



# IMPACT REPORT 2023



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## LISA & NICK

### CO-CHAIRS

What an incredible year GGYC enjoyed in fiscal 2023! We entered the year feeling extremely grateful that we had survived the COVID-19 pandemic and delivered daily online and hybrid on-site programming with great finesse that garnered us widespread appreciation and acclaim from our participants and their families.

This happened because of the incredible commitment, dedication - and ingenuity - of our youth leadership team of coaches and counsellors, some great generosity from our loyal stable of donors, and the Government of Canada's Emergency Community Support Fund, the latter of which enabled us to purchase a significant amount of computer equipment that launched our first ever computer programming and coding course.

But a serious misstep in mid-January of this year related to a missed deadline for the Canada Summer Jobs program put our future in jeopardy and forced us to consider hiring fewer youth staff and shrinking the size of our fully subsidized March break and summer camp, big deal the crown jewels of our year-round programs.

Yet, thankfully, our organization was "saved" by a number of individuals and fortuitous events!

A past donor and the lead singer from the six-time Juno-award-winning rock band, Max Kerman from Arkells, stepped up to help us. As an enthusiastic supporter, Max brought us several new donors, including Riley Keast from Medallist Capital, the Karen & Mike Vukets Foundation, RBC Wealth Management and the Nick Nurse Foundation. Max also visited our March Break camp at a special assembly and brought with him Nav Bhatia, the Raptors Superfan. With roughly 350 March Break participants, Max and Nav talked to all of us passionately about the importance of believing in yourself and following your dreams.

In fact, it was events leading up to March break which truly transformed our organization and put us on a more solid footing to expand and further our mission of creating leadership and enrichment opportunities for new immigrant youth to foster within them greater optimism about their futures.

Rachel Chernos-Lin, the Chair of the Toronto District School Board and our Don Valley West trustee, asked us to embark on a massive neighbourhood-wide student tutoring initiative aimed at closing



what the Board identified as a post-pandemic achievement gap among students right across the City. We were chosen as the program deliverer for Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park and ran these programs at Valley Park Middle School and Marc Garneau CI.

In a matter of just a few weeks leading up to March Break, our youth staff swelled from 16 part-time year-round members to more than 115 with the addition of newly hired high school students from Marc Garneau CI and other post-secondary institutions charged with tutoring students from Grades 2 through 10.

With the Board's support and under the leadership of our experienced staff, we paid this group to tutor in a wide variety of subjects. For the first time ever, we also received funding from the TDSB to provide both a healthy breakfast and lunch to our participants during our March Break camp. This successful tutoring initiative continued throughout last spring, both after school and on the weekends.

This program added to our existing roster of youth-led activities, which include year-round and summer programs in cricket and sports, art, music and dance, cooking and nutrition and computer coding. For us, adding academic tutoring was a dream come true. We also recognize that it is up to us to sustain this program in the future because we fully understand the importance of proficiency in literacy and numeracy for youth to succeed.

For us, the last serendipitous event of 2023 was a Careers Workshop designed and delivered on our behalf by Mary Giamos, the newly retired and former Associate Director of Careers - Coaching and Education at Rotman Commerce, University of Toronto. Mary will continue to work with us in 2024 to develop a series of workshops that will also train and inspire members of our own youth staff and alumni network in coaching others in a host of educational activities, including the preparation of resumes, university and job applications.

We believe that we at last are on the way to offering the youth who participate in our programs the necessary wrap-around support they need to secure a successful future. We remain grateful to organizations such as Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, Greenwin Cares, our local property managers - Park Property Management, DBS Communities and WJ Properties, SmartCentres and individuals including Benjamin Trefler - for their continued belief in us. We are proud of 2024. In fact, it was a pivotal year. We are especially thankful always to our Executive Director, Talha Malik, for leading these initiatives and making everything happen with his incredible youth leadership team.

✉ [lisagg@gogreenyouthcentre.ca](mailto:lisagg@gogreenyouthcentre.ca)

## TALHA MALIK

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am delighted to share the Go Green Youth Centre's 2023 Impact Report, a testament to our collective achievements and the remarkable growth we have experienced. This year, we saw exponential growth in the number of campers, a clear indicator of the success and appeal of our fully subsidized programs.

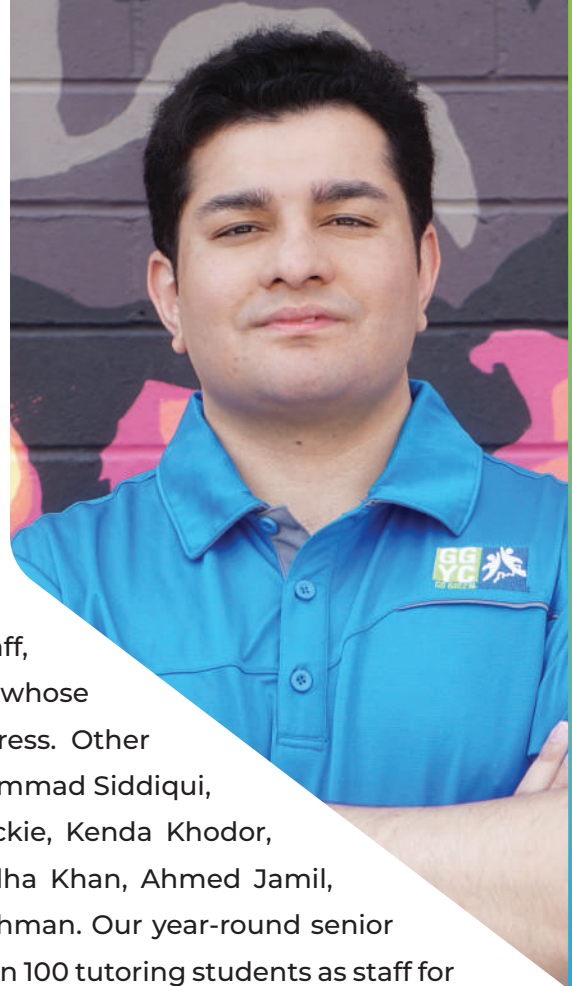
A special acknowledgment goes to our senior staff, including lead program manager Michael Ma, whose invaluable assistance has been pivotal to our progress. Other notable senior staff members are Ahmed Siddiqui, Hammad Siddiqui, Taha Malik, Areeba Zubair, Crystal Ma, Michelle Mackie, Kenda Khodor, Mohammad Usman, Mashood Khan, Jarar Khan, Talha Khan, Ahmed Jamil, Loukas Theodoropoulos, Umer Shehzad, & Safi Ur Rehman. Our year-round senior staff deserve our deepest gratitude for hiring more than 100 tutoring students as staff for our March Break program, many of whom continued with us into the spring tutoring program.

Despite not receiving the CSJ employment grant this summer, we successfully ran a significantly larger summer camp than in previous years, buoyed by the success of our earlier programs. This achievement underscores our resilience and ability to adapt and thrive even in challenging circumstances.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our board members, including Lisa Grogan-Green, for their guidance and wisdom throughout the year. The unwavering support from our donors, individuals, and volunteers has been the cornerstone of our success. I am proud to acknowledge my recognition as a recipient of the prestigious Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Award, which reflects my dedication and commitment to our organization.

Enclosed in this report are more details about our journey and achievements. I invite you to join us in celebrating this success and to continue to be a part of our journey forward.

✉ [t.malik@gogreenyouthcentre.ca](mailto:t.malik@gogreenyouthcentre.ca)



## MISSION STATEMENT

To break the cycle of poverty for racialized, immigrant and refugee youth through sports and education because we understand that feelings of inclusion and a sense of hope are important for lifelong personal and professional success.

Our Youth Mentorship Model focuses on the six C's of Positive Youth Development: the fostering of individual skills-competency, self-confidence, a strong character, and social connection, as well as developing within all participants a sense of caring for others and a desire to contribute to community.

## VALUES

As an accredited member of the Ontario Camps Association, we share its values of:

### INTEGRITY

Demonstrating honesty and fairness at all times

### RESPECT

Recognizing and protecting the inherent worth of every person, including oneself.

### RESPONSIBILITY

Being dependable and accountable for choices, actions, and commitments.

### INCLUSIVENESS

Fostering a sense of belonging for all.

### CARING

Building relationships and demonstrating concern for the needs of others.

### OPENNESS

Ability and willingness to embrace new and different ideas and to be open to change.



## ABOUT US

Go Green Youth Centre (GGYC) is a federally incorporated not-for-profit organization that empowers low-income and racialized youth at the community level in the Neighbourhood Improvement Areas of Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park. Our communities are known for being “arrival cities” and “high-rise communities,” encompassing large numbers of young and marginalized equity-seeking refugees and immigrants to Canada. Our youth face systemic and intersectional barriers to inclusion, belonging and employment. These barriers are exacerbated by what educators have identified as a post-pandemic achievement gap, which may be contributing to a recent rise in youth violence in these neighbourhoods.

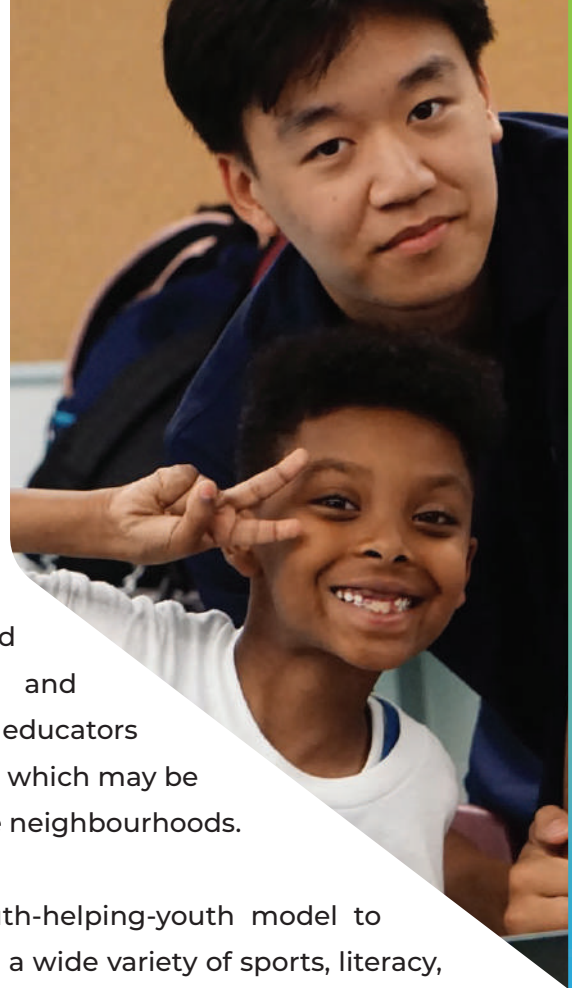
Our organization uses a peer mentorship and youth-helping-youth model to cultivate young leaders who coach and tutor youth in a wide variety of sports, literacy, numeracy, technology, music, dance, arts, cooking and nutrition, and other activities. We also operate a Go Girls program, a safe space for females, where they participate in both girls' only and co-ed programs.

Our organization is committed to empowering and creating employment opportunities for youth, which is most exemplified by our own employment strategy, which is focused on hiring only youth from these communities who are between the ages of 15 and 29 years old.

We hire 15-20 of these dynamic young leaders annually to lead, organize and manage our year-round and March Break programs. During the summertime, this staff grows to more than 30. Collaborating with the Toronto District School Board's Focus on Youth Toronto program, we also normally hire an additional 10-20 high school students during that time. An equally enthusiastic team of younger 14- and 15-year-old volunteers, called Leaders-in-Training (LITs) assists this group.

As such, we are proud to be one of Canada's largest Canada Summer Jobs recipients and have provided more than 180+ job opportunities to new immigrant youth between 2014 and 2022 in this program alone. Our approach fosters youth development and significantly contributes to LIT's' professional growth and skill enhancement.

Each year, our youth staff directly serves more than 1000 young participants aged 7 to 29 years in a wide variety of programs, field trips and workshops.



We are one of the few Ontario Camps Association-certified camps providing fully subsidized programs to all our youth participants. In the spring of 2023, the Toronto District School Board awarded us a transformative \$644,000 grant to deliver a student-led academic tutoring program delivered by more than 100 Grade 11 and 12 students from Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute (MCCI). The 100 students we hired and paid tutored more than 250 Grade 9 and 10 students on week day evenings and Saturdays as well as March break from March through to the end of June using our respected peer mentorship model. We were proud to be selected as the sole deliverer of this program in these two neighbourhoods.

All GGYC programs are delivered at permitted facilities inside VPMS and MGCI. This spring, we will also be provided with a TDSB-approved outdoor portable classroom located on the parking lot at VPMS where we plan to focus on youth-led educational tutoring, skills training and academic and employment counselling.

Our recent TDSB collaboration and its decision to provide us with an accessible outdoor facility onsite at VPMS reflects the relationship we have built with the TDSB and the reputation we have earned over the past few years. Their confidence is based on the positive youth outcomes we achieve.





## HISTORY

GGYC started in the spring of 2010 when a grassroots committee of parents, teachers, students and community activists from Valley Park Middle School decided to revitalize the school's backyard. By removing a number of portable classrooms, and combining the yard with adjacent Hydro property the school yard became big enough to encompass a multi-purpose community cricket field and other recreational and environmental amenities. Eventually in 2012, several committee members became board members of a newly incorporated entity called Valley Park Community Association. It successfully mobilized to build the Go Green Cricket & Sports Field (GGCSF) in 2015 after a successful \$1.5 million community-wide fundraising campaign.

Two years later, another \$700,000 was raised for GGCSF a second phase which also made us Canada's first illuminated cricket field. The project engaged more than 7500 racialized, low-income and diverse youth in six local public schools as they shared the dream of creating an engaging community space centred around cricket, with amenities including an adjacent multi-sport court, a baseball diamond, batting cages, an outdoor amphitheatre, and environmental features including a bioswale, demonstration wetland, meadow, and urban forest.

The ethos of what started as an environmental project was to teach about rainwater harvesting. Underground PVC pipes beneath our cricket field redirect surface and underground stormwater into our bioswale and demonstration wetland thus connecting the school yard and the school curriculum to the richness and biodiversity of the adjacent Don River valley ravines. This imaginative

## OUR JOURNEY

We Started as a grassroots group in 2010 to fundraise and revitalize the schoolyard of Valley Park Middle School into the Go Green Cricket & Sport Field

2012

Incorporated as a not-for-profit to fundraise and offer youth sport programs

2017

Became Canada's first illuminated cricket & sports field after installing LED sports lights

2018

Changed our legal name to Go Green Youth Centre to better reflect our long-term vision

2022

Further diversified our enrichment programs. Delivered our 10th annual summer camp

2023

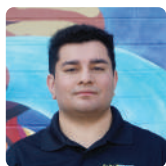
Partnered with TDSB to offer mass-scale tutoring and mentorship to close the achievement gap

project created volunteer opportunities for school youth to be project ambassadors and develop skills such as public speaking, digital literacy, and marketing. At the same time, we began employing local youth volunteers through the Canada Summer Jobs and TDSB's Focus On Youth (FOYT) programs as coaches and counsellors.

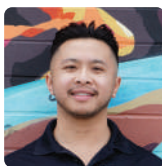
While our programs started with cricket that was initiated by four male teenagers from MGCI in 2012, our organization quickly expanded to include a much larger co-ed youth staff delivering girls' only and co-ed programs in other sports, eco-arts, music & dance, cooking & nutrition, computer programming, and most recently student-led tutoring in a wide variety of academic subjects.

The former VPMS principal and our GGYC Board co-chair, Nickolas Stefanoff, was quoted in a March 18, 2011, article in the Globe & Mail saying, "Cricket isn't just a sport for many of the neighbourhood's residents, it's a religion." This shared love for cricket along with the respect and trust our youth leaders have earned within the community, has made our organization an important youth-serving community hub. In 2018, VPCA formally became Go Green Youth Centre (GGYC) to better reflect this wide-reaching goal of empowering youth and fostering within all of our participants feelings of hopefulness & optimism about their chances for future success.

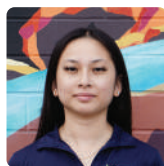
## TEAM BEHIND THE IMPACT



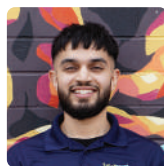
TALHA MALIK



MICHAEL MA



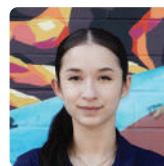
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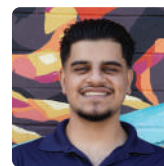
JARAR KHAN



SUMAYA MOHAMMED



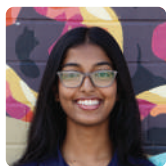
MICHELLE MACKIE



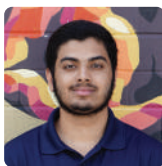
MASHHOOD KHAN



AREEBA ZUBAIR



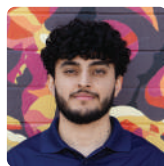
SHARIGAA KUSALAN



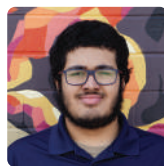
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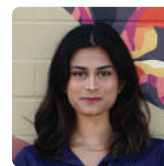
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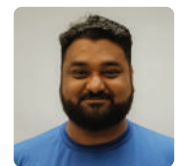
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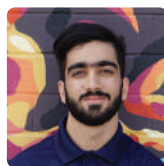
KENDA KHODOR



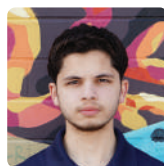
NADIF RAHMAN



RYAN FEI



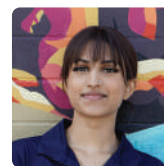
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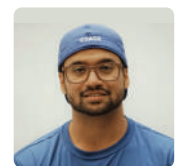
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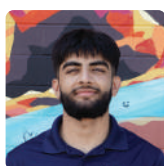
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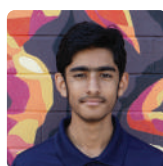
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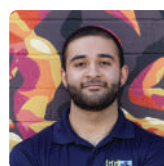
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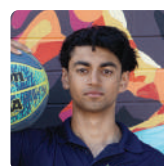
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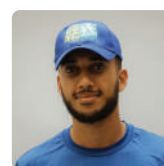
MOHAMMAD ABU-BAKR



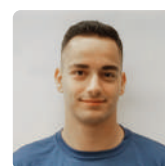
DANIYAL ANJUM



AKBAR CHEEMA



AHMED JAMIL



LOUKAS THEODOROPOULOS

Thornccliffe Park and Flemingdon Park are among the City's most densely populated, diverse and high-rise rental communities and together accommodate one of North America's largest concentrations of new South Asian Muslim immigrants.

The vast majority of the combined 43,041 reported residents of Thornccliffe and Flemingdon are South Asian (47% for Thornccliffe and 35% for Flemingdon) with residents hailing mostly from Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. Smaller numbers come from the Philippines, Syria, Africa and other parts of Europe such as Hungary. (These statistics come from the City of Toronto's 2016 Neighbourhood Profiles (#55 for Thornccliffe and #44 for Flemingdon) and are based on 2016 Canada Census data. These statistics have not yet been updated for the 2021 Canada Census.)

**More than 60% of people living within Thornccliffe and Flemingdon are first-generation Canadians (i.e. they are born outside of Canada) compared with slightly more than half of residents in the City of Toronto (51%) The refugee population in these neighbourhoods is also comparatively high. Of those immigrants landed in Canada after 1980 more than 22% of Thornccliffe immigrants are refugee claimants (26% in Flemingdon) vs 18% for the rest of the City.**

Almost all residents live in high-rise (5+ storey) rental buildings (89% in Thornccliffe, 55% in Flemingdon vs 47% in the City.) As well, the size of families living within units is much larger than the City average (20% of Thornccliffe families have five or more members, 15% have five or more in Flemingdon vs 9% for the City.)



Median household income in Thorncliffe is also lower at \$47,000 per year (\$49,000 in Flemingdon) vs \$66,000 for the City. Moreover, 46% of Thorncliffe residents report low income after tax (34% in Flemingdon) vs 20% for the City.

Meanwhile, the average age of residents is younger, at 34 years of age for Thorncliffe (37 years of age for Flemingdon) vs 41 years old for the City. And, more than one-third of residents are youth between the ages of 0-25 years old (39% for Thorncliffe, 36% for Flemingdon) vs just 27% for the City.

Overall, Thorncliffe residents are well educated but underemployed (41% of residents possess a Bachelor's or higher university degree), vs 44% for the City.

Our fully subsidized programs are aimed at engaging youth as richly as possible for families who cannot otherwise afford to send their children to for-profit programs and camps outside the community.



**60%** of people living within Thorncliffe and Flemingdon are first-generation Canadians

Median household income in Thorncliffe is also lower at **\$47,000** per year

University education in our locality however, is well below the City average at **35%**

**Go Green** fully subsidized programs are aimed at engaging youth

We are proud to have directly served 1409 youth within our programs during 2023, which represents an almost tripling of numbers served the previous year.

**This jump reflects four factors:**

- 1 A dramatic expansion of participants served given that the pandemic is over;
- 2 A new partnership was developed with the Toronto Police Service ProAction Cops & Kids program related to outdoor hardball summer cricket;
- 3 A transformative addition was made to our programs with the addition of youth-led academic tutoring - both in terms of the # of student tutors hired (Grade 11 & 12 students from Marc Carneau CI & post-secondary students) and the # of students/participants served in these programs (Grades 2 through 10); and,
- 4 The introduction of a career workshop series run by Mary Giamos, the newly retired former Associate Director of Careers - Education & Coaching Rotman Commerce, University of Toronto.



# PROGRAM IMPACT

This year was remarkable as our existing year-round youth staff of 16 employees successfully onboarded more than 100 part-time youth employees, an impressive managerial accomplishment last spring. For some of the new students hired, this was a first-time job opportunity, and some remained with us for the remainder of the spring and summer.

The aim of the program was to empower and employ older Grade 11 & 12 students to tutor younger students in a wide variety of academic subjects and thereby help close a post-pandemic achievement gap. Members of the TDSB Caring and Safe Schools Dept. said GGYC was chosen to deliver this program because of our strong record delivering youth-led programs.

During the March Break alone, 116 students taught 274 younger Grade 2-10 students the following subjects: English, ESL, Math, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Integrated Arts (art, drama & dance), Geography, History, Resume writing, Career Guidance, Financial Literacy, Computer Coding and Programming, and Physical Education.

Students were provided with a healthy breakfast, snacks and lunch each day. The TDSB provided us with funds to purchase 100 Windows Laptops and Chromebooks to support the tutoring program. Additionally, we donated 50 Chromebooks to those students in need.

In May and June, our focus shifted specifically to subjects in literacy and numeracy, which was delivered after school and on Saturdays in conjunction with our normal programs. We also provided all participants with pizza and snacks during each session.

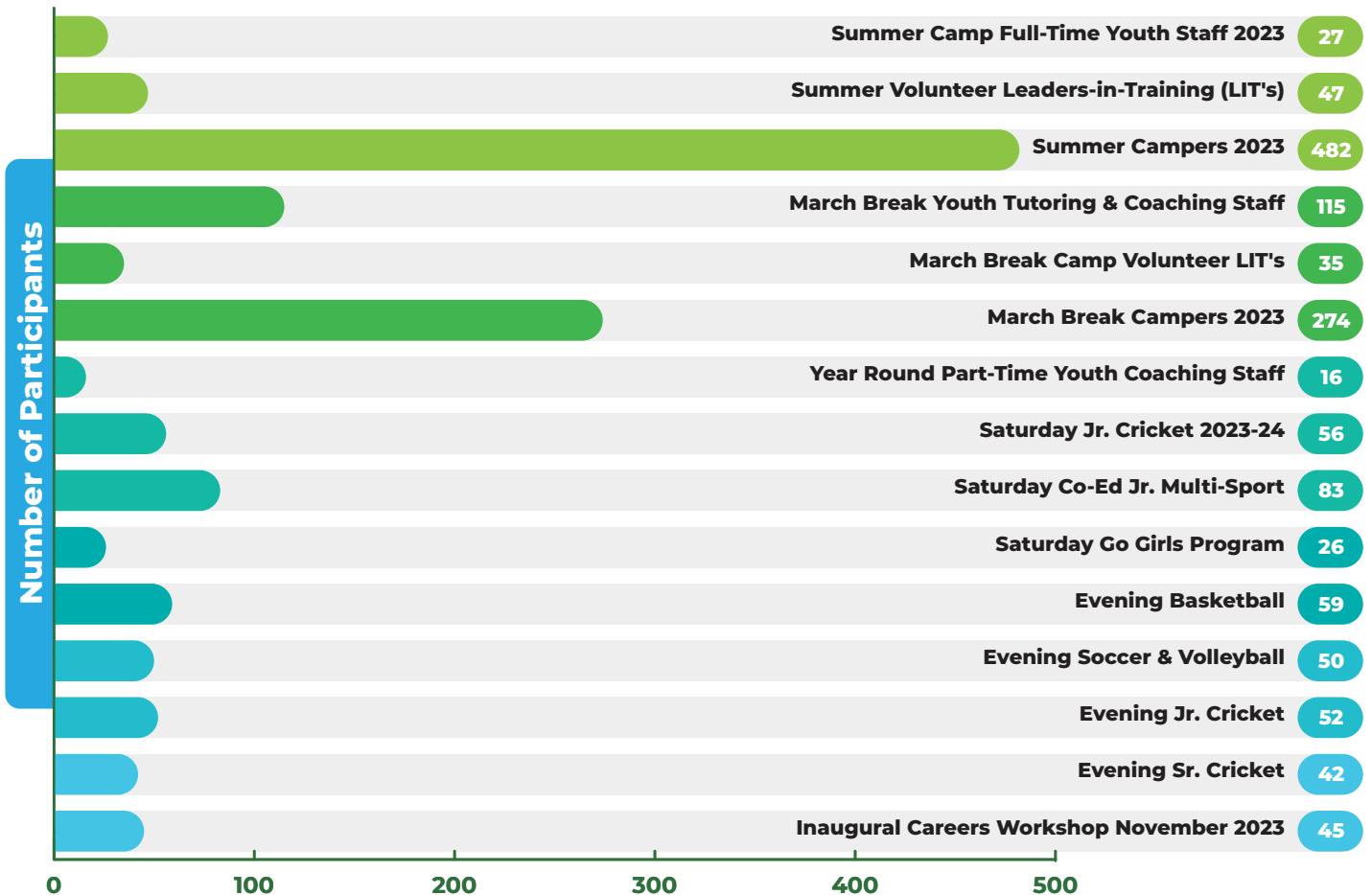
Last summer, enrolment at our seven-week camp almost doubled from 214 campers in 2022 to 398 campers in 2023. Our Leaders-in-Training (volunteers aged 14 & 15) ballooned from 27 to 47 LIT's. Our full-time summer staff dropped from 32 employees to 27 reflecting the loss of the Canada Summer Jobs grant. Nevertheless, we employed roughly 10 additional students through the TDSB FOYT program.

During the summer, a partnership was established with the Toronto Police Service ProAction Cops & Kids program. It involved Tuesday evening hardball cricket sessions for children and youth aged 7 to 18 years old, led by GGYC youth cricket staff, LITs & volunteer police officers.

During the academic year, GGYC additionally served 368 youth in our evening and weekend programs held in the VPMS gymnasium.

Throughout the year, participants attended seven field trips to places such as a Toronto Blue Jays game at SkyDome, a GT20 Cricket League match in Brampton's CAA Centre, Ontario Science Centre, Art Gallery of Ontario, Royal Ontario Museum, African Lion Safari, and the National Ballet of Canada's Nutcracker Ballet. (KidsUpFront funded the majority of these trips.)

As the year concluded, GGYC held the first session of a series of career workshops, which will continue in 2024. Almost 50 high school and post-secondary students attended.





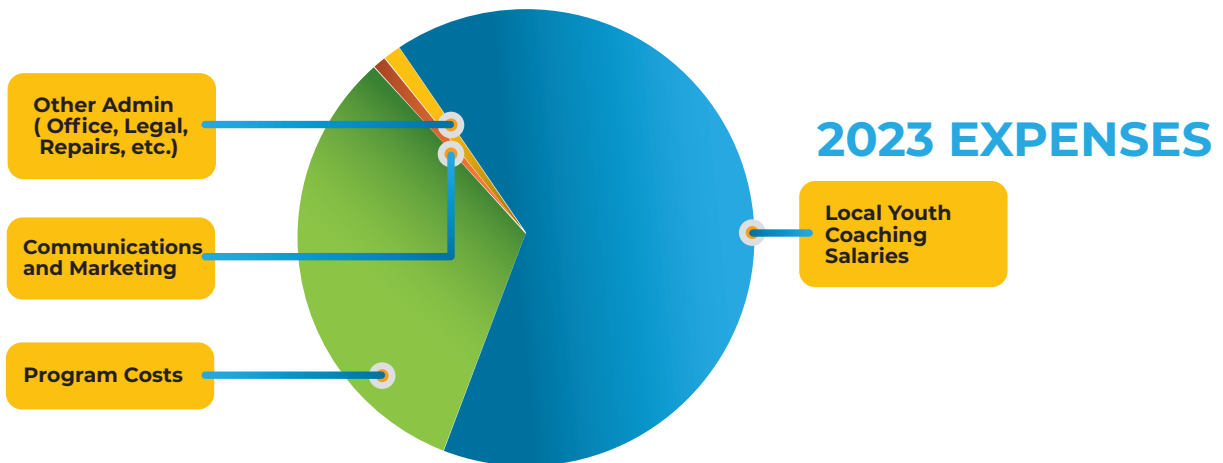
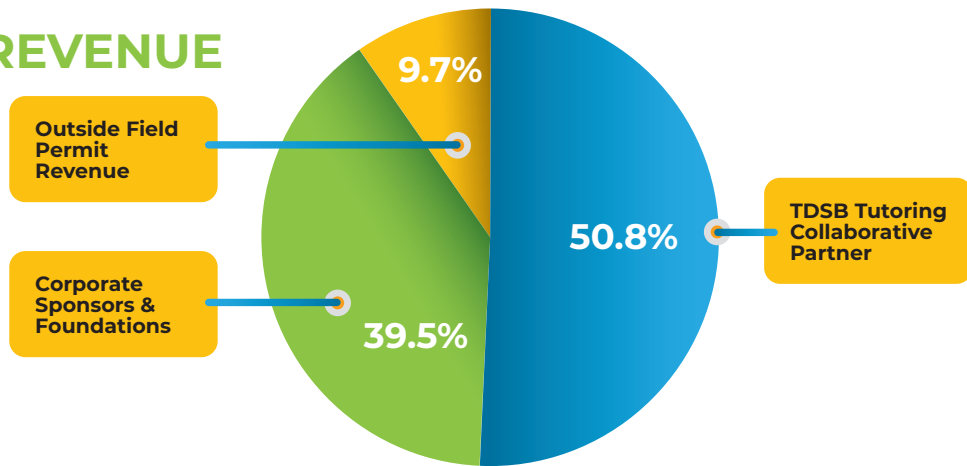




Our impressive fiscal 2023 performance was achieved despite a serious financial setback last January related to a missed deadline for the Canada Summer Jobs program - a grant we have received each year since 2014. This grant typically accounts for a significant amount of our annual revenues and enables us to hire our summer staff. For instance, in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2022 this grant amounted to 42% of our operating revenue when we hired 32 youth.

However, despite receiving no funding from Canada Summer Jobs in 2023, higher donations from our existing donor base, new donations, higher permit revenue, and new contributions related to the collaborative TDSB tutoring partnership last spring meant we outperformed our previous year by leaps and bounds. Fiscal 2023 revenues climbed by nearly 150% to \$887,772.00 from \$357,203.35 in 2022.

## 2023 REVENUE



## Sumaya Mohammed

Staff Member 2019-2023

"I am glad that our team had the incredible opportunity to coordinate the Tutoring program offered during the course of our summer camp. Tutoring made its first debut during our March Break program and we had the opportunity to continue it during the summer. It's been a joy to witness the transformation in the campers who participated. It was a challenge to make learning literacy and numeracy an exciting journey, but it was done nonetheless.

During literacy sessions, we organized interactive storytelling sessions where campers not only enjoyed captivating tales but also actively participated in discussions to enhance their comprehension skills. We encouraged them to express their thoughts and opinions, helping them develop their communication abilities. Campers also had the opportunity to create their own stories and share it with their peers.

For numeracy, we designed hands-on activities that turned math into a fun adventure! Campers engaged in scavenger hunts where they had to solve math puzzles to unlock clues. We also introduced minute-math during the start of our sessions as a friendly competition to challenge campers to solve math problems quickly and accurately in hopes to improve their mental math abilities. We are thrilled to have played a role in fostering in our campers a love for learning and helping these young minds reach new heights academically. The tutoring program has undoubtedly added an invaluable dimension to our camp's offerings, and we are honored to have been a part of it.

Working at Go Green has also been an incredibly rewarding experience for me. I've had the privilege of witnessing the positive impact we make on campers' lives for more than four years. Being part of a dedicated team that creates a safe and nurturing environment for these young children and youth to explore, learn, and thrive has been truly fulfilling. Collaborating with fellow staff members who share the same passion and commitment has enriched my own journey as well. The bonds formed with campers, watching them step out of their comfort zones, try new activities, and build lifelong friendships, are moments that continue to inspire me to pursue our work with children. The sense of community that blossoms within the camp is nothing short of magical, and we are grateful to have played a role in shaping these memories."



## Sophia Tran

### Eco-Arts, Digital Media & Go Girls Coach

"Joining Go Green Youth Centre in 2021 after the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, I discovered more than a job: I found a vital community connection. Three years on, I eagerly return each summer, embarking on fresh adventures with colleagues and campers. GGYC has significantly refined my leadership and communication skills, offering invaluable experience in youth program coordination. Beyond that, it's a dedicated space for youth and women empowerment, enhancing my own personal and academic growth during my post-secondary education journey."

## Kenda Khodor

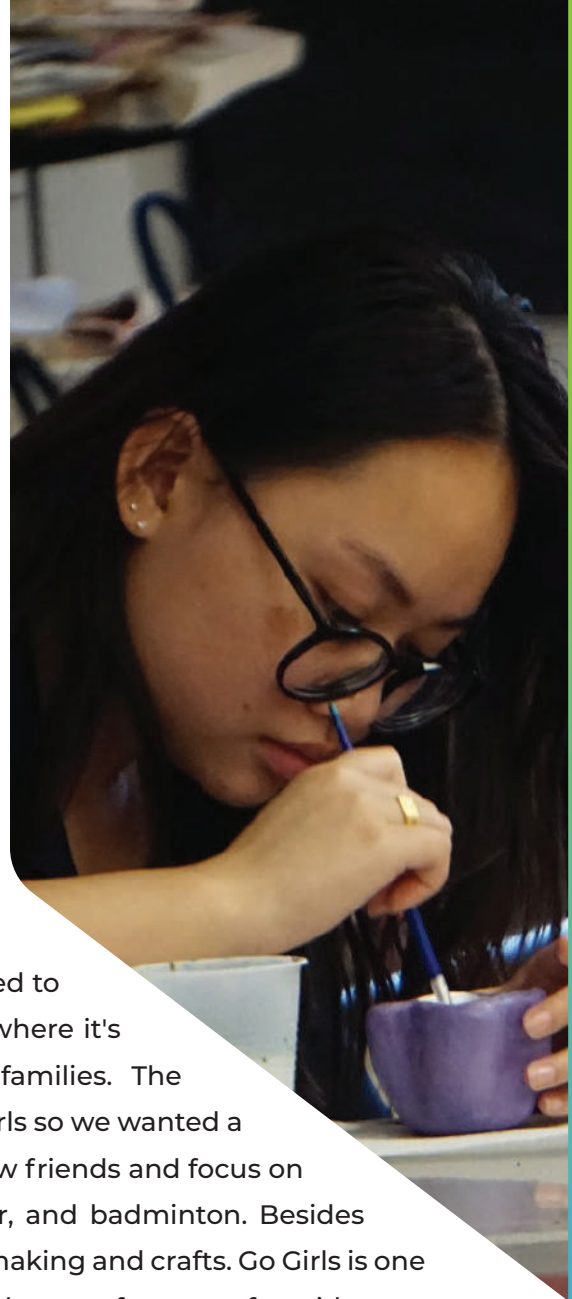
### Go Girls Coach, Music & Dance

"The Go Girls program has been running for the past couple of years, however this year we especially wanted to focus on sports-related activities. We live in an area where it's really populated and there's a lot of immigrant families. The opportunities that guys receive are not the same as girls so we wanted a safe space where girls could come together, make new friends and focus on learning new sports like basketball, volleyball, soccer, and badminton. Besides sports, we also do other activities like Eco-Arts, slime-making and crafts. Go Girls is one of the only programs in the community that provides a safe space for girls to come together."

## Nazeesh

### Go Girls Participant & LIT

"At this program, adolescents like me make friendships that last. We make decisions for the future and learn from the past. We have many opportunities here, and all for the price of free. I would greatly recommend Go Green to anyone willing to nurture their skills that would benefit them in the real world. Conclusively, GGYC inspires young minds like mine to nurture creative pathways into the real world."



## Sanjeya Emanuel Suganthan

### Staff Member

"I began my journey with GGYC at about age 10 or 11 as a camper with my twin sister, Sanjika, where we met my fellow staff and dear friends such as Mashood Khan, Crystal, and Micheal Ma. I was introduced to a number of excellent staff who were welcoming, kind, and energetic and made me want to come to camp every day. For two years, I was a camper, when GGYC was mostly a multi-sport camp and I was handed many opportunities to make new friends and connections and learn about the dynamics of GGYC. I was a student-athlete my entire life and within Go Green, I was able to pursue my love for basketball and get better with the help of the multi-sport staff. They taught me to express myself and never be ashamed of playing sports and treated me as an equal.

Watching the staff have a passion for what they do and enjoy teaching others to enjoy the same thing influenced me to want to have a big role within GGYC.

Once I entered middle school I took on a role that changed my course of life. I had the opportunity to be one of the few people to be the first LITs (Leaders-in-Training). During this time I got to be more involved in the Go Green establishment. I took on different tasks and a wide range of responsibilities which expanded my experience and skills. I made more connections and I finally found a group of people that I can also call family.

I am currently 19 years old and just completed my second year at Wilfrid Laurier University. I have officially been working for GGYC for roughly 4 years. I am beyond grateful for the opportunities GGYC has offered me and the level of leadership this organization has taught me. I create activities for girls, sports, games, and even art-related activities such as sketching, nature walks, painting and so much more for ages 7 to 13 years. Being with children and young girls at such a young age and developing from a camper to a volunteer to staff is part of what makes me want to pursue working with adolescents. The amount of love I have for working with kids is because Go Green has inspired me to help and teach others. To show their uniqueness and be comfortable sharing their thoughts and expressing themselves.

Go Green has allowed me to be more responsible, more confident, be a leader, and work hard. I now have a great role to also teach the next generation of girls, LIT's and staff. Being able to mentor others the way I was mentored into the person I am now is the best feeling ever. I can not wait to see what GGYC has in store for me in the future as I hope to gain even more skills and leadership through my journey."

## Ayan Rahman

### Volunteer, Grade 9

"As a volunteer at Go Green, I have had an amazing time and enjoyed every moment here. I have created great bonds with staff members, volunteers and campers. It has been an experience that taught me more about leadership, being vocal, ethical and professional at workplaces. I started at Go Green as a camper last year, and the environment here was joyful, enjoyable, and made me have an amazing time.

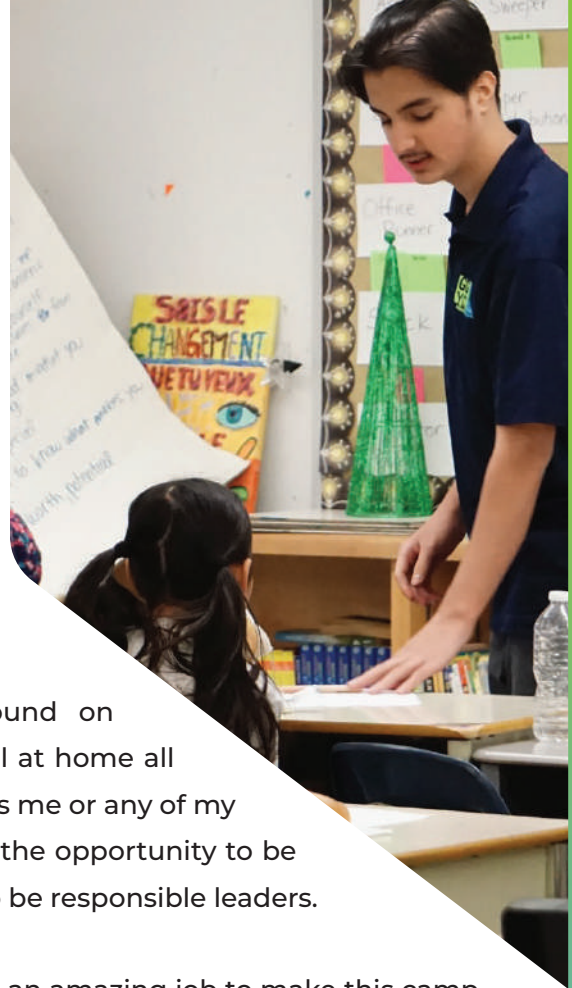
This year, I returned as an LIT/Volunteer year-round on Saturdays and summer camp. The staff make me feel at home all the time, and create an environment that never makes me or any of my colleagues feel bored. I thank Go Green for giving us the opportunity to be leaders in action and to learn to be capable enough to be responsible leaders.

The heads of Go Green, Talha and Michael, have done an amazing job to make this camp a place everybody loves. I highly recommend anyone to join. It is a fun, enjoyable experience that teaches us the techniques needed in sports, behavior, sportsmanship, kindness, patience, teamwork and leadership. It is a place that is always engaging. The camp even does field trips to places such as The Art Gallery of Ontario, Royal Ontario Museum, and African Lion Safari. The best part is that everything is free of cost. Go Green is a wonderful place and I can confidently say that I would love to come back here, hopefully as a staff member."

## Sheharyar

### Volunteer, Grade 10

"Volunteering is an excellent opportunity to gain valuable experience for your resume and to develop essential skills like responsibility and communication. Beyond that, it allows high school students to connect with their community, build a sense of belonging, develop leadership skills, and benefit from mentorship opportunities. It's a pathway to personal growth and an avenue to make a positive impact on the world while preparing for a successful future."



## Mohammad Usman

Participant, LIT & Coach, 2016-23

“Over the past three years as a ping pong coach at GGYC, my experience has been nothing short of exhilarating. Witnessing the growth and progress of our young ping pong enthusiasts has been a source of immense pride. From trembling beginners to confident players, I've seen these kids develop remarkable hand-eye coordination, strategic thinking, and impressive serves. Their backhand slices have become more precise, and their topspin smashes... Well, let's just say they now give any opponent a run for their money on the table. It's truly heartwarming to see the smiles on their faces as they master new techniques and win those hard-fought matches. Their dedication and passion for the sport are inspiring, and I couldn't be more thrilled to be a part of our campers' ping pong journey.”

## Alex Xhemali

Grade 6

“Before arriving at Go Green, an activity that I would rarely do is ping pong, due to the fact that we do not own our own ping pong table. I love playing ping pong with my dad when we go on vacation. The memories I make with him are pretty fun, along with the memories I create with other members of my family. Go Green helped me remember some of the times I had forgotten. I am thankful for the time I was able to spend here.

Sometimes, I feel kinda shy. But thankfully, Go Green welcomed me kindly. I was able to make some great friendships as well as some pretty nice memories. I can't wait to return because of how nice the experiences I enjoyed here were.”



## Sophie Bayani

### Grade 5

“This is my second year at Go Green. I was in the 2019 online program during COVID-19. Although the program was online, they didn't fail to keep me intrigued using the interactive online activities they had. This summer Go Green gave me the opportunity to join the in-person summer camp. This year because of Go Green I had the opportunity to pursue a multiple of my passions, one of them being ping pong. The staff taught me the rules and how to serve and I got the chance to practise these skills and still enjoy playing ping pong with my peers.”

## Taha Masood

### Grade 4

“Soccer is my favourite sport! I play the position of a midfielder. An important skill to have which I got better at is speaking to one another. Speaking with one another helps the team to work together. Getting better at that skill made my team and I win. Playing soccer is fun because I like to run and I get faster every day with the exercise of running laps.”

## Hammaad Sayed

### Grade 3

“My basketball experience was INSANE!!! I improved way more than last year thanks to the staff members of basketball. I learned how to shoot with Hareen. He told me to aim, and then to extend your right arm pointing at the net. I also learned how to dribble, pass, and dodge someone trying to get the ball.”



## Zayan Rizan

### Grade 3

"When I started at Go Green as a camper, I had never played cricket and expected it to be boring. But Go Green's cricket program changed my perspective completely. I now have a newfound love for cricket, and recently, I even got to attend a live cricket match, which was an incredible experience."

## Safi Ur-Rehman

### Participant, LIT, & Coach

"My name is Safi (Ur-Rehman) and I am involved in our cricket programs. Here at Go Green we have three different cricket programs that take place throughout the week. We have a Tuesday evening cricket program, Thursday evening cricket program and a Saturday program. We have mentorship opportunities for youth to come together, and share their love and passion for cricket, which gives them a chance to help out the community. Tuesdays we have a slightly competitive program for youth that are a bit older. This helps them connect with their peers of the same age, which can help them also socialize with one another and get out into the world to improve their confidence, and foster their abilities to help society. Cricket is a sport that spreads love and peace, and here we have one of the biggest illuminated cricket fields in Toronto and this helps the communities band together. People come here from other communities to play cricket with other players from all across the GTA, and it basically makes it an impactful environment for all communities to be helping each other: people meeting other people through the sport of cricket. And I would like to share my story about this youth program here at Go Green. I started as a camper, and it helped me improve my confidence, my social skills, my skills in cricket, and it brought me together with a bunch of peers that I am now very close friends with. It's a good opportunity for all ages and I would just like to say that this all would not be possible without our donors and their help."





## Sanjana Thirumalaikumar

Grade 5

“Eco-Arts is my favorite thing to do because I usually do arts and crafts at home and I got so many certificates at my school in India. I also got so many prizes for that. And I like arts because of the staff that are there in eco arts because they are making us practice arts and crafts so we are skilled in arts and crafts. I like the staff that are in eco arts.

Music is my second favorite thing to do in GGYC. Music is really fun because of the staff that are there. Music is good with the staff that are there because in the last music class they let us play with instruments and it was so much fun with those instruments. One day, they organized a competition in which the best drummer would win. Fortunately, our group won because they were looking for a group that had teamwork and gave effort, and we were the ones doing those things, so they gave us Gatorade. The music coaches are so sweet, I really like them.”

## Sheyma Benahmed

Grade 5

“I love to cook even at home! In cooking class I learned nutrition, and learned how to make healthy food. Learning how to cook helps me because I like to cook for my family and I love helping my mom cook too! When I grow up I want to be a baker and a chef so learning these skills and recipes will help me. I enjoy cooking class because it makes it fun and I look forward to it everyday.”



## Arisah Baset

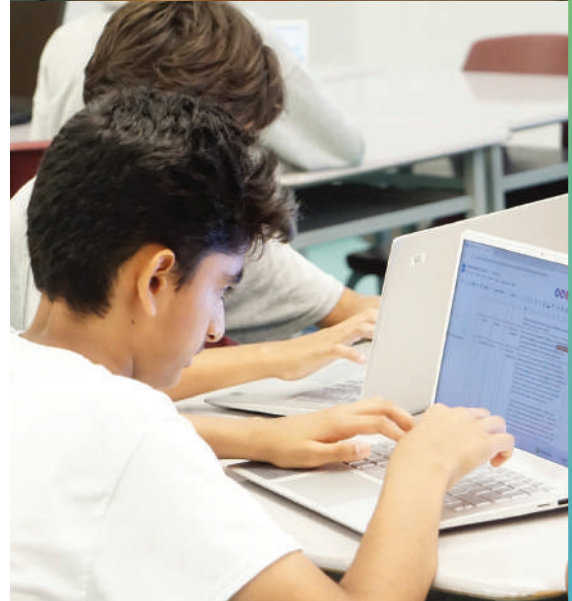
### Grade 6

“Programming is something I’ve never been that interested in. I always thought it would be boring and hard and something I’d never enjoy. However, after coming to Go Green, I have changed my opinion on coding. First, we started off with block coding, which I found fairly easy. It was fun and every Day Two, I was eager for more. It was the activity I would most look forward to. Then, we started doing Javascript, which was much harder, but I liked the challenge. I felt very accomplished when I finished a coding challenge. This was definitely one of my favourite activities, because we also had “Fun Day Friday,” which was basically free time. It balanced the fun and work and I really liked that.”

## Ryan Fei

### Computer Programming Staff

“Our programming lessons were done through an educational programming platform called Tynker, which had material catered to various ages and skill levels. The material was assigned such as lessons and challenges to campers after we created accounts for them. Alongside these lessons, progress was able to be tracked by the staff through the grade book tab that was offered on the platform. This grade book tracked individual camper progress through the various lessons that were assigned, and lesson blocks would turn green upon completion. This allowed for individual camper progress to be tracked, as well as compared with their average peers. As a result, the pace at which they completed lessons was a solid indicator of what level a participant was at, and quick progress and improvement was obviously indicated through getting through lessons faster. Additionally, I was constantly walking around the classroom and checking in on individual campers and groups if they appeared to be struggling. By constantly asking



questions, checking if they understood the lessons or activities, myself and the other staff were able to deduce whether they required additional help or were handling the material just fine. It was pretty evident when improvement was made, because not only would campers show this on their faces, but through check-in's their entire demeanour would also brighten up.”

## Nadif Rahman

### Computer Programming Staff

“My philosophy for programming at our summer camp was that the biggest priority was to build confidence in the campers when it comes to their ability to program. I remember when I was around the age of 6, 7, or 8 years of age, my father would take me to a programming class in the Flemington Park library. That class had mixed age groups in it; some were older and some were younger, I was one of the younger pupils. The staff would give lessons that would perplex me and make me feel that programming was not for me and that I would never be good at it. It heavily discouraged me; I was lucky that later experiences in my life got me interested in programming and other computer technologies. In another timeline, I may have hated programming and never tried to do it again. Due to this personal experience of mine, I made sure to prioritise the confidence-building of my campers. Although valued as well, the actual skills and knowledge they learned came second to confidence building.

As the weeks progressed through the summer camp, I noticed positive effects from the campers in general. I noticed that the campers got more invested in the activities as the lessons got more difficult; specifically, the older kids found our Javascript lesson to be very interesting although it was much more difficult than what we had done before it. Additionally, I personally felt that the campers asked for my assistance less as the camp progressed - which probably means that the campers became more confident in problem-solving on their own as time went on. Throughout the whole camp, I never felt that engagement had ever dropped. My policy was that no one had to take part in activities if they did not want to; if they did not want to program, I would let them do something else like draw on the whiteboard or read a book. However, I almost never had a camper who did not want to take part in the programming activities; probably only about five times for the whole seven weeks. I believe that myself and my fellow staff did an excellent job keeping up in engagement through positive reinforcement and awarding the campers with free-time if they worked hard during our classes.

Particularly, two of my campers, Sumedh and Sumith, would always enthusiastically ask me in the



morning (as soon as they entered the building) about which lessons they were going to do that day. I felt proud that they were so engaged with the program. In addition, I had a camper named Jessica who told me she found programming very difficult and that she “wasn’t built for it.” I explained to her that there was nothing wrong with not liking programming, but even just by trying a little bit; we can learn a lot. Later on, I found her doing well and she did not really complain about programming - I would see her trying her level best to do the activities regardless.”

## Fariha

### Grade 7

"At Go Green, programming has become my favourite activity. It adds excitement to my day, especially when it feels dull. I want to pursue coding in future, but we only did a little of it at school. I'm grateful that we have programming at summer camp. I've learned a lot, from the basics of Javascript and Python to robotics-related topics. It's been a fantastic learning experience, and I even play games I created."

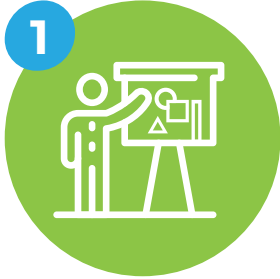


# OUR THANKS TO OUR DONORS

## Community Services Recovery Fund



## WE HAVE IDENTIFIED FOUR GOALS FOR 2024



1

*To continue to develop & support our new student-led tutoring initiative.*

*To secure stable funding for the installation & operating costs related to our outdoor GGYC portable, where academic tutoring, workshops & computer programming courses will be delivered year-round.*



2



3

*To continue to develop our educational & career counselling programs using outside professionals, our alumni network, and our parent database. The long-run goal is to connect participants to academic scholarships, opportunities, training and jobs.*

*To form a new entity that will deliver our charitable initiatives specifically aimed at the charitable objective of advancement of education. We plan to operate the new charity under the corporate name "Go For It Youth."*



4

### OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The collaboration with the TDSB to deliver student-led tutoring was a serendipitous opportunity because it provided us with sufficient funding to support a program we had always dreamed of delivering. The program follows on the success of our other educational programs including eco-arts, cooking & nutrition, music & dance and our computer coding program. Providing student-led academic tutoring puts us on a more solid pathway to deliver on our goal of "youth mentoring youth". Our hope is to offer participants career coaching with future academic and job applications & even to connect youth directly to training, employers and jobs.

***\*However, this fall, the TDSB has not yet supported this tutoring initiative.\**** As a result, GGYC is setting out in 2024 to find new donors, foundations and grantors who are willing to support youth-led tutoring initiatives in addition to supporting our existing recreational and educational programs.

## YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

With your support, we can deliver on our mission of fostering greater confidence and hope among immigrant youth about their chances of achieving success. You will also be helping us build and expand our “youth helping youth model,” which is central to our organization.

Donors can obtain **tax receipts** from GGYC by making donations payable to our charitable trustee, the Toronto Foundation for Student Success, which is the TDSB’s arm’s-length charity. Cheques can be made payable to “TFSS-Go Green Youth Centre” and provided to our Executive Director Talha Malik. Alternatively, they can be mailed to our GGYC address.

While donations are welcome, we are also interested in receiving volunteer assistance in areas that may help us develop our youth-led organization even further.



## BOARD GOVERNANCE

The collective professional, volunteer and lived experiences of our board of directors reflect our commitment to diversity in serving equity-seeking groups.



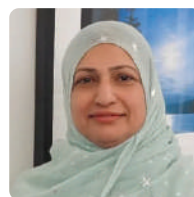
Lisa Green



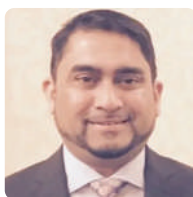
Nick Stefanoff



Ali Baig



Sumaira Tariq



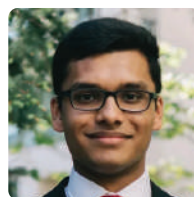
Yousuf Syed



Julie Dasoo



Mazhar Shafiq



Abeir Liton



Gerri Gershon



### Go Green Youth Centre

C/O Valley Park Middle School, 130 Overlea Blvd  
Toronto ON M3C 1B2



647 725 2793

[info@gogreenyouthcentre.ca](mailto:info@gogreenyouthcentre.ca)

[www.ggyc.ca](http://www.ggyc.ca)