

To become the pre-eminent youth voice in Canada that encourages positive choice related to mental health, bullying and addiction and to create a safe space for youth to reach out so that none live alone in their own silence.

Personal stories are shared in assemblies by youth employed to voice a strong message of respect, hope and tolerance and to lead workshops that help build character, self-esteem and resilience.

The Challenge

- * Suicide is the second highest cause of death for youth aged 10-24 in Canada
- * 80% of youth report being bullied either in school or online
- * The number of hospitalizations for self-harm has increased by more than 85 per cent in five years
- * Young people aged 15 to 24 are more likely to experience mental illness and/or substance use disorders than any other age group

The Difference We Make

- * Increased empathy
- * Improved well-being
- * Increase in number of students asking for help
- * Enhanced knowledge for parents

According to Open Minds, Healthy Minds (Ontario's Mental Health Strategy) – early identification leads to better health outcomes, improved school attendance, contributions to society, cost-savings to healthcare, justice and social service systems

Sponsorship Opportunities

Change

\$5000+

Help us meet our goal of reaching \$24,000 this year

Hope

\$2500-\$5000

Provides training for youth speakers and leadership workshops for youth

Empower

\$1000-\$2500

Provides one leadership workshop for students

Wisdom

\$500-\$1000

Provides one presentation for at-risk youth

YouthSpeak was founded in 2003 by Una Wright and inspired by personal experience within her own family. Una has lost two children – Gavin who died on his nineteenth birthday in a weather-related car accident. He was one of the first youth speakers for YouthSpeak. Ten years later, Kyle who struggled with bipolar for many years took his own life at age 31. The most recent loss of her second son has been a very raw and real reminder about the importance of the work of YouthSpeak.

Everyone knows someone who has dealt with a mental health issue at some point in their lives – giving that person hope can actually save a life.

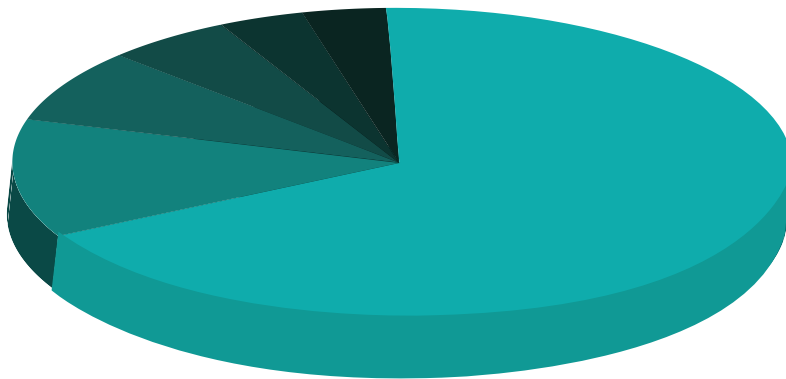
Story-telling is the oldest form of communication, so it is no surprise that a personal story inspires, motivates and educates our primary audience in a meaningful and memorable way. Recent research by Queens University shows strong support for contact-based education to, not only change attitudes, but change behaviour.

YouthSpeak will double its reach in 2014/2015 to 24,000 as we have become the go-to youth voice related to mental health, addiction and bullying. We have experienced significant increase in the traffic on our website and calls from schools needing help. Our roster of youth speakers is strong, committed and passionate about making a difference.

YouthSpeak is well-supported by community through our Board of Directors and sustainable partnerships with the school boards, local police service, public health and many community organizations. As a responsive, innovative charity, YouthSpeak has been proven to increase empathy within the school environment, increase the number of students asking for help and give parents knowledge and hope for their youth.

Presentations to date by region

Reaching over 130,000 youth,
parents, educators in the past
five years



Program highlights

- * Healthy Minds Canada conference
- * York Region & Durham Children's Aid Society
- * LGBT Conference
- * T.A.M.I. (Talking About Addiction and Mental Illness) Summit
- * Youth Voice Mental Health Conferences
- * deScrambled Mental Health Awareness event
- * Crime Stoppers Student Symposium
- * Annual Ontario School Counselors Association Conference
- * Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
- * Ministry of Child & Youth Services Staff Engagement days
- * Southlake Regional and Royal Victoria Hospital Lunch & Learns
- * Canadian Safe School Network conference

YouthSpeak contributes to the mental and social well-being of students who may be facing challenges by creating awareness that bullying, mental health and addictions impacts everyone in the community.

ASSEMBLIES: Grades 3 – 12: Content and activities are modified for a range of age groups.

One-hour interactive assembly with youth who share their experience with mental health, bullying, addiction; a personal story shared by someone relatable makes it real and gets youth thinking about their own lives. They are inspired to make changes or ask for help if needed, develop empathy for others and feel empowered to have a voice.

CLASSROOM FOLLOW UP SESSIONS: Grades 7-12 Designed to follow an assembly to deepen the awareness and understanding of the specific issues addressed. The youth guide the students through an interactive session of learning tools for coping and building self-esteem such as creating Mantras, It's ALL Good Well-Being Checklist and our signature Wall of Challenge. It is also a good opportunity for students to ask questions in a small group setting!

PARENT/TEACHER WORKSHOP: This sensitivity training workshop is designed to bring new awareness, understanding and appreciation for the challenges faced by today's youth. Our youth speakers offer practical exchanges that are eye-opening, real and raw through their personal stories as they travelled the path from pain to wellness from a youth perspective. The speakers share how their struggles influenced, not only themselves, but their friends and families.

Annual AWAKE conference: *Grades 9&10 A youth drug awareness conference held in March each year that provides students with an opportunity to hear the personal stories of youth speakers, engage in a range of fun, positive activities such as breakdance, martial arts, poetry-writing, graffiti arts, belly dance, crafts. As well, explore community agency interactive booths and demos.*

KEYNOTES: We provide presentations for school councils, conferences, AGM's and many other community groups. Our youth speakers add meaningful impact to the successful outcome of events that address the needs of youth.

LUNCH N' LEARN: Mental illness and substance abuse disorders cost employers \$17 billion each year. These workshops will improve your employees understanding of mental health issues and provide them with understanding, coping tools and resources to reduce stress related to their own or a family members mental health challenges.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING: Leadership is a skill that anyone with some passion can obtain. We believe the four pillars to developing a mountain mover is honesty, inclusivity, drive, compassion. Our youth will help to build leadership skills in other through engaging activities that will make a mark for success. Leadership is not about standing alone but inspiring others to move with you.

"Thank you for 2 amazing sessions today at Sam Sherratt PS. Roxy, Shawn and Matt were equally as inspiring- sharing their personal stories unplugged. But most importantly, they shared how they connected with people to get help. Joanne, you nailed it - especially the quote "hurt people, hurt people". When I know speakers empower is when a group of girls who have huge issues with anxiety approached the social worker and sang your praises grateful that not only did you tell your story but they get now that they are not alone in their journey. They want to continue the conversation- and want to plan activities for mental health week in April. Thank you so much- again- for sharing, and making a difference in our world!"

Karen Must, Vice Principal
Sam Sherratt PS, Milton

"I really related my own life to the speaker's stories since I am dealing with similar issues. Having them at the school was amazing and inspired me to get help."

Sarah, Grade 9 Student,
St. Elizabeth CHS, Thornhill

"I expected that the program would be powerful, as I heard YouthSpeak at the Youth Voice conference. However, I was blown away by the response of our students; they actively participated in the conversations and truly appreciated the courage of the speakers to share their stories. The students continue to thank us for having YouthSpeak come to the school and they have expressed interest in bringing their parents to the parent session."

Marisa Benakis
Teacher, St. Jerome, Aurora