

In 2018, 1,142 youth suffering from mental health issues were discharged from hospitals in our region. In 2017, between September and December, 7 young men under the age of 25, took their own lives. We will never fully understand why. Since that time, the problem has only exponentially increased. It has reached a crisis point and needs our collective support. Our community has a 2.5% higher suicide rate than the provincial average and that's before COVID!



Meet Brian. A 13-year old teen who grew up in a rural area and has suffered from depression and feelings of isolation. His family recently moved to the city and he had just opened up to the idea of counselling support, but because of COVID-19 the support he needs is no longer available in the building down the street. With no school, Brian has no way of interacting with his peers. He sits in his room day after day, playing video games and watching movies on Netflix. His depression is getting worse and his parents feel they have nowhere to turn.



Jenny is 17. Once a great athlete with dreams of obtaining a scholarship to play soccer at a major University. Her life was turned upside down when she lost her parents in a car accident. Jenny spiraled into a state of depression, stopped playing soccer, and dropped out of school. Her friends and family convinced her to get help, but they were told she would be number 250 on a waitlist. Because of the pandemic, that waitlist has increased and she is now number 427. She continues to isolate herself, has stopped eating regularly, and refuses to leave the house.

100 Women Who Care can provide funding for a peer support outreach worker to provide care to 70 youth in our community. These funds would be used to engage with youth, and provide them with guidance and support as they try to navigate services. This will also help us determine the necessary steps to scale up across all of our micro-sites.

Canada's health care system is a jigsaw puzzle with many different pieces that can be very hard to navigate – even for health care professionals. For youth seeking help, navigating the system can be a nightmare, and it often fails them. This was a serious problem before Covid, but now with the added mental distress from lockdowns and uncertainty, it has become an even bigger and more urgent problem in helping our young people to cope.

We have an opportunity to help by simplifying the way in which youth access care.

The solution is most simply described as having “Youth Hubs” where young people can access a range of services through one place. More technically, here in Guelph Wellington we’re building an “Integrated Youth Services Network.” The intention is to provide INTERVENTION and PREVENTION services utilizing the service providers we already have in our community, so we are all working together. Over 30 community organizations have already come together in this shared vision. The Youth Hubs are being designed to be welcoming spaces that provide help to young people in navigating the system, both physically and virtually. Youth Hubs are not a magic bullet that will solve our youth crisis, but they are a piece of the puzzle that will make it easier for youth to access services.

Here in Guelph Wellington, we’re building on successful Youth Hub experiences from other Canadian cities and regions, and we’ve enhanced the local model to have not only one centre but SEVEN locations in Guelph Wellington where youth between the ages of 12 and 26 can have immediate access to services, including tutoring, housing support, employment counselling, primary care, mental health and substance abuse support. The seven micro-sites will be networked together so service providers can access files, and youth will not have to repeat their story each time they request help. Furthermore, youth will be deeply engaged in the design of these sites to serve them in the most meaningful way.

This Guelph Wellington Youth Hub program is a highly significant new development for our city and county, partnered with CMHA-WW (Canadian Mental Health Association – Waterloo Wellington) for health care and the Guelph Community Foundation to help raise funds.

Our community needs this, and our young people need it, now more urgently than ever. Please help the program move forward with our donation.

Cyndy Moffat Forsyth

Member of 100 Women Who Care Guelph

I began working on the IYSN concept in November 2018 as a Rotary volunteer. In July 2020, I accepted a fulltime role as the IYSN’s first director.

Short Video’s explaining why this is critical to our community

<https://youtu.be/nMJKTZy7VQc>

https://www.instagram.com/p/CFet2Pwinzm/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet&fbclid=IwAR0h0qxx1KKCQAdtJsWdA8ImNGthLQXHUY9b6wfeLEiFvfCUFeQm WRjFXk

<https://www.facebook.com/111232763904215/videos/878387226022387>