

TURNING — YWCA TORONTO — POINTS

LEADERS IN ACTION

Why Girls' Spaces are Critical

TRANSFORMING LIVES

Camp Tapawingo's Enormous Impact



COVER PHOTO | TOYO AJIBOLADE, 2018 YOUNG WOMAN OF DISTINCTION



YWCA
TORONTO

A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN



United Way
Greater Toronto



YWCA TORONTO TRANSFORMS LIVES.
 AS CANADA'S LARGEST WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION, WE HELP WOMEN ESCAPE VIOLENCE, MOVE OUT OF POVERTY AND ACCESS SAFE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING. WE WORK TENACIOUSLY TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS THAT HOLD WOMEN BACK FROM ACHIEVING EQUALITY.

ywcatoronto.org



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**LETTER FROM THE DESK OF
 OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

*I have a memory that is top of mind. I am standing on stage with representatives from over 80 community organizations to call on provincial leaders to fight poverty. Daniele Zanotti, President and CEO of the United Way Greater Toronto, is at the podium and thoughtfully states what we are all thinking: **“This is what community power looks like.”***

At YWCA Toronto, we know a thing or two about community power. Together, we help women escape violence, move out of poverty, access good jobs and safe, affordable housing. We do this work because women are still not equal – and it is on us to take action. Our Association has thrived for more than a century because of community power. It is found in the resilience of the women we serve, the passion of our staff, and the generosity of our donors. We have joined and built coalitions to advance social change, and we are buoyed by the strength of a worldwide YWCA movement.

This newsletter centres on girls and young women – leaders of today but also the future power of our movement. You will read about two young women who give us hope and the power of a collective voice in Ontario YWCA Member Associations’ advocacy for dedicated funding for girls’ programming.

Moving forward, YWCA Toronto needs your continued support. I encourage you to donate and attend our philanthropic events, support our gender-focused advocacy campaigns and spread the word to your friends and neighbours about our transformative work. Community power will drive us forward – and it starts with each one of us.

Heather M. McGregor
Heather M. McGregor,
 Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Toronto



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CAMP TAPAWINGO'S ENORMOUS IMPACT

For the last eight years I have spent my summers at YWCA Toronto's all-girls overnight camp: Camp Tapawingo. Going to Camp Tapawingo has been extremely helpful to me. I have made friends and have found fantastic role models in my counsellors. Also, engaging in sports and learning to voice my opinions in an all-girls environment has really taken away an element of judgement that I worry about at school.

I also dance and most of my classes have been exclusively girls. A combination of dance classes and Camp Tapawingo has shown me that my ideas and opinions are worth being said and that I should have confidence in myself and my abilities. But like many girls my age, I still have doubts, both in myself and whether my opinions are being heard. Although these doubts and insecurities, which everyone feels, do not fall away when I am in all-girls programs, they do seriously abate.

So it is clear that the all-girl programs we have in place are fantastic, but what about the parts

of girls' lives where we need support the most? My high school is very male-dominated, and I feel that girls at my school, myself included, would thrive in certain all-girls programs. In my experience, girls boost each other's confidence, and are so supportive. I am worried about gender-based violence, and I think that girls my age would love to have a safe place or group to talk about what it is like to be a woman in this day and age with the unique challenges we face.

Girls and women today are learning to voice our opinions - but this is not easy. According to a study done by the University of Texas in 2006, in a classroom with the same amount of girls and boys with their hands up, the teacher - no matter their gender, race, or sexuality - was more likely to choose the boys to speak. This is unconscious bias that exists everywhere in our society. The conclusion of this study was that young girls feel that they are not being heard and that this may cause them to be hesitant in fighting for their rights and beliefs later in their lives.



Girls benefit tremendously from all-girls programs where girls can learn about what the world is like for young women and how it should be. I am so lucky to have support from my parents, who encourage me to voice my opinions. But not all girls are so lucky to have this support in their homes, so we need to offer them support in other ways and places.

I am counting on my generation to keep the women's movement alive, but we need the help of the generations before us. We have the opportunity to shape the future and we need to embrace it. ■

Maya is 16 years old and is part of the Leadership Training Program at Camp Tapawingo, YWCA Toronto's all-girls camp in Parry Sound, Ontario

PHOTOS (TOP) | TWO CAMPERS CANOEING AT CAMP TAPAWINGO ON GEORGIAN BAY; NEW AND OLD FRIENDS AT CAMP TAPAWINGO.

INVESTING IN GIRLS

OUR IMPACT

\$2.5 million
invested in girls' and family programs

779 girls
built friendships and became leaders at YWCA Toronto's Camp Tapawingo

363 girls
found a safe space to have fun and connect, build critical thinking skills, and receive individual support at YWCA Toronto's Girls' Centre

525 teen moms
and families increased social networks, and developed the confidence and skills to raise healthy children

11
YWCA Member Associations across Ontario advocated for dedicated girls' program funding. When you invest in girls, they rise up as strong women.



PHOTO | TOYO AJIBOLADE, 2018 YWCA TORONTO YOUNG WOMAN OF DISTINCTION

WHY GIRLS' SPACES ARE CRITICAL

“Girls as young as seven are becoming more self-conscious, losing confidence, and giving up sport as a result” - Huffington Post UK

I have seen and read plenty of similar articles over the past few years and each time, the ages of the girls are getting younger. These articles and reports are written from different perspectives and various geographic regions, yet all echo the same staggering message. Girls as young as seven years old are suffering from body confidence issues, preventing them from engaging in physical activity. How can you fully enjoy all the amazing qualities and opportunities that sports, and recreation have to offer when you are lacking self-confidence and are overly conscious about the way your body looks?

Through my experience working with girls, I have discovered quite simply, that girls need a space - their space - where they can express their unique experiences and challenges. That is why I created Lady Ballers Camp, a girl-centred organization providing recreational and accessible basketball and sport programming to youth, particularly those from marginalized and racialized communities. As a girl-centred program, it has become critical for us to cultivate this space for girls' voices. It is, in fact essential to the attainment of safe and nurturing environments that girls feel confident to share their unique experiences and develop creative and empowering ways by which to overcome common hurdles.

Where else can young women feel confident to participate in physical activities, as well as crucial discussions, if not in a space designed specifically for them with their needs in mind? It is very much through this collective approach that they discover and cultivate their own skills and abilities in an atmosphere of support. If these spaces are not easily accessible, young women may lose the ability to freely analyze



When we create programs for girls, we invest in their goals and abilities and enable them to realize their full potential.

their experiences and gain the confidence they need to challenge harmful societal labels. Their valuable insights will become easily discredited and lost in favour of dominant narratives that do not recognize the important ideas brought forward by a gendered perspective. This has real and lasting generational implications for young girls as they mature into women and must navigate a society that is complicit in dismissing the contributions of girls and women.

When we create programs for girls, we invest in their goals and abilities, and enable them to realize their full potential. Girls and young women aspire to be active members of the community while becoming role models to their younger counterparts. Investing in girl-specific

programming is the smartest way to ensure the enduring strength of the girl-child and development of further generations of confident and motivated young women. For me, personally witnessing girls overcome internalized societal limitations - and become confident, successful young women - is one of the greatest pleasures of founding Lady Ballers Camp. ■

Toyo Ajibolade is YWCA Toronto's 2018 Young Woman of Distinction Award recipient. She founded Lady Ballers Camp and is an inspirational role model, mentor, and coach. Currently Toyo is a third year Marketing Management student at Ryerson University.

WOMEN VOTE FOR ACTION
#WomenVoteON

I VALUE THE GIRLS' CENTRE BECAUSE...

SAFE SPACES TO LEARN + GROW ARE IMPORTANT!

♡

I VALUE THE GIRLS' CENTRE BECAUSE...

It has benefitted me so much and the programs are so meaningful. The girls centre has changed my life ♡

GIRLS' PROGRAMMING IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE...

IT ALLOWS GIRLS TO DISCOVER THEIR TRUE SELVES

COMMENTS ON GIRLS' PROGRAMMING
For YWCA Toronto's election campaign #WomenVoteON, we engaged with women and girls at various sites across the city on key issues. Here are a few highlights.

YWCA TORONTO AT-A-GLANCE

NEAR & FAR

- **Girls and young women** from YWCA programs in Peterborough, Muskoka, Hamilton, Guelph, Cambridge, and Toronto came together at **Elm Centre** for #TheFutureIsUs conference. Participants shared why girls' programming matters, and some of the common themes we heard included: safety, support, mentorship, empowerment, confidence, and inclusivity. These insights are central to the ongoing advocacy of Ontario YWCA Member Associations for dedicated funding for girls' programming. As participants made clear - the future is us!
- Our **Employment Centre** at 2425 Eglinton Avenue East is implementing a six-month training program that will prepare 20 marginalized Scarborough youth for a career in the food services industry. The training program offers employer-informed classroom and hands-on training on food preparation, customer service, Health and Safety, CPR/First Aid, and Food Handling Certifications.
- Our **Trauma Informed Development Education (TIDE)** project is now in its second phase of development. This involves participant engagement through focus groups, consultations with staff on training needs and creating resource materials tailored for individual programs. We presented at YWCA Canada's Annual Membership Meeting in Halifax, and look forward to presenting at upcoming training sessions in fall 2018.

CELEBRATE



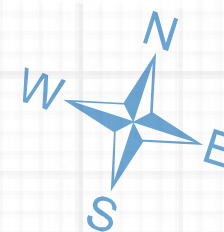
- Our **staff and supporters** took to the streets for the annual International Women's Day march in downtown Toronto. This year's theme of Press for Progress inspires us to continue advocating for gender equity, racial justice, and reconciliation, as well as to press for an end to gender-based violence and poverty.
- We are celebrating the launch of our **new website!** Our new site is more accessible and user-friendly. It is much easier to learn about our wide range of programs, join our advocacy campaigns, and make a donation. Find us online at www.ywcatoronto.org.

- Etana Cain from our **Advocacy and Communications** team was named Co-Chair of the Decent Work for Women Advisory Council. This three-year project is led by the **Ontario Nonprofit Network** and puts a spotlight on women workers in the non-profit sector. Our sector is fueled by 75-80% women workers, but women are still largely under-represented in senior leadership positions. This project seeks to develop and pilot solutions to address systemic barriers to women's economic empowerment, especially for racialized and newcomer women.

PHOTOS | (ABOVE) STAFF PARTICIPATING IN THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH; (FACING PAGE) BUTTONS FROM OUR #WOMENVOTEON CAMPAIGN AND ZANANA AKANDE, 2018 YWCA TORONTO WOMAN OF DISTINCTION AWARD RECIPIENT.

GENDER MATTERS

- Nina Gorka, Director of **Shelters, Girls' and Family Programs**, is participating in a Community of Practice group aimed at supporting trans women in violence against women shelters across Canada. The objective of this group is to share knowledge and resources around creating trans-positive shelter spaces and services. Practitioners from across Canada provide and receive peer support, share practical resources, and will create a collective vision for future action.
- Representatives from our two **violence against women shelters** participated in the Hard Questions Roundtable on Women's Safety co-hosted by Facebook and YWCA Canada. Over 1,100 people tuned in online to watch this lively roundtable discussion focused on gendered cyber violence. Facebook and other social media platforms must take a leadership role to prioritize women's safety online and create safer digital spaces.



What's in it for us?

"Women need to ask politicians, "What's in it for us?" This is a legitimate question and there is no shame in asking it. We have so many issues - carding, sexual assault, racism, pay equity, poverty, public schools failing Black children - our votes matter for all of those reasons. Our livelihoods depend on it. There are many gains that can be rolled back if we are not vigilant."

Excerpt from an interview with Zanana Akande, the first Black woman elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and served as Cabinet Minister in Canada. She was named 2018 YWCA Toronto Woman of Distinction.



CREATING
SYSTEMIC CHANGE
ADVOCACY

During the provincial election, Ontario YWCA Member Associations had a collective voice with the **Women Vote for Action** campaign. Together, we advocated for universal child care; a continuum of safe, affordable housing; and dedicated funding for girls' programming. Online, over 1,100 supporters tuned in to our young women's panel discussion on our key election issues. Hundreds signed our online petition, sending direct messages to their local candidates on gender equity. We also hosted a gender equity town hall with local candidates to help voters make an informed choice. With this campaign, we made clear that gender equity issues must always be front and centre.





(LEFT TO RIGHT) 2018 YWCA TORONTO WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARD RECIPIENTS: ZANANA AKANDE, JULIA DEANS, DR. PAT ARMSTRONG, DR. MILICA RADISIC, MARCIE PONTE, MARGARET HANCOCK, LYNN FACTOR AND TOYO AJIBOLADE



SPOTLIGHT ON PHILANTHROPY

CIRCLE OF DISTINCTION MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN SPEED MENTORSHIP
In April, YWCA Toronto held our first Speed Mentorship event, connecting 15 young women from the Girls' Centre and JUMP employment programs with members of the Circle of Distinction, a collective of past Women of Distinction Award recipients.

Working on a rotating format with four minutes for each mentorship exchange, there was a sense of energy and optimism in the room as women connected with young women to share advice, encouragement and support. The young women asked their mentors about the challenges and successes that they, as women, had experienced in their lives and careers. Mentors also encouraged each mentee to talk about her own aspirations and offered guidance on overcoming adversity and meeting goals.

"It was a very inspirational moment for me and I got a lot of advice from each one of them. From what I shared with each [woman], I got more reassurance that my dream is valid and that I am on the right track."

WALK, RUN OR ROLL TO HELP TRANSFORM LIVES
Registration is now open for this year's Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon!

When you sign up in support of YWCA Toronto, 100% of the funds you raise go directly towards our programs. Join us on Sunday October 21, 2018 to transform the lives of women and girls in Toronto.

WHAT A WONDERFUL NIGHT!

On May 24, almost 1,000 women, girls and allies came together to celebrate YWCA Toronto's 38th annual Women of Distinction Awards and honour the incredible achievements of eight outstanding women who have made a real difference in the lives of girls and women in Toronto.

After mingling over delicious food, drinks and silent auction bidding, guests settled in to enjoy an uplifting and inspiring awards ceremony. As this year's Women of Distinction accepted their awards, they encouraged women and girls to be determined, fearless, and continue working together towards real change and equity.

One of the most moving moments of the evening came as a former YWCA Toronto shelter resident told her story. "Sometimes a woman needs help," she explained, "but once she has been helped, she realizes she is strong and she can help others."

Our biggest fundraiser was a huge success, raising nearly \$700,000 towards YWCA Toronto's life-changing programs that serve over 13,000 individuals each year.

Congratulations to our amazing Women of Distinction and thank you to everyone who attended and supported the event. We look forward to seeing you next year!

THE 38TH YWCA TORONTO WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARDS WAS SPONSORED BY

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PHOTOS | (TOP TO BOTTOM) DEBBIE DOUGLAS, 2004 YWCA TORONTO WOMAN OF DISTINCTION ALUMNA, CURRENT AND PAST YWCA TORONTO STAFF; MARGARET HANCOCK, 2018 YWCA TORONTO WOMAN OF DISTINCTION; DORIS CHAN, BOARD MEMBER AND EVENT GUEST; NANA ABA DUNCAN, EVENT HOST; EVENT GUESTS; JUDY MUNRO AND MARIE PICTON.

Scotiabank Charity Challenge in support of YWCA Toronto

Sunday, October 21, 2018



YOU CAN TRANSFORM A GIRL'S LIFE WITH EVERY STEP

To register, visit: www.torontowaterfrontmarathon.com/stwm-charities/ywca-toronto/

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YWCA TORONTO

Helps women and girls achieve equality, economic sustainability and lives free from violence.

Donate today!
ywcatoronto.org

Your help is needed now more than ever!

- YES, I want to help women and children
 - \$20 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____
- YES, I would like to join the **Fresh Start Monthly Giving Plan** with a gift on the 15th of each month of:
 - \$10 \$15 \$20 Other \$ _____

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- I would like to receive the Turning Points newsletter by email
- I have remembered YWCA Toronto in my Will
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Receipts are issued for all donations of \$10 or more. Thank you for your support!

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