

STRONGER TOGETHER

Spring 2017



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**Working her way to
a brighter future –
thanks to you**

Danielle thanks you for giving her a
chance to move on from homelessness
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Why supporters like you are making space for young people in their Wills

After you've taken care of your family and friends, remembering YMCA in your Will helps give vulnerable young people a safe place to turn to, for years to come. Around 30% of our donations come from these special gifts – so they're absolutely vital to the future of YMCA.

Here are the reasons some of our wonderful supporters gave for remembering YMCA in their Will:

"YMCA works with success with young people. I trust my small contribution now and after I'm gone will help to continue the good work."

Yvonne, Hampshire

.....

"Having had a loving and supportive family myself, I find it hard to imagine what it must be like to be rejected and abandoned to care for myself at a young age. I hope my legacy will do much to help."

Diana, Wiltshire

.....

"I think YMCA is a brilliant organisation that works with young people in very practical ways. I have left a share of my estate to YMCA."

Keith, Swindon

Thinking about leaving young people a gift in your Will?

Find out how easy it is, and get a copy of our free Will Guide, by calling Debbie Bland on **020 7186 9518** or emailing supporterservices@ymca.org.uk

Our 116 YMCAs helped 630,000 people last year, and Gifts in Wills helped support this vital work. Please do consider making this very special gift.



Welcome to *Stronger Together*

This issue is introduced by Anna Charlton, who as Housing Pathway Manager at YMCA is helping hundreds of young people to get an apprenticeship or vocational training. She explains why your support is – and continues to be – so vital.



Dear YMCA supporter,

As Housing Pathway Manager at YMCA, I work with young people to help them get the most of their stay with us, and ultimately help them move on to independent living. I cannot tell you how inspiring it is to see a young person brimming with confidence because they've earned a diploma, or been accepted onto an apprenticeship, or been offered a job.

For many, it may be the first time in their lives that they feel that they've actually achieved something. The huge grin on their faces tells its own story, as they look forward to taking the next step towards independence, and build a better life for themselves.

Thank you so much for your continued support. I hope you enjoy seeing the impact of your donations, and I hope you see how much it means to young people to know you believe in them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Charlton".

Anna Charlton,
Housing Pathway Manager at YMCA

Thank you for supporting our Christmas Wishes Appeal

Supporters like you helped us raise an amazing £265,774, beating our target. Thank you so much to everyone who gave so generously to help young people at Christmas!

We thought you'd be interested to receive an update on Jason, who featured in our Christmas Wishes Appeal.

Jason has volunteered to be the new manager of the football team at his YMCA – and it's given him a new goal in life. He's organising all the coaching, going to FA meetings, and says the team is now "brimming with confidence."

In September he'll be going to college to study sports management and is really looking forward to this new opportunity. Thank you for all your support. If you haven't had a chance to watch our video of young people opening the Christmas cards from supporters like you, then visit our webpage here:
www.ymca.org.uk/christmas-wishes

**Thank you
for all
your
support.**



All of the stories in *Stronger Together* are real. To protect identities, we've changed some names and used models in photography.

You're giving young people a chance to move on from homelessness – for good

Dannielle's loving her apprenticeship – thanks to you!

Apprenticeships and training can be a fantastic gateway into independent living for vulnerable young people. They provide entry into the world of work, enable young people to develop new skills and give them the opportunity to earn money while doing so. YMCA enables almost 68,000 people every year to engage in education and training. This includes almost 3,700 people trained through apprenticeships each year. Here Dannielle and Sam explain what their apprenticeships mean to them:

Dannielle came to YMCA after her relationship with her mum broke down. She was scared to speak to people, struggling with depression and had no belief in herself. But little by little, with the help of her YMCA keyworker Jayne, her confidence started to grow and she's now starting to look forward to a brighter future.

Volunteering to help out on reception brought Dannielle out of her shell, and when the opportunity of a YMCA apprenticeship came up she seized it with both hands.

Dannielle is now working as a host on reception at one of our YMCA centres. It's a busy place, with a café, gym, conference suites and sports facilities.

As part of her role, Dannielle welcomes visitors and answers phone calls. Her manager also encourages her to walk around the centre, talking to clients and asking them about their visit. She says that she used to find this quite scary, but now that her self-esteem has improved she really enjoys it.

As part of her YMCA apprenticeship, Dannielle also goes to college once a week, studying for a Level 2 NVQ in Business Administration.

Dannielle still has what she calls 'wobbles' where she struggles with depression, but thanks to the support we've been able to give her, due to the kindness of people like you, her confidence has grown in leaps and bounds.

A gift of £50 could pay for a term's worth of stationery and revision books to help a young person like Dannielle study as part of their apprenticeship – or £150 could pay for these supplies for the whole year.

“Now, every time an opportunity comes up, I always take it. I say ‘Yeah, I can do that.’”

Sam was homeless when he came to YMCA. He volunteered to help with the catering at a YMCA event for local businesses, and one of the companies there were so impressed by him and his desire to find work, they offered him an apprenticeship at a construction company.

He was so happy when he found out he'd been offered the place and is really enjoying the experience so far. It's a perfect job for someone who knows that he would struggle working in an office.

“I've learned how to work and what manual labour is. It's so hard, but it's good. It keeps you fit.”

Sam really enjoys working outside in the open air, and he's also excited by the opportunities that have arisen for him.

As part of his apprenticeship, Sam is also studying English and Maths, which he knows will be very helpful later on in life. He's now hoping that his apprenticeship will lead to a full-time job and is planning to study for his professional certificates so he can use different pieces of machinery.

“I'd recommend an apprenticeship to anyone. It's hands-on, so when you're learning it's a whole different ball game. It's so much better.”

You can read about the launch of our new research highlighting the positive impact of apprenticeships on young people at www.ymca.org.uk/work-in-progress

A gift of £30 could pay towards counselling and long-term support so a young person like Dannielle or Sam can build up their employability skills.

Thanks to you, and with the support of YMCA staff, young people like Dannielle and Sam are on their way to a much brighter future.

Last year you helped us give 13,390 people like Sam and Dannielle work or employment skills training – thank you!



“I love my job, because I'm working, learning and earning.”

Thank you for supporting vulnerable young people

Do you remember reading about Sophie, whose mental health difficulties had forced her to leave her family home? When Sophie came to YMCA, she suffered with depression and anxiety and felt that her life was spiralling out of control.

She's now learning to manage her long-term mental health difficulties. She's writing poetry for YMCA publications and keeping herself fit through boxing. Thanks to your support, she's now looking forward to taking the next step towards more independent accommodation.

17,360 people like Sophie received mental health advice or counselling through YMCA last year.

#IAMWHOLE

Growing up can be a positive time – but for hundreds of thousands of young people across England and Wales, like Sophie, their experience is very different. Mental health difficulties amongst young people are common and can go on to affect all aspects of life.

Added to this, the stigma attached to mental health difficulties can stop young people speaking out and seeking help, further damaging their health and wellbeing.

YMCA and the NHS have joined forces with the **#IAMWHOLE** campaign to help tackle this stigma. Through our work in the press, online, and through social media, last year the campaign reached an audience of 120 million people. This year we are hoping to reach even more people, to help stop young people suffering in silence.

To find out more about the campaign, visit www.ymca.org.uk/i-am-whole or follow **#IAMWHOLE** on social media.

£25 could pay for a young person to have an hour-long session with a YMCA keyworker.



YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.



Sophie's doing so much better thanks to you.



Jordan Stephens of Rizzle Kicks supports #IAMWHOLE

To give now call **020 7186 9518**
Visit www.ymca.org.uk/stronger
Or turn to your **donation form.**

THANK YOU.

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