Community Sport Initiative. Launched on May 1, 2023, this four-month project helped remove barriers, increase sport access and participation, while helping with retention rates for equity deserving groups in the rural communities of New Germany, North River, Parkdale Maplewood, and Pinehurst. Although the program only ran four-months, with the funding we were able to purchase equipment and adaptive equipment for each site for community members to use year-round.

LEAD (LEADERS EXPRESSING & APPRECIATING DIVERSITY) MOVING FORWARD

In May 2023, the YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia received funding through the Dept of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage Diversity and Community Capacity Fund to develop and pilot a new program with a focus on diversity and social inclusion. In partnership with New Germany Elementary School, SchoolsPLUS, and the South Shore Multicultural Association a program that builds teamwork and leadership skills while learning about and appreciating the differences we all have was piloted beginning in November with two Grade 6 classes. This pilot program will conclude in March 2024.

NHL STREET- TAKE IT TO THE STREETS

The YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia was one of 9 YMCAs in Canada who were selected as a preferred community to implement the NHL Street program. This new program launched by the Social Impact and Program Innovation branch of NHL and RCX Sports aims to accelerate the growth of the sport of hockey by bringing an affordable, fun, simple and accessible hockey program to ages 6-16. Implemented in August 2023, planning is underway for the launch of the first of three seasons of league play in early 2024.

YOUTH ZONE

The YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia, with supportive funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage Active Communities Fund was able to relaunch "Youth Zone" in November 2023. This free weekly program offers children and youth ages 5 – 11yrs, an opportunity to access unstructured physical activity in a noncompetitive, healthy, fun, and interactive manner in a safe social environment.

LAUNCHPAD FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS STRATEGY

In October 2023, a multi-year agreement was signed with YMCA of Greater Toronto in partnership with the Metropolitan University's DMZ to offer the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy in Nova Scotia as one of six provinces participating. This new program is made possible by the Government of Canada's Women Entrepreneurship Strategy Ecosystem Fund. It is designed to empower early-stage women entrepreneurs inter-provincially by offering dedicated resources to kick-start and grow a successful business. From November - December 2023, a total of 25 one-on-one coaching sessions were offered and seven stakeholder information sessions were held.

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

YOUTH DEPARTMENT ALSO:

- Participated in the Attachment, Regulation and Competency Framework training
- Participated in the 2023 KDE Hub's 3rd Symposium – “Leveraging Momentum for Mental Health Promotion in Canada hosted by University of Waterloo
- Participated in “Community Conversations” workshop hosted by NS Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Framework
- Participated in on-line focus group hosted by Impact Organizations of NS as part of the Nova Scotia Plan to End Gender-Based Violence
- Hosted an ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) for YMCA and South Shore Open Doors Association staff
- Participated in Canadian Sexual Exploitation Summit 2023 – Inspire Change
- Participated in 3rd Annual Nova Scotia Alcohol Forum – Policy Solutions Across the Lifespan
- Supported staff in the Seize the Day event for epilepsy
- Participated in the Integrated Youth Services – Nova Scotia: “What is IYS NS, What is IYS model?”
- Participated in the Labour Day 2023 event hosted by South Shore Labour Council
- Participated in REMO Emergency Preparedness training
- Participated in MHA Crisis Response Initiative facilitated by Mental Health & Addictions
- Participated in Trauma Informed Care refresher training
- Participated in Town of Bridgewater Community Connections Day
- Attended South Shore Work Activity Program 2023 Recognition Event
- Participated in Canada Alcohol Policy Evaluation Results for Nova Scotia
- Participated in the Children & Family Services Act Engagement Session
- Participated in Child Welfare in Nova Scotia: Discussing Challenges & Leading Change forum facilitated by NS College of Social Workers

COMMITTEE WORK:

- Member of Lunenburg & Queens County Community HUB with representation at Level 1 & Level 2 HUB meetings; Queens Interagency Meetings; and Chester Interagency meetings
- Member of Trafficking & Exploitation Services System (TESS) Regional Group with representation in the Education and Strategy working group

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Testimonial from youth program participant, age 14:

It's like a place where I can be myself, and like, it's just a place where it's like, I can get out of my house, but also have opportunities to work with other people, and like it's just a safe spot.

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THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

The Youth Department has formed affiliations with many organizations within the community and will continue to develop opportunities in 2024 for youth that are not presently available for them. These affiliations include, but are not limited to:

- YWCA
- YREACH
- Digital Nova Scotia
- The Discovery Centre
- Desbrisay Museum
- The John Howard Society of Nova Scotia
- Liz McCurdy, Therapeutic Art
- Compassionate Care Therapeutics
- RCMP Lunenburg County Branch
- Department of Justice – Victim Services
- Harbour House
- Souls Harbour Rescue Mission
- South Shore Sexual Health
- Employment Solutions
- Canadian Mental Health Association – NS Division
- United Way of Lunenburg County
- Nova Scotia Health Authority
- South Shore Multicultural Association
- NS Department of Community Services
- Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre
- South Shore Restorative Justice
- South Shore Regional Centre for Education
- South Shore SchoolsPlus
- Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
- Municipality of the District of Lunenburg - Municipal Recreation Department
- Family Resource Centres (Bridgewater, New Ross and Queens)
- Nova Scotia Legal Aid (Bridgewater Office)
- Be The Peace Institute
- Trafficking & Exploitation Services System (TESS) Interagency provincial partnership
- Native Council of Nova Scotia
- South Shore Open Doors Association
- South Shore Chapter Autism Nova Scotia



Lunenburg County YMCA
75 High Street, Bridgewater
902-543-9622



Y Our Safe Space - Empowering Youth
425 King St., Bridgewater
902-530-3392



King Street YMCA Youth Centre
416 King St., Bridgewater
902-530-3392



Liverpool YMCA Youth Centre
40 Water Street, Liverpool
902-530-3392