



Executive summary

2009-10 marked the eighth year of the delivery of Youth in Action (YIA) and the thirteenth year of Young Leaders of Tomorrow (YLT). Once again, both programs engaged outstanding local high school, university and college students in making a difference in their community.

- 17 Young Leaders, 17 Board placements, 11 volunteer trainers
- 14 Youth in Action participants, funded 33 proposals, invested \$13,055

Renewed focus: youth leadership and United Way's mission

In 2009, United Way's Board of Directors announced the organization's new mission, vision and values. Our mission to "*mobilize the power of the community to create lasting change*" best reflects the expertise of United Way in London and Middlesex. Our youth leadership programs - and our partnership with London Life - represent an outstanding example of bringing our mission to life. Together, United Way and London Life are mobilizing the energy, interest, and excellence of youth, non-profit organizations, and volunteers to prepare the next generation of community leaders.

Inspiring engagement: GenNext

Of note, October 2009 marked the official community launch of *GenNext*. Inspired by our success with YIA and YLT, United Way of London & Middlesex sought to create a further avenue for interested young adults to stay - or become - engaged in social issues, voluntarism, and philanthropy through United Way. For more information, visit www.gennextuw.on.ca.

Evolving for impact: strategic program review

Given United Way's evolution to enhance its impact in the community, 2009-10 saw a strategic review of the youth leadership program service delivery. This included analysis of program delivery and outcomes, review of other organizations that are interested in youth engagement, and understanding of United Way's own strategic needs. The full report is available on request. However, the highlights demonstrated the following opportunities:

- formalize connection with GenNext to ensure a continued relationship with youth participants;
- significantly enhance partnerships with Pillar, Emerging Leaders, and the London Community Foundation;
- enhance strategic alignment with other like-minded programs, organizations, and collaborative;
- streamline Young Leaders training sessions and content and enhance Board mentoring;
- increase emphasis on education, engagement, and experiential learning; and
- social media is a key engagement tool.

Outcome Evaluation Framework

In accordance with United Way's program evaluation strategy, a program logic model and rigorous data collection strategy is in place for both Youth in Action and Young Leaders of Tomorrow. This includes participant evaluation at the beginning, mid-point, and end of their participation in their respective programs. Highlights of this evaluation are shared in this report, and include both quantitative and qualitative information.

Youth in Action

Youth in Action (YIA) encourages youth aged 13-24 to identify a need in their community, bring together a group of individuals, plan a project that will help alleviate the identified need and apply for YIA funding in order to implement their project. Successful applicants may receive up to \$1,000 for projects.

Youth in Action Advisory Committee

Modeled on United Way's rigorous planning and allocations committee for community-wide funding, the Youth in Action Advisory Committee is mandated to compare the request for funds against a series of criteria and conduct interviews to decide which projects qualify for funding and at what level. Each young person showed a great deal of dedication and devoted approximately 20 hours to the program by attending and preparing for meetings, marketing the program, researching and presenting on topics of social issues as well as conducting interviews with representatives of each of the project teams seeking grants.

This year's committee included the following members:

- Aden Hamza
- Daniella Marie Mcintosh
- Diane Tisdall
- Jaret Zaifman
- Jasmine Stasiuk
- Jennifer Xu (Chair)
- Julia Cutt
- Madeline Kelly
- Manjot (Iyoti) Brar (Vice Chair)
- Paige Lawson
- Perry Baldwin
- Rebecca Davies Wilson
- Rohollah Dolatabadi
- Sanel Fajkovic

Program outcomes

- 100% of our participants reported a substantially greater understanding of budgets and finances and 80% reported significant development of decision making skills upon completion of the program
- When asked if the youth would continue their involvement in the program, over 80% specified they were extremely interested in staying involved with the Youth in Action program and 50% expressed interest in the Young Leaders of Tomorrow Program.

- All of the participants expressed interest in continuing their volunteer work in the future, either with United Way or another local community group.

What our participants had to say...

- *“We met countless inspired youth who were eager to start their unique projects. From community clean ups, multicultural celebrations, and educational awareness, the variety of projects was truly impressive.”*
- *“I learned the importance of activism, especially by youth, and will forever be a volunteer because of the positive experience.”*
- *“I developed new interests in issues that I may not have been educated on, having not been a participant in YIA, such as culture competency, which has redirected my current broadcasting career aspirations into a new direction that involves activism and not-for-profits in the media world.”*
- *“Being on the YIA Advisory Committee has taught me a lot of new skills, such as marketing. For example, I submitted an article to “The Coffee News” newsletter and they published it free of charge, which was very nice of them. It was great being on the YIA Advisory Committee and I would love to participate in it again.”*

Youth in Action funded projects

This year saw investment in 33 projects. In fact, the spring 2010 call for proposals was our most successful yet, with 19 applications received by the Youth in Action Advisory Committee. This was in large part due to the incredible ownership and outreach provided by the youth participants themselves, noteworthy at a time when there was a staff vacancy at United Way.

Project Funding - Fall 2009	Host Organization	Total Grant
Boys' Group Winter Holiday Celebration	John Howard Society	\$560
Contacto	Sexual Assault Centre London	\$200
Cookmania	LUSO Community Services	\$525
DREAM	Canadian Mental Health Association	\$204
Express Yourself Arts Contest	Islamic Centre	\$250
Family Game Night	South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre	\$180
Girls' Group Winter Holiday Celebration	John Howard Society	\$560
Juvenile Diabetes	Rotary Club of London	\$300
Kipps Cooking	Life Resource Centre, North Park Community Church	\$720
Learning It Together	Investing in Children	\$300
Nutritional Initiatives for Kids	Brescia University College	\$207
Oh-so-Goode	South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre	\$875
See Inside the Minds of the Mentally Ill	Art Exhibit and Formative Lecture, Schizophrenia Society	\$320
STAND	After School Tutoring Program	\$200
Walk Around the World in Their Shoes	Central Secondary School	\$240
	TOTAL	\$5,641

Project Funding - Spring 2010	Host Organization	Total Grant
Boullee After School Program	Life Resource Centre	\$650
Boys' Healthy Lifestyle Project	John Howard Society	\$445
Celebrate Cultural Diversity	Westminster Secondary School	\$500
Creative CHAOS!	LIFE*SPIN	\$416.72
D.R.E.A.M.	Hellenic Community Centre	\$250
Eclectic - A showcase of youth activity	South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre	\$410
Fusion	London Intercommunity Health Centre	\$350
Girls' Healthy Lifestyle Project	John Howard Society	\$445
Newcomer Girls Leadership Group	Sexual Assault Centre London	\$571.91
How to be reasonably sexy in 2010	Middlesex-London Health Unit	\$250
Multicultural Festival	H. B. Beal Secondary School	\$550
National Youth Week	Children's Aid Society of London & Middlesex	\$350
Root Fundamentals - Making a Difference	ReForest London	\$316
S.A.Y. (Science for Aboriginal Youth)	Let's Talk Science	\$250
Spaghetti Dinner Open House	Montcalm Secondary School	\$393
Resident Art Workshop	Unity Project	\$591
Young Active Leaders	Learning Disabilities Association of London Region	\$362
Oriental Spices Initiative	Brescia University College	\$315
	TOTAL	\$7414.58

Impact of funded projects on our community

While it is difficult to formally quantify the exact reach of these 33 projects (noting that final reports are still being received towards the end of the school year), we can estimate based on the proposed activities that at least 1,000 youth and community residents have been touched by these projects. Indicators of this engagement include over 400 meals served, and close to 50 presentations given.

Topics of interest range from environmentalism to key social issues that are aligned with United Way's work around poverty, diversity, mental health, and literacy. Notably, there continues to be great activity around education and awareness.

Examples included:

- Westminster Secondary School's *Cultural Diversity* night saw over 100 participants attend an evening celebrating the extensive diversity in their school and community. Westminster is one of the most diverse high schools in our entire province.
- A grant of \$204 for DREAM, hosted by the Canadian Mental Health Association, delivered close to 20 presentations in local high schools, educating youth about teen depression. United Way's local research demonstrates that youth depression is close to 20% in our community.
- During National Youth Week, close to 40 youth were recognized by non-profit organizations in London and Middlesex County for their energy, engagement, and passion as volunteers. The celebrations were supported thanks to a \$350 contribution from Youth in Action.

Young Leaders of Tomorrow

Young Leaders of Tomorrow (YLT) matches young leaders with Board of Directors in the non-profit sector. Youth aged 18-24 serve as interns on a Board of Directors of a non-profit organization, while also attending a series of monthly training sessions designed to teach them the information and leadership skills necessary to be an effective Board member. In 2009-10, 17 youth, 10 volunteer trainers and 16 local organizations participated in the program.

2009/10 participants

Young Leader

Board placement

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| • Abdel Rahman | Boys' & Girls' Club of London |
| • Michael Thomson | Canadian Mental Health Association |
| • J. Ross Graham | Canadian National Institute for the Blind |
| • Michelle Valladares | Community Living London |
| • Robert Gordon | Crouch Neighbourhood Resource Centre |
| • Nicole Fassina | Daya Counselling Centre |
| • Evan Russell | London & District Distress Centre |
| • Martin Badowski | London InterCommunity Health Centre |
| • Sophear Net | LUSO Community Services |
| • Althea Annan | Neighbourhood Legal Services |
| • Ryan Keleher | Nokee Kwe Occupational Skill Development |
| • David Strangio | Pillar Nonprofit Network |
| • Amber Justine Ruddy | St. John Ambulance |
| • Rola Chadi | Sexual Assault Centre London |
| • Paul Kim | Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre |
| • Gladys Yeung | United Way of London & Middlesex |
| • Diane Tisdall | Youth in Action Advisory Committee,
United Way of London & Middlesex |

Volunteer engagement

United Way is grateful to our volunteer trainers for the 2009-10 year:

- Dr. Bill Avison, Professor of Sociology, Paediatrics, Epidemiology & Biostatistics; Director, Aging & Health Research Centre, University of Western Ontario; Chair and Scientist, Child Health and Well-Being Program, Children's Health Research Institute, Lawson Health Research Institute
- Janet Christensen, Dynamic Awareness Inc.
- Robert Collins, Vice President, Workforce Development, Goodwill Industries, Ontario Great Lakes, Goodwill Career Centre
- Kerry Hendricks, Business Development Consultant
- Dharshi Lacey, Pillar Nonprofit Network
- Sharon Lupton, Labour Program & Services Coordinator, United Way of London & Middlesex
- Meni Mantzavrakos, The Strength Coaches
- Sean Noguera, Senior Counsel, Law Department, London Life
- Robert Parker, Robert A. Parker & Associates Inc
- Kim Terrington, Sergeant, Canadian Forces

Participant outcomes

Once again, participating youth had the opportunity to learn a range of skills related to Board governance and leadership. Topics included:

- Leadership
- Board roles, responsibilities, liability
- Understanding the nonprofit sector
- Community trends and issues
- Group decision making
- Robert's Rules of Order
- Strategic planning
- Finances and budgeting – interpreting financial statements
- Program and outcome evaluation
- Diversity and inclusivity

Based on participant feedback:

- over half of the participants indicated the sessions on Finances and Budgets were extremely important, along with programming on Strategic Planning and understanding the roles and responsibilities of a Board Member
- over 70% of participants reported chartable improvement in their knowledge/ understanding of leadership, governance, and the functioning of non-profit boards
- over 78% of our participants indicated a greater commitment to learning about and getting involved with non-profit organizations in our community as a direct result of the YLT program
- 100% of participants reported the YLT Program has been an important part of preparing them for future success

What our participants had to say...

- *“I am more aware of how things are organized and accomplished within a non-profit organization. Training seminars have brought professionals in their field to speak about various problems and strategies faced in the non-profit sector. I am more aware of who these individuals are and what it takes to be in this sector”*
- *“I continuously learn through sessions and board meetings. I take new information away from each session, gain great experience and skills from each board meeting, and I am learning about all the various aspects and getting an in-depth look at the non-profit/social service sector.”*
- *YLT “is taking theory to action and learning the outcome of the application side. I am learning a lot by attending and participating in the board meetings and joining the sub-committees. I think it is very important to enjoy the work your board does and also share the same vision as those that sit on the board with you. The experience gained is unquestionable.”*

- *“I think YLT definitely shed light to the possibility of having a career in the nonprofit sector...YLT truly demonstrated the importance of continuing to volunteer and contribute in my community. As well, YLT has helped me to grow as a leader, and this skill will help me to influence others to become engaged in their communities.”*
- *“YLT has been a great learning experience and a challenging one. I am more aware of my own weaknesses and what I need to do in order to be the best leader. Through YLT I have met professionals in their fields, as well as other participants who are motivated and committed to doing good. I have learned the skills and qualities needed to be a strong leader and will endeavor to master these skills. I have learned so much about networking and communication that I have discovered need more work. Working to improve these will help me be the best I can be.”*

Acknowledgements

Special thank you to:

- London Life
- 2009-10 YIA and YLT participants
- YLT volunteer trainers
- YLT Board hosts, especially Board mentors
- Estela Quintero-Weldon, United Way staff
- Youth program assistant, Amani Gharib

For more information on YIA and YLT, please visit us online: www.uwlondon.on.ca