



CJI Helps Youth Learn Conflict Resolution & Community Building Skills for Life!



Salomon from Liberia enjoys CJI's New Canadian Youth Connections.

Connecting New Canadian Youth to Our Community

For teens like Salomon, CJI's New Canadian Youth Connections is a safe place to make friends and improve their English.

We are partnering with Reception House on this pilot project. Modeled after our Stride program, it restores a sense of community and provides ongoing support for refugee teens. It also helps volunteers to get to know youth who are new to Canada.

On Monday and Wednesday evenings from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, youth work on homework at St. John's Anglican church in Kitchener. Volunteers patiently spell out words, help with pronunciation, and guide the youth as they answer homework questions.

"The volunteers are good at explaining math," says Salomon, who thinks it's the worst subject he's ever seen. His favourite high school courses are science and religion.

The oldest of five siblings, 18-year-old Salomon says he did not work as hard in school back home in Liberia because there was no one to help him. "My parents are happy. They like to see me working hard," he says.

During our Thursday night rec program, coordinators aim to organize activities that are inclusive, regardless of gender or country of origin. Art and volleyball have been popular activities. In his country, Salomon played soccer; now he also enjoys basketball. He thought he might like hockey, until he tried skating at Kitchener City Hall. "I almost fell down," he says with a laugh.

"[The New Canadian Youth Connection] is important for teenagers because it will help them in their lives and to have a better future," says Salomon.

Funded by



Looking Outside the Bubble: SVP Teens Support BackHome

Many of us take supportive friends and family for granted. Youth in custody don't have that luxury. When local teens heard a young man from CJI's BackHome program speak, they realized how fortunate they were.

Mya and her sister Marly belong to Social Venture Partners (SVP) Teens. This group helps youth decide on an issue of focus, raise funds and evaluate grant applications from local non-profit organizations. The teens then visit each organization to decide which one will receive their funds.

When the sisters and their group sifted through the applications, BackHome stood out. "It's a special program because it gives people the sense of family and community that not everyone is lucky enough to have," says Mya, a grade 12 student in her second year with SVP.

BackHome facilitates mentoring relationships between volunteers and youth who are reintegrating from prison. These supportive relationships create a safer, more deeply connected community.

Selecting the organization that would receive the grant was a difficult decision, but SVP was confident that BackHome was the best choice. "This organization was such a perfect fit for SVP because we wanted to impact teens. This spoke to everything we were trying to raise awareness for," says Mya.

During their visit, the teens listened to a young man talk about how BackHome changed his life. "BackHome gave him people to talk to without being judged; he was loved and accepted. It gave him the chance to be a kid again," says Marly, who is in grade 10.

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Resolving Conflict Restoratively in Schools

I wish we could have talked to each other before he was suspended. I never wanted that to happen.

—student

CJI is partnering with the Waterloo Catholic District School Board to help students in two local high schools develop connected, peaceful relationships and to resolve all school conflicts restoratively. Through the Restorative Practice School Project, CJI provides:

- Mediation that helps de-escalate tensions and resolve disputes instead of suspension or other discipline.
- Classroom circles that proactively bring students together in a safe environment to build understanding, respect for differences, and conflict resolution skills.
- School Personnel Training to help teaching staff and administrators build alternate dispute resolution techniques.
- Conflict Coaching to help conflict-prone students learn to navigate tense situations.



Parent Teen Mediation

How parents handle the massive physical, emotional, and psychological changes of adolescence can create conflict or help ease their teens' passage into adulthood.

CJI's Parent Teen Mediation Program helps families learn about and survive adolescence through conflict coaching. Offered in partnership with Family & Children's Services.

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SVP Teens Support BackHome

"It's eye-opening to be able to see what goes on outside of your bubble and helps you to gain perspective. SVP Teens isn't just about philanthropy, it's about learning to give back to your community," shares Mya.

So moved were the SVP Teens that they continued their generosity by assembling care packages for BackHome youth at Christmas time. This gesture, fueled by their admiration for the BackHome mission, went above and beyond their SVP project.

When asked if they would recommend that others support BackHome, Mya and



Local youth raised funds and shopped for gifts for BackHome teens reintegrating from prison.

Marly gave an enthusiastic "Yes!"

BackHome motivated all of the SVP teens to be part of and contribute to a more inclusive community. Their experience changed the way they see youth who have spent time in custody. "It taught us that the mistakes that you make don't have to follow you around for your whole life," Marly says. "People are capable of change."

Donate online at cjiwr.com

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To volunteer with youth in BackHome or New Canadian Youth Connections contact Peggy at 519-744-6549 ext. 208 or peggy@cjiwr.com

UPCOMING CJI EVENTS

March 27, **R.E.S.T.O.R.E event for older adults**

April 3, 7-8:30pm, **Volunteer Orientation**

April 26-29, **Transformative Mediation Training**

Registration and more training opportunities at www.cjiwr.com

April 27, **Volunteer Appreciation Event**

May 2017, **May Court Flower Power Fundraiser**. Buy Meadow Acres bedding plants from us. 100% of \$'s spent support CJI!

NEWS BRIEFS

JAN. 2017: CJI formalized a partnership with Ellen Osler House to offer Stride Night and Stride Circles to support women at this 12-bed halfway house in Dundas, ON as they reintegrate.

FEB. 2017: With funds raised creating and selling crafts, women in prison at GVI donated \$500 each to Anselma House and Marillac Place. #freshstartcreations

New books that mention CJI:

Ingenious: How Canadian innovators made the world smaller, smarter, kinder, safer, healthier, wealthier & happier by Gov. General David Johnston and Tom Jenkins

Diversity, Justice, & Community: The Canadian Context

The Little Book of Restorative Justice for Older Adults by CJI staff Wendy Meek and Julie Friesen