

YOUTH INITIATIVES NEWSLETTER

MERRY CHRISTMAS



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The Big Give Returns!

We are delighted to announce our participation in the upcoming Big Give Christmas Challenge for the second consecutive year. This presents a unique opportunity, as some generous organisations have graciously pledged to match all donations made to YI throughout the week of the Big Give (November 28th- December 4th), up to a maximum of £25,000. Reaching this target would result in YI receiving £50,000, providing much needed support for our mission.

Last year, thanks to the support of individuals like you, we successfully met our goal. Today, we reach out to you once again to join us in reaching our new objective. This year's campaign theme is "Contributing to a Shared Future." Youth Initiatives is dedicated to enabling young people from diverse communities and backgrounds, to become contributors to a positive future in their communities, and across Northern Ireland.

A big part of our work at Youth Initiatives involves giving young people an opportunity to Volunteer. Many young people who have had hope awakened in them are eager to give back to the next generation. Through the 'Double your donation' Big Give challenge, we aim to raise funds to make this possible. Your contribution will enable Youth Initiatives' young participants to grow as meaningful contributors to their families, churches, communities, and workplace.

We sincerely thank you for your continued support of YI and encourage you to participate in this year's Big Give Challenge. Together, we can make a lasting impact on the lives of young people, help them grow in faith making a positive impact in our communities. Thank you and God bless this Christmas.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DONATING ON INSERT PROVIDED*

YOUTH INITIATIVES BANBRIDGE

Youth Initiatives Banbridge has continued to go from strength to strength this year! We have seen an increase in young people attending our programmes with over 50-60 young people attending every Wednesday night between our Junior and Senior programmes! This Summer, we ran a T:BUC programme for our Junior Programme which involved exploring Good Relations alongside some fun trips to Splash NI, we went to have a mural tour of the Peacewalls in Belfast and to Ardluin House in Newcastle for our TBUC camp! We also ran a Planned Intervention Programme during the summer for our Senior age group and this involved exploring topics such as self-esteem, stress, healthy choices etc. as well as growing our cooking skills and going on some fun team building trips aswell! A highlight of this group was going to a local gym and discussing how exercise impacts positively on our mental health.



We continue to work in St. Patricks College and Newbridge Integrated doing lunchtime programmes which help us in engaging new and existing young people!. We are also doing detached work on Friday nights in the area and have started some detached sessions on Friday afternoons also!

Prayer Point: One prayer point would be for new volunteers who can come alongside our current team! Our current volunteers are excellent and work so hard, we are so appreciative of all their time and energy, and so to support them we would love to see our volunteer numbers continue to grow!

YOUTH INITIATIVES DOWNPATRICK



The past few months have been a wonderfully busy time for YI Downpatrick. During the summer months we ran a second year of our Alternative Sports Academy. ASA saw young people doing a range of different activities, games and challenges which put a new spin on promoting health, well-being & fitness.

We were also very fortunate to have a team of young people travel to Cork to take part in a mission trip in collaboration with Redemptorist Youth Ministry, Scala. During their time in Cork, these young people worked alongside the team in Scala to run a week-long summer camp for children from the local community. they also came together with young leaders from Cork to take part in social justice and good relations workshops that they will have the opportunity to share with their peers back home later this year. We look forward to seeing where this partnership goes over the next few years.

We recently brought young people from our 15-18's programme IGNITE on residential. This is the first time we as an area have gone on a residential in over 5 years. The residential was a chance for this new group to come together and bond as friends. We are very excited to journey with this new cohort of young people as the IGNITE programme grows and develops.

As we move forward this year into the new year, we would greatly appreciate your prayers for the local community of Downpatrick, as they join together to recover and rebuild following the recent floods that devastated the town.



YOUTH INITIATIVES EAST BELFAST

Highlights of Youth Work in East Belfast - 2023



Summer Success - East Belfast has celebrated another year of successful youth work, marked by several notable achievements. Our Summer Schemes, catering to both 10-14 and senior programs, witnessed great participation numbers, creating a positive momentum that extended into the start of the school year.



Senior Programme - Building on the energy of the summer, we've had the privilege of engaging with senior young people in our ongoing programs. The work has been enriching, and we anticipate continued growth not only in numbers but, more significantly, in the lives of these young individuals.

Volunteer Programme Growth - A significant milestone for us this year has been the growth of our Volunteer Program. Recognising its pivotal role in our ongoing success and connect within the next generation, we're thrilled to see the programme expanding.



Outreach and School Initiatives - Our commitment to outreach extends to three high schools in East Belfast. Establishing strong and positive reputation in these schools, we've also delved into mentoring and religion classes, deepening our impact within the schools.

Street Work Collaboration - Continuing our partnership with the local EA team, our street work remains a crucial aspect of our outreach, connecting with the wider community in East.

Community Events - Two standout events this year were the joint community celebrations at Easter and Halloween with around 200-300 participants at each. These event are so important for building relationship and to have a strong presence in our community.



Anticipating the Future - Looking ahead to the coming year, we are really excited for Camp in the Summer, Three TBUC camps with other YI areas coming up, and the Volunteer Residential in January.

Prayer Requests - As we continue our work with these brilliant young people, we would ask you to pray for our work, in particular for:

- **Our Staff Team:** Especially for Paulina, transitioning into a new role with our 10-14's after returning from maternity leave.
- **10-14's programme:** Pray for continued growth in numbers
- **TBUC Programs:** These cross-community programmes are so important for continuing to breakdown division across our city.

YOUTH INITIATIVES LISBURN

The past year in Lisburn has been a blessed time, and a time of transition. Over the Summer we had a fantastic Summer programme, working with over 20 young people throughout our Summer Schemes, sprinkled in with some great trips to Let's go Hydro, Boulder World etc. We worked alongside five of the secondary schools in Lisburn delivering 1-1 support, Alpha Courses, and personal and social development programmes. We have been blessed by some new partnerships across Lisburn who have supported us this past year to engage with so many new young people in the areas of Lisburn. We have also had some incredible new volunteers help us run their first Summer Scheme and they have been key to us engaging with new young people and even starting up new programmes! #legends

Some of what we are looking forward to in the coming year include hoping to expand our work with 15-18's in the new year and we are excited about the possibilities and opportunities this will bring. We are also very hopeful of starting up a new fun creative programmes for our junior boys and girls where they can explore important and unique themes and issues impacting boys and girls. We also hop to partner with Exodus to bring at least one team in an Overseas Service Project this summer which would be an amazing opportunity for those young people.

As always, we appreciate your prayers, and would particularly love prayer as we continue to look for a base for our Lisburn Hub in the heart of our city where we can welcome young people. Please also pray for opportunities such as the Summer Teams project and the funding and support to help us continue our work and grow our team here in Lisburn.



YOUTH INITIATIVES DERRY/ LONDONDERRY

Derry/Londonderry has been blessed with unforgettable moments this past year. Some of the Standout highlights include our NUTS Volunteers winning the Connect award, boosting our team's morale going into the start of the year. One of the particularly successful initiatives was our Planned Intervention programme, addressing crucial issues including the Mental Health pandemic and exploring their own identity in a world where it is getting increasingly more difficult to do so. We were also delighted to be able to go on a trip with this group to do a High Ropes adventure course at Oakfire!.

Looking ahead to the upcoming year, we are excited for a Residential in February, our Annual Artbridge Exhibition in March showcases some of the incredible talent from our Young people, and a broader Residential connecting our Volunteer team with all the YI areas across NI happening later in the year, which is a great time to learn from other areas about their work, and for our young people to develop friendships with volunteers from every area.

Please continue praying for our staff team's journey into the new year, and for the young people with some of them facing substantial barriers in their lives. Please pray for a supernatural breakthrough that can change the trajectory of their lives.



YOUTH INITIATIVES WEST BELFAST

What a fantastic year of youth work 2023 has been in YI West! Here are some of the highlights:

Responding to the needs of young people - from big fun programmes to dinners, adventures, 1-1 mentoring, trips, and residentials young people have told us what they need and we've worked with them to make it happen!

Going Deeper - The last number of years have been challenging for a lot of our young people, this year we've been helping them journey through the chaos to get some stability by engaging with relevant topics and providing spaces for friendships on a deeper level.

Stepping up - 60 young people joined our volunteer team for 2 weeks of summer schemes as well as graduates from our programmes becoming interns and a few even joining the staff team!

Achievements - Congratulations to our young people who completed their time in Nuts and graduated into the older Lifeline programme and a huge well done to everyone who danced, sang, produced, and performed in the outstanding Crosslinks show in March!



New Things - This year Youth Initiatives became a licensed organisation for the Duke of Edinburgh Award/ Gaisce Joint Award Initiative, which means we can now offer this amazing lifetime achievement to our young people who are part of our programmes. A huge congrats to our two first-ever cohorts of young people who successfully completed their Bronze level outdoor expedition this summer! They planned an overnight walking/camping route and navigated without direct supervision in the Mourne mountains. After having gotten lost and walking for hours, one group of young men was met by a leader at the checkpoint and asked if they would like to stop for the day and go back to the minibus, to which they replied, "No way! We're going to finish this!" before continuing into the night to find their campsite. Perseverance, teamwork and craic won the day!

Looking forward - Next year we are looking to our young leaders to get involved in shaping the programmes and are excited to reach more young people in the Colin area to awaken hope!

Prayer Points - Please pray for all our young people, especially those struggling with poor mental health, for energy and vision for our staff team, prep for Summer Camp 2024 and for the continued development in the Join Award Initiatives. Thanks, God Bless!

A couple of quotes from our wonderful volunteers.....

"I always looked up to the volunteers who came before me, and they had a huge influence on me as a person, so when I had the opportunity to volunteer, I was so excited to step up and be that person for the next group of young people." - Louise Downpatrick



"I have volunteered on all sorts of programmes. I enjoy volunteering because when I was younger, the volunteers sometimes really annoyed me, but as I've gotten older, I realise that I was a bit of a nutcase and hard work, and they were there for me through all of that, and now I want to be there for the younger people coming through"- Caoimhin Maguire West Belfast



STAFF & INTERNS

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Doug Smith
Andy Hewitt
Samantha Colhoun
Michael Robinson
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Daniel Byrne
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BANBRIDGE

Heather Hill
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