



turning points

IMPACT
REPORT

A PLACE FOR PLAY AT
YWCA TORONTO'S ARISE SHELTER



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OCTOBER 2025

PHOTO: YWCA Toronto's Arise Violence Against Women Shelter



A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

To our valued Turning Points partners and most loyal supporters, after more than 30 incredible years serving as YWCA Toronto's Chief Executive Officer, I will be retiring this coming spring. This decision comes with deep reflection, emotion and even deeper gratitude for the people—like you and the talented people I have worked with over the years—who have made this work so impactful and rewarding.

I am also so proud of everything we have been able to accomplish. Together, we grew YWCA Toronto's housing portfolio from 149 units to 824, expanded our Employment and Training programs from three to fifteen, and grew the Association into one of the largest multi-service

organizations for women, girls and gender diverse people in Canada. It has been a remarkable experience to work beside you and create so much meaningful impact in our community.

As I prepare for my retirement, I do so with deep gratitude and great anticipation for the opportunities ahead. Thank you for being part of this journey with me. Your support has meant more than I can express, and I hope you will remain a passionate advocate for a vision of Toronto where every woman, girl and gender diverse individual has the chance to thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light green rectangular background.

Heather M. McGregor

TURNING POINTS NEWSLETTER

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A Place for Play at Arise

With a bright orange slide and multiple levels to climb, the brand-new play structure at YWCA Toronto's Arise Violence Against Women Shelter makes an inviting sight for any child—and parent.

“We’ve got two grandchildren,” says Elizabeth Martin, the donor who gifted the playground along with her husband, Paul. “I can tell you the value of a playground any day. It’s a godsend for parents!”

Prior to Elizabeth and Paul’s donation, the Arise playground was in desperate need of repair: a structural issue had left the former jungle gym unsafe for use. This meant the children staying at our Arise shelter were facing an entire summer without a place to be active, use their imaginations and play outside.

“We don’t have a lot of space inside the shelter for children’s programming; the playground allows us to bring programming outside in a fun, safe space,” says Reena Rambharose, one of the Parent and Child Support Workers at Arise.

Now, not only does Arise have a safe and fun structure where children can play, but it also has a heated outdoor seating area, another part of Elizabeth and Paul’s gift, for parents to keep an eye on their kids or enjoy a quiet moment to themselves, even as the months get cooler.

For Elizabeth, a long-standing volunteer at Arise, the residents’ health and happiness was a big motivator for the gift. She sees the families who call the shelter home on a regular basis and knows just how important outdoor space is for their well-being, describing how she hopes it will be “a respite, a small getaway” for them.

The new playground was completed this past summer and is already a hit with the shelter’s youngest residents.

“I love playing in the backyard, especially on the big slide!” says one of the children living at Arise. “I love to hang off the slide and then do flips when I land.”

Thanks to Elizabeth and Paul, the families at Arise will continue to have a place to play, unwind and let their children just be kids.



Photo of Sarah Yaffe, Board President of YWCA Toronto

A NOTE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

On behalf of the Board, I want to extend our gratitude to Heather for her commitment, leadership and persistent belief in the potential of women, girls and gender diverse people in this city. Her impact throughout her tenure has been immeasurable. It is our pleasure to launch the Heather M. McGregor Fund in

her honour – a Fund that will support the extensive services we offer at YWCA Toronto. Look out for opportunities to continue fueling our mission through investments in this special Fund.

Sarah Yaffe

WHO INSPIRES YOU?

WE WANT TO CELEBRATE THEM!

Every year, YWCA Toronto honours remarkable changemakers who are creating a difference in the lives of women, girls and gender diverse people.

NOMINATE THE NEXT **YWCA TORONTO**
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DEADLINE:

Friday, October 31, 2025

TO LEARN MORE:

Contact Anna Borges, Manager of Events and Volunteers
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MORE THAN 150 YEARS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT YWCA TORONTO

2009



Ground breaking for Elm Housing, L-R: Olivia Chow, Diane Walker, David Miller, Heather McGregor, Sherry Brydson, Kristen Blakely-Kozman and Arlene Perly Rae

1950s



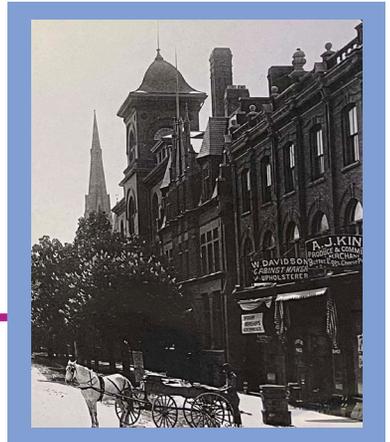
YWCA Toronto housing residents and their children.

1912



Ontario House was a YWCA Toronto site that offered safe housing to Caribbean women who came to Canada as part of the “domestic scheme.”

1890s



18 Elm Street, an early YWCA Toronto housing site, now the site of the Elmwood Spa and Bangkok Gardens Restaurant.

DONOR LOVE



Photo of Pam Graham

For Camp Tapawingo alumna, Pam Graham, her \$1,000,000 gift to YWCA Toronto is a full circle moment.

“I just loved everything about it,” she says, discussing her own days as a girl at YWCA Toronto’s Camp Tapawingo. “I looked forward to it all year. I cried on the bus on the way home and still have friends from those days.”

During the ten years she spent at Tapawingo, first as a camper and then as a teenage staff member, Pam says her experiences there gave her incredible chances to grow and “be who [she] wanted to be.” Now, she wants to make sure other girls and gender diverse youth have even greater opportunities to flourish.

Pam’s generous gift will allow YWCA Toronto to create a special leadership program at Camp Tapawingo, including the construction of a “leadership village” of cabins to give youth counsellors space and opportunities to grow their skills and develop into confident, capable leaders. These cabins will also allow YWCA Toronto to offer greater off-season accommodations, generating revenue and making Camp Tapawingo more self-sustaining.

Beyond Camp Tapawingo, Pam’s gift will expand leadership programming for members of our Girls’ Council—the dedicated group of volunteer youth who steer YWCA Toronto’s Girls’ Centre. Now, Council members will have even more opportunities to develop their skills and grow their confidence through youth-led civic engagement projects, mentorship opportunities and focused leadership training.

“It’s very satisfying to give back,” expresses Pam. “I’ve had a lifetime of a lot of hard work, a number of businesses. It’s a lifetime of satisfaction ... I feel really good that I can return something and make a difference in young girls’ lives.”

Thank you, Pam, for your life-changing gift.



PHOTO: Pam Graham (far right, top row) with fellow campers at Camp Tapawingo in 1973, returning from a canoe trip on the French River.



PHOTO: Our 2025 Women of Distinction Award recipients (from left to right) Farrah Khan, Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Deqa Nur, Dr. Paula Rochon, Carly Kalish, Nancy Barber and Dr. Aditi Sivakumar.

THANK YOU

We would like to express enormous gratitude to our sponsors, table and ticket purchasers, silent auction donors and volunteers for making YWCA Toronto's 44th Annual Women of Distinction Awards a night full of inspiration and hope. Together, you helped raise more than \$500,000 to support women, girls and gender diverse people fleeing violence and poverty. You also joined us in celebrating the accomplishments of seven incredible women.

Thank you for your generosity, and we look forward to seeing you next year on May 28 at the 45th YWCA Toronto Distinction Awards.

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Pam Graham

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