

STRONGER TOGETHER

Autumn 2017



You're giving young people a safer, brighter future



You helped Mel launch an exciting new project
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Your support is helping Amy thrive at Uni
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How Manjit is reaching out to young people
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WELCOME TO Stronger Together...



DEBBIE, SUPPORTER SERVICES

Dear Supporter,

I've been with YMCA for 39 years now and have seen so many times how your support can help transform young people's lives. It's hugely inspiring to talk to them and hear about what they've achieved. They've found the strength and confidence to turn their lives around – all thanks to your support.

That's why I'm incredibly proud to introduce this edition of Stronger Together, where you can read about just a few of the young people you're helping and be inspired by their determination to build a safer, bright future.

I hope you enjoy reading about those young people and I'd like to add that I'm

here should you have any questions about your support or YMCA's work. You can reach me on **supporterservices@ymca.org.uk** or **020 7186 9518** and I'd love to hear from you.

Debbie Bland
Supporter Services Manager

YOU'VE HELPED BILLIE TURN A CORNER



Before she came to YMCA five years ago, Billie had been sleeping on the streets. But today she's using what she's learned to help others.

"I ended up homeless after my relationship with my family broke down. I had nobody I could turn to and felt angry and like I couldn't trust anyone. My self-esteem was low and I got caught

up in this cycle of self-destructive behaviour.

"After some time of sleeping on the streets, I decided to go to YMCA. They offered me somewhere safe to stay and the support that gave me the strength to turn my life around. The people at YMCA also saw something in me I didn't think was there – which is why I'm now working there with young people myself.

"I can tell them that I've been through what they have, and

I can see it helps them to know I understand. Today, I am a support worker at the YMCA that housed me and have decided to make a career of youth work – I don't want young people to make the same mistakes I did.

"Without YMCA I just wouldn't be where I am today."

A gift of £15 can help a young person like Billie stay at YMCA for 1 night, where they can start to build a better future.

YOU HELPED GIVE AMY THE CONFIDENCE TO FACE THE FUTURE



When Amy became homeless at 16 she was preparing to take her GCSEs. With no experience of living independently, she was scared about what lay ahead.

"When me and mum fell out I felt so alone. I didn't know what the future would bring and I was terrified sleeping on the streets. I don't know what would have happened to me if I hadn't been offered a place at YMCA. I felt so safe in my room and, for the first time in ages, I had people I could turn to for help."

"YMCA, and especially Manjit my keyworker, gave me so much support. I didn't feel confident about staying on to 6th form and doing A Levels, but Manjit was always there to encourage me. It meant so much that she thought I could do it."

"It felt surreal that I could end up going to Uni after what I'd been through. It was also really daunting sorting out my application and finances before going away to study."

"I just don't think I'd have been able to do it all without Manjit. She was so patient, helping me with all the paperwork and giving me the confidence to believe I could achieve something."

"I'm so grateful to her because I know that her support was crucial to getting my life back on track."

"I'm in the 2nd year of Uni now, studying Social Work, and I love it. I did a placement in a nursery and I definitely want to work with kids in the future."

"I'm feeling so positive now and that's all thanks to Manjit, YMCA and kind supporters like you."



MEET MANJIT, a YMCA worker on the ground.



MANJIT, KEYWORKER

Manjit, who is Amy's keyworker, has been with YMCA for 11 years. Here she explains some of the inspiring work she does to help young people like Amy.

"The majority of my time is spent meeting with young people, helping them set goals or deal with any problems they might be having. They might have been abused, or neglected and let down by society, so the most challenging aspect of my job is to get them to believe in themselves and what they can achieve."



I have to stay strong – I'm here to fight their corners and it wouldn't do any good if I burst into tears.

"The most rewarding thing is when young people have that lightbulb moment and begin to make positive changes to their lives. Amy had always been told she wouldn't amount to anything and didn't think she could get to Uni. So seeing her gradually build up her confidence and then make real progress has been lovely."

"Just recently I bumped into another young man we'd helped in town. I didn't remember him at first but he'd been at YMCA 10 years ago. He'd just started his own business – a tattoo parlour. He said I could come in for a free one, to say thank you, but that's not really me."

But when young people make a go of their lives, knowing that I've been able to play a part is hugely rewarding.

"Moments like that remind me that what we do is so important."

You can help keyworkers like Manjit give young people crucial guidance and emotional support. A gift of £25 could provide an hour of personal, one-to-one support.



YOU'VE INSPIRED MEL TO HELP OTHERS

“You're helping me pass on what I've learned to other young people. Thank you for supporting YMCA”
Mel

Since we last wrote to you about Mel in July, things are looking even brighter for this determined young woman.

“When I look back over the years, and how desperate I was when I first came to YMCA, I sometimes have to pinch myself to believe what's happened.

“I was sleeping rough and taking recreational drugs. I'd given up on myself. But my family support worker helped me sort myself out and apply for a place at Uni to study textiles. When I'd finished

YMCA was there for me again. I work there now, teaching Arts & Crafts to young people.

“It's so rewarding to see them become interested and enthusiastic and begin to understand all they can achieve. And if they're struggling I can tell them 'I know what you're going through, I've been there myself', and that seems to be a huge help.

“We recently opened a shop in the local town, selling the

things we make in classes. All the young people have thrown themselves into it and are so proud when people come along and buy the items they've made.

“I'm really grateful to YMCA supporters like you for helping me and the young people I work with at YMCAs now. Thanks to you they're taking their lives forward.”

Your gift of £50 could help provide a course like Arts & Crafts at YMCA – so more young people like Mel can discover their vocation

A GLIMPSE BACK IN TIME

Your insight into the history of YMCA



1891 – Basketball is invented at YMCA

Did you know that the game now enjoyed by millions worldwide was the brainchild of a YMCA physical training instructor? James Naismith wanted to find an indoor game young men at YMCA Springfield, Massachusetts could play during the winter months.

The objective of the sport he developed was to throw a ball

into fruit baskets nailed to the lower railing of the YMCA gym balcony. Every time a point was scored, the game was halted so the janitor could bring out a ladder and retrieve the ball. After a while, the bottoms of the fruit baskets were removed and the sport hasn't looked back since, gaining Olympic status in 1936.

BECOME A ROOMSPONSOR

and change a young person's life

With winter closing in, and young people facing the prospect of trying to survive on the freezing and dangerous streets, many of your fellow YMCA supporters choose to show their commitment to helping young people by becoming a Roomsponsor.

When you become a Roomsponsor, at the cost of

just 40p a day or £12 a month, you could give a young person a safe and warm place to stay and the support they need to turn their life around. In return you'll receive regular updates from the young person you could be helping and access to an exclusive website.



**To sign up visit
roomsponsor.org.uk
and receive your
welcome pack and gift.**



To give now call **0800 085 0603**
Visit **www.ymca.org.uk/stronger**
Or turn to your **donation form**