

Changing lives together

Dear North Shore Community,

It's summer and we are beginning to imagine a life where we can see each others smiles and breathe a bit easier, and I say this knowing we are not out if it yet.

We are in another period of transition as things open up and health orders change. As with many people I have spoken with over the last few weeks, the ending of this pandemic brings forward some mixed emotions and important questions. How do I keep the good parts of this year of isolation – the deeper connection to myself and kids? What if I have enjoyed my more introverted self? What if I still feel anxious and am not ready yet?

I think we can take inspiration and direction from the youth in our lives and follow their words, **"you do you"**.

Here at Family Services of the North Shore we have been taking direction and inspiration from youth in our community for over 12 years through our Youth Leadership Advisory Board (YouthLAB). We started this unique volunteer program because we knew we needed these voices and this wisdom to guide our Child and Youth Programming. We needed to better understand how youth take in mental health information, how to reduce stigma for youth and support them in seeking supports, and to create a platform for youth led solutions to very complicated issues such as mental health and social justice.

Over the years, we have graduated over 100 YouthLAB leaders, many who keep in touch and share the long-term impact in their lives.

Each year the YouthLAB volunteers create an outreach project and this year's group created an **incredible video**. I encourage you to watch it and share it. If you know of a youth who is interested in joining YouthLAB, visit **our website** for more information. While you are there on our website, check out our latest **Open Hearts. Honest Conversations.** podcasts.

Thank you for your support and care this past year, we look forward to opportunities to come together over the many months to come.

With gratitude,



Julia Staub-French
Executive Director



**Family
Services**
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“The thing that’s carried out for me since YouthLAB is that you empowered us with the tools to guide our friends and get them help when they need it, and that’s carried on now that I’m 24. I also feel like you taught us it’s okay to seek help when it’s needed.”
- Samantha, (YouthLAB Alumni)

Our moment OF APPRECIATION

Since March 2020, **630+** Family Services of the North Shore volunteers went above and beyond, providing **13,000+ hours of service** to help our community through these extraordinary times. Our volunteers are integral to many of our programs and services including Senior and Caregiver Support, Christmas Bureau, PROUD2BE, and Thrive Family Programs. Our dedicated volunteer and event committee teams made it possible for us to stay connected with as many individuals and families as we did this year. We cannot thank them enough and always enjoy hearing why they volunteer with us.

I volunteer because I want to give something back to an organization that does good work in the community and offers services that have directly benefitted me and my family. I would also like to help transgender people and their families/caregivers in some small way.
– Meredith (PROUD2BE)

I volunteer because I want to give back to our community and hopefully, I can make a difference in someone's life.
– Kulvir (Jessie's Legacy Eating Disorders Prevention Program)

I volunteer because I can. I volunteer because I want to make a difference. I volunteer because I have found the courage to believe in myself in a way that I have never known. I volunteer because I need the clients as much as they need me.
– Michelle (Christmas Bureau)

“ No matter what job you want to do, whether it's large or small, you're welcomed. There is a sense of family here.
– Connie (Christmas Bureau volunteer)

Sign up and join our volunteer team!
Contact **Michele Varley** or **Rebecca Telfer** to learn more.

MEET THE PEOPLE BEHIND OUR *programs*



Meet **Jennifer Hamman** (top photo) and **Susan Salazar** (lower photo). Jenn is a counsellor and expressive arts therapist, and Susan is a registered clinical counsellor. Both have been working with children, youth, and adults for the past eight years and together lead **YouthLAB (Youth Leadership Advisory Board)**. YouthLAB is a group of 12 high school students (grade 10-12) who care about social justice and mental health. Students have the opportunity to learn through arts collaboration, building awareness, and participating in dialogue about mental health topics pertaining to youth today.

Q: What do YouthLAB members do?

A: From September to June, students hear presentations about relevant topics, and discuss the material in meaningful ways with the goal of engaging other youth in the community.

Students also:

- Learn about mental health topics from professional counsellors and guest speakers.
- Develop leadership, communication, and public speaking skills as well they explore creative methods for learning and engaging their communities.
- Collaborate on an outreach project to present within North Shore schools with the purpose of reducing stigma, creating awareness, and advocating for support.
- Earn 50+ volunteer hours making an impact in their community.

Q: What do students gain by being a part of YouthLAB?

A: A deeper understanding of important mental health topics and become well-versed in discussing complex and nuanced topics such as anxiety, depression, gender and sexuality, intersectionality, trauma, eating disorders, inequality, and social change. Students grow more confident and develop leadership skills to advocate for change, think critically, and challenge the status quo.

“ We thoroughly enjoy watching students from different schools build a community with other like-minded peers who share a common goal. These students form important friendships by collaborating and creating something special together.
– Jenn and Susan, (YouthLAB counsellors)

Q: Any meaningful stories, experiences, changes in students from being a part of YouthLAB?

A: Last year students came together to create an arts journal that included visual art, poetry, and photographic reflections on youth mental health. This book, **Unfiltered**, was shared digitally and sent out as a resource to youth navigating a challenging time. The project won a **District of North Van Youth Award for Outstanding Youth Team!**

Q: How can I help my child or another youth who may be struggling?

A: The type of support a person needs will vary depending on the situation and their developmental stage, some starting points are:

- Create opportunities for conversations.
 - Listen to their experiences in a non-judgmental way.
 - Avoid telling them why they shouldn't feel the way they do.
 - Validate their feelings without trying to fix it. For example, "I hear you feel frustrated because today did not go how you expected, it's been hard."
 - Ask how you can support them and/or offer suggestions.
 - Assist your child or someone in need in seeking professional support.
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Q: How do high school students get involved?

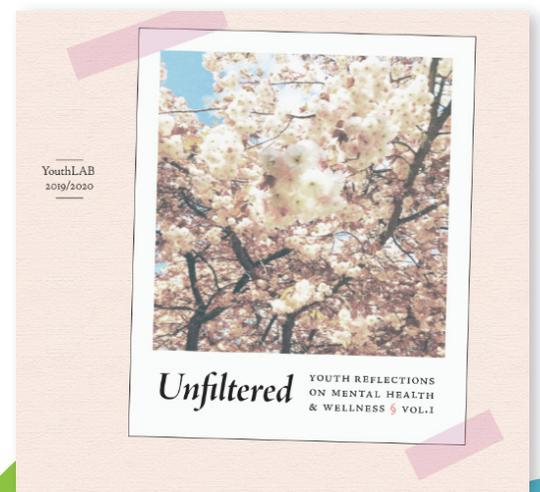
A: It's easy to become involved! Each year, at the end of June, students complete an **online application** and submit a reference letter. Interviews will take place throughout the summer and students selected will be notified by the start of the school year. Check out our **YouthLAB information packet** for further information.

HELPFUL TIPS & RESOURCES:

YouthLAB's 2020/21 **Video Project** shares powerful and thoughtful insights into the mental health issues facing youth today and other helpful resources.

[Play video](#)

YouthLAB is generously supported by Northshore Auto Mall and The Young Foundation.



“ YouthLAB has been an incredible learning opportunity where I have gained significant leadership skills, while I feel I have been a contributor to helping my community. I am grateful to all the wonderful people I have met and collaborated with, who have helped me grow along the way.
- Mary (YouthLAB volunteer)



2021 YouthLAB team members





We called AND YOU ANSWERED

During Mental Health Awareness Month in May, we asked you to support our child and youth mental health programs. These services are critical for school aged children, who we anticipate will experience longer-term effects of pandemic isolation, anxiety, and missed social connections. We are so proud of our community for rising an incredible **\$90,600 with thanks to the triple match of Northshore Auto Mall, and a long-time donor. THANK YOU!**

We continue to help in these ways



YOUTH VIRTUAL AND PHONE COUNSELLING



PARENT SUPPORT AND EDUCATION



GROCERY DELIVERIES TO STRUGGLING FAMILIES



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND CONNECTIONS

“A community is only as strong as the support it receives from those who live in it. I believe we all have a duty to sustain and protect everyone, especially those who are the most vulnerable. That is why I believe in Family Services of the North Shore and why I am honoured to be able to contribute right now to the invaluable work they are doing.

- Robin Pascoe, donor and long-time supporter



“One generation plants the trees, and another gets the shade.”

- Chinese Proverb

Create your legacy

Legacy giving is a wonderful way to celebrate your life in the community you love. A planned gift ensures people on the North Shore now, and well into the future, continue to benefit from our support and services. Whether it be for parenting support, child and youth mental health, struggling individuals, isolated seniors, or vulnerable families, you can help us continue creating a healthy community for generations to come.

Family Services of the North Shore believes mental health is a community responsibility, help us make sure it continues beyond our lifetimes. If we are already in your will or you would like more information on leaving a legacy, then we would love to hear from you. Please contact **Amy Lynn Taylor**.

Thank you West Vancouver Foundation for helping to fund our **Caregivers and Seniors Programs** and enabling us to continue our community connections and outreach initiatives.

Connect with the development team:

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