

#### Y W C A Halifax 2 0 2 2 2 0 2 3 Annual Report **Growing Together**



YWCA Halifax is privileged to support and work with women, Two Spirit, and gender diverse people across Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. We hold ourselves to upholding a vision of gender justice that is informed by the input and experiences of Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit people. Thank you for continuing to walk with us in friendship.

#### Mission

We build economic security, promote wellness, and create opportunities for women, girls, Two Spirit, and gender diverse people by providing a strong voice and integrated services.

#### Vision

We envision a world where women and girls, Two Spirit, and gender diverse people are empowered in a safe and equitable society.

#### Four Focus Areas

- 1 Promote the leadership, health, and wellness of women, girls, and gender diverse people.
- 2 Advance women and gender diverse| people's economic and housing security.
- **3** Deliver quality, accessible, developmental early learning and child care.
- **4** Work to end violence against women, | girls, and gender diverse people.



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#### YWCA Halifax 2023 Annual Report

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## /// Message From the President and Executive Director

The well-being of women is why YWCA Halifax continues to operate and expand our childcare offerings. Children benefit from the care they receive but so do the women who are still often their primary caregivers.

The data is consistent and clear: affordable, accessible, quality childcare enables women's participation in the workforce, increases women's economic empowerment, and has a dramatic impact on the make-up and fabric of our communities where women can play central roles.

Childcare in Nova Scotia and in Canada is at a pivotal moment. Together we are designing and building a new system of care, including workforce development, parent fees, family home and centre-based care, and the number of licensed spaces that are available. At YWCA Halifax, we recognize that this is the baseline. We need to make sure that the childcare system is inclusive of all children and that those who choose to work in this field have rewarding and sustainable employment.

In this report to our community, find out more about our most recent work to build and expand a just and accessible childcare system. It's been an exciting journey with much road ahead.

We're also excited to share with you some highlights from many of our other 2022/2023 programs. As a multiservice agency, YWCA Halifax continues to be active in housing, gender-based violence, settlement, sport and recreation, women in trades, economic empowerment, and much more.

Most importantly, know that your YWCA Halifax, an agency that has been at the forefront of gender justice for nearly 150 years, continues to work for our vision where women, girls, Two Spirit, and gender diverse people are empowered in a safe and equitable society.

Sincerely,



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Jennifer Ashton, (She/Her) Board President



Miia Suokonautio, (She/Her) Executive Director



families and Early	learning centres 250+ children across 35 family home childcares
65 free newcomer tax clinics with 1,072 beneficiaries	60 employment readiness participants with 20 long-term employment positions secured
oloans and grants hts fleeing ence bort for survivors on and trafficking	<b>48</b> housed in supportive housing programs with <b>10</b> supported moves to independent housing
	and Early 65 free newcomer tax clinics with 1,0722 beneficiaries or Women and cloans and grants ts fleeing cort for survivors n and trafficking

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# /// Dartmouth Child Development Centre: Growing Together

This is a story about illusions and misconceptions. It's also a story about innovation and partnership. All of it is rooted in community.

Pay attention. We need more of this.

In late 2019, members of the Board of Directors for the Dartmouth Child Development Centre (DCDC) approached YWCA Halifax with a question: "How do we ensure effective leadership for our centre?"

DCDC was a longstanding nonprofit childcare centre with a committed Board of Directors, deep connections to community, and a waiting list of families seeking care for their children. Like many nonprofit centres, though, it was struggling with finding the right leader.

YWCA Halifax and DCDC then had their first conversation to explore options.

Traditional logic would have that the DCDC Board insist on maintaining independence and their identity as a standalone organization. They had connections in the community and a reputation to protect.

But the DCDC Board remembered what many of us forget: their mission was community, not organization. They knew what mattered was service, not ego.

A year later and still without an Executive Director, the DCDC Board asked: "What if we became a part of YWCA?"

So began a 13-month journey where DCDC dissolved as a legal entity and merged their operations with YWCA Halifax.



Members of the Dartmouth Child Development Centre team.



What were the benefits? Too many to count.

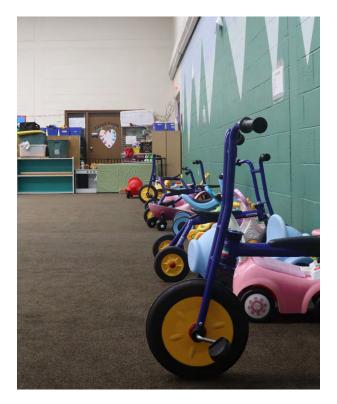
For DCDC staff, it meant some improvements to their total compensation. It also meant that the childcare team could focus on what they do best as the YWCA Halifax team brought along core operating and administrative staff. Staff gained access to more advancement opportunities internal to the organization, as well as becoming connected to a national and international network of childcare services.

The merger also meant that YWCA Halifax could repurpose underutilized parts of the building for a variety of programs to serve the Dartmouth North community. The new community programs space is now a hub for economic empowerment programs.

Most importantly, families in Dartmouth continued to have access to a core essential service as staff retained their jobs, and the number of childcare spaces for the location increased. The merger between DCDC and YWCA Halifax took time and resources. The two groups secured a small pot of transition funding from the Nova Scotia Government but, more than anything, the Board and staff worked diligently and consistently for over a year.

Today there are almost 300 children on the waiting list for DCDC's 80 licensed spots and YWCA Halifax knows that more is needed. The DCDC Board proactively and wisely thought of the centre's future in making a decision that is both difficult and obvious.

After all, the most important question was: "How do we make sure women and families have access to childcare?"



DCDC connects childcare and community programing. The availability of childcare enables women and parents to pursue employment, education, and other aspirations.

# /// Family Home Childcare: Thinking Outside the Centre

With the tremendous need for childcare, approved family home providers bring unique benefits in an intimate, family-like atmosphere.

The Family Home Child Care program allows childcare providers to offer service within their own homes under the guidance of a government licensed childcare agency. This alternative childcare option connects community childcare providers with local families who are seeking quality, home-like childcare for their children.

YWCA Halifax has filled the role of a licensed agency welcoming new family home childcares for over ten years, says Monique Walsh, Family Home Child Care Manager. From ensuring home spaces adhere to regulations, providing administration paperwork samples, and offering a library of equipment, staff support childcare providers from starting a home to offering service.

The FHCC program has seen immense growth from 2022 to 2023 with the YWCA team successfully supporting 35 childcare home providers in March 2023. YWCA Halifax has additionally been granted approval by the provincial government to support five more childcare homes starting April 2023.

# With each childcare provider able to welcome seven children, that opens 280 potential childcare spots!

"It's a total spectrum that really tailors to a family's unique needs," says Monique. "You might have a provider who has the full seven maximum of children, but we also have care providers where there's few children and it's like going to a grandparent's home or having a private nanny."

Families can also find a range of cultural experiences for their child as current providers represent over 13 countries. "If you have a care provider who speaks your language or can offer your child

familiar foods, maybe that's one way they can maintain and celebrate their culture," says Monique.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, family home childcares have opened in Beaverbank, Eastern Passage, Enfield, Dartmouth, Halifax, Sackville, and Timberlea. A full map picturing the Family Home Childcare Program's expansion across Nova Scotia can be found in the "Family Home Childcare Research Report."

Halifax Regional Municipality

Pairing the program's highquality, regulated childcare with affordable rates is an additional priority for staff. Fees are partially subsidized with additional funding options available for families in need.

YWCA Halifax not only connects families to childcare options but ensures the Family Home Child Care program is a positive opportunity for providers.

Motivations for joining the program include wanting to care for their own children at home, feeling compelled to support other families, and seeking a new employment opportunity.

"Lately the biggest trend is young mothers who don't have care options for their child," says Monique. "They're thinking 'if I'm in this situation, there are other parents facing the same thing." "I have the space and maybe I can do something."

Providers are afforded professional development training and education opportunities, as well as material resources and accessible support during operating hours. "We truly try to include learning and resources that they can take back with them to their programs," says Monique.

With the number of family home childcare providers increasing, the program continues to grow as a solution to meet the childcare needs of families. "We all have the goal of providing quality care for children," says Monique, "and it's an absolute viable quality option for childcare. Each one of our homes is completely unique, so we'll have 40 programs to offer families."

The inside of a family home childcare, Happy Hopee Early Learning & Childcare.





YWCA Halifax 2022/2023 Annual Report

#### /// Staff Highlight: Kerri, at the Heart of Childcare

The YWCA Halifax team is privileged to have leaders who are at the heart of advancing childcare, and Kerri Johnson is undoubtedly one of these leaders.

Kerri has been working in childcare for over 30 years. You only need a few minutes with Kerri to feel the determination, care, and sense of humour that make her an excellent Provincial Director of Early Learning & Childcare.

"The majority of my time, I like to spend supporting staff, because they are the key to any successful childcare program. You have to take the time for your people," says Kerri to describe a typical workday. "Staff appreciation days, or me riding a tricycle up and down the halls – anything to make them laugh."

Overseeing childcare is an expansive task. As of March 2023, Kerri directs two full-time centres and two before-andafter school programs with 40 staff.

But Kerri's impact on childcare goes beyond YWCA hours. As a member of the Early Learning Curriculum Framework committee, Kerri puts forward her experience as a Black woman and an Early Childhood Educator to help shape anti-racist practices in Early Childhood Education course material.

Kerri's contributions shape opportunities for students in Nova Scotia. In November 2022, 18 Nova Scotia Community College graduates received their diplomas from the new Africentric Early Childhood Education program developed by Kerri. The program offers students of African descent a learning environment where their families, cultures, and lived experiences are represented.

"To develop those 19 ECE courses from an Africentric perspective was amazing," says Kerri. "I'd write until five o'clock in the morning and still get up and go to work. I was just as chipper because I was doing something I loved."

Kerri receiving recognition for her ten years at YWCA Halifax.



Erica, Tishe, Donna, and Kerri (left to right) at the YWCA's 140th anniversary.

Creating initiatives from scratch is a challenge that Kerri's always enjoyed. When turning challenges into opportunities, she makes a point to encourage her colleagues.

"I try to motivate, guide, and direct the ECEs to ensure that they're able to blossom into their full potential," she says. Kerri welcomes staff to pursue additional courses and certifications, knowing that when you invest in your people, everyone is better for it. This principle extends to hiring by ensuring teams represent the communities they serve. "I will go the extra mile. I would rather do that and bring families together and have this diverse childcare centre."

Helping people grow is a leadership ethic that Kerri holds herself to. This quality is genuine to Kerri's personality, and comes from her experience at YWCA Halifax, she shares.

Kerri joined the team of Supportive Housing for Young Mothers in 2011, which became her first connection with YWCA Halifax. A director told Kerri that YWCA Halifax was looking for managers to open a Spryfield childcare centre and encouraged her to apply.

Kerri will tell you that her interview for the Spryfield Childcare Manager position is one of her favourite memories at YWCA Halifax. She may also tell you that she didn't want to apply for the job.

"I always had in the back of my mind that I would love to be a director, but just never had the confidence in myself to go for that. I hadn't seen many Black directors, so I was thinking 'what are the chances of me getting that position, especially outside of my community?"

The call inviting her to an interview was a surprise. "Long story short, my mother sent my resume without my consent," says Kerri. "But something in the back of my head said, 'Kerri just go.""

Kerri was greeted at the interview by then Director of Programs, Donna Snair and waited nervously in a room with other candidates.



Kerri enjoying a YWCA Halifax Early Learning & Childcare Fun Day.

But in the interview, Kerri let her passion for childcare guide her and answered questions naturally. Then she was asked to complete a Microsoft Excel test on the computer.

"I was waiting 'til Donna left. I picked up my purse and looked for the exits. I was leaving." What Kerri thought she already knew was now for certain.

At the time, Kerri didn't know Microsoft Excel and believed she wasn't going to get the job. Her escape was cut short when she turned the corner and was greeted again by Donna. Kerri admitted that she never planned to apply, didn't know Microsoft Excel, knew she wasn't going to get the job, and that she was leaving.

Kerri still remembers Donna's response: "You think I'd let you walk out that door just because you don't know Excel? Excel is a skill. Anyone can learn that. What you talked about and how you answered those questions, that is not a skill. That is within that person. You can't learn that." A few days later Kerri got the job offer.

"That just changed my whole outlook. I'm the same way with the staff because of this individual seeing something in me that I didn't see. She supported me, motivated me from day one."

Since accepting the Spryfield Childcare Manager position in 2012, Kerri has progressed to Director of Childcare in 2019 and more recently to the Provincial Director of Early Learning and Childcare.

She's put on a hardhat to measure construction dimensions in Spryfield, pranked the Executive Director with a fake broken leg, opened the Dartmouth Childhood Development Centre, and developed many provincewide Early Childhood Education programs.

Kerri is extremely proud to be an Early Childhood Educator and is ready to maintain quality childcare through all the sector's transformations and will do so with the best interest of children, families, and her team in mind.

"That's the one great thing about YWCA, is that it's a family. Within childcare, that's my family. And that's why I continue to stay. For the support I've received and for the love of what I do, I love it. I love it."

### /// Food Programs: Five-Year-Olds and Five Star Meals

Twyla Nichols has never met a recipe she couldn't change. Paired with her Bachelor of Science degree in Nutrition, Twyla's recipe revamping is an important talent as the Cook for the Spryfield Early Learning Centre.

"Children need healthy foods and specific nutrients to develop their brains and bodies, especially in their early years," says Twyla, explaining how each meal enjoyed at the centre meets the Government of Nova Scotia's nutritional standards. The wide variety of foods in Twyla's recipes have sparked curiosity and excitement.

A kitchen bulletin board featuring "Foods Around the World" is set up to further nourish this curiosity and teach about the meals served. Children can also help garden at the centre to grow a connection with food. "We grow food like beans, tomatoes, strawberries, stuff that they can wash and eat, and then they know where it comes from," says Twyla.

An addition to the success of the food program has been YWCA Halifax's participation in the 2022 Celebrate Feeding project.

The joint project between Mount Saint Vincent University and the University of Prince Edward Island works to build positive relationships between children, their caregivers, and food. Twyla says the project has introduced new ways to approach meals at the centre and is showing positive results.

"One of the ways is family-style dining. We put food in larger bowls and the children serve themselves into smaller bowls," says Twyla. "It helps their motor skills and it also encourages independence and selfregulation."

> Nurturing a child's ability to self-regulate and connect to their personal hunger cues helps to form a healthy relationship with food.

> > Twyla in the Spryfield Kitchen.



Twyla cooking Korean bulgogi for lunch.

Some outcomes that Twyla has happily seen are children feeling safe to try new foods at their own pace, not perceiving foods as a reward or punishment, and continuing to eat balanced portions as they age.

"Food neutrality is also common. If a child is eating something they've never had before we treat that like it's normal. There's no big fanfare or pressure."

Twyla hopes that children at the centre will fondly remember mealtimes with her nutritious recipes and carry them as comfort food into adulthood. The likelihood of Twyla's wish coming true looks promising with the number of recipe requests she receives from parents. "Parents give feedback saying that their kids are eating foods they would never try before or asking for them to 'make food like Twyla does'," she says. However, recipes aren't only shared one-way at the centre. In line with Celebrate Feeding and Twyla's own passion, meals become a cultural exchange between staff and parents.

"When a new family comes in, I find out from what country they originate and do some research on what foods are traditionally made there. I then find a recipe that I can alter to fit the nutrition guidelines," says Twyla.

Parents receive a sample of the meal and are encouraged to give feedback to improve its authenticity. Once perfected, children enjoy the meal together while learning about their playmate's culture. "They get to feel proud of their heritage and their parents, and it expands the other children's experiences." So far some favourites have been Nigerian jollof rice and Korean bulgogi.

The Celebrate Feeding project is set to finish in 2023 and Twyla is proud to share that YWCA Halifax has been called "the gold star standard for nutrition in Nova Scotia childcare." Although children will miss her cooking when they graduate from pre-school to elementary, they'll be full of recipes to carry in their memories and lunchboxes.



# /// Supportive Housing: Building Family Foundations

Supportive Housing for Young Mothers (SHYM) provides supportive housing, parenting support, and life skills development for single mothers ages 16 to 24. An endless thank you to Alexandra, a former SHYM participant who has offered to share her story and what this program has meant for her and her family.

My name is Alexandra, and I am a former youth in care who became a first-time mother while at SHYM. I was 21 when I found out I was three months pregnant, sleeping on a friend's couch. I had to find stable housing but didn't know how many times I would have to move to find a place to raise my unborn child.

I am a former youth in care, so I will forever have a broken relationship with my immediate family. I did not have anyone to help support me in becoming a new mother. I was surprised to find out what a healthy home looked like before SHYM. I learned to feel safe and create the stability needed to provide for my son and me.

I am now in my third year at Dalhousie University studying International Development Studies and currently preparing to apply to the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie through the IB&M initiative. I have come a long way while I spent my time in SHYM.

Stable, affordable, and safe housing means that I can complete my education to create a home.

I never had a place where I genuinely felt at home, as being shuffled through the foster care system makes it much harder to find housing stability. I received enough support through SHYM to induce a warm feeling of belonging and to create what is home to me now.



#### /// New to Canada: Planning the Unplanned

YWCA Halifax community programs offer tailored supports to help women, gender diverse people, and families who are new to Canada settle into their homes.

When war began displacing citizens of Ukraine in February 2022, the YWCA's New to Canada team set out to expand this programming and support those moving to Canada for safety.

Olena Lokutsovska, a licensed Ukrainian lawyer who fled to Canada, joined YWCA Halifax in November 2022 to start the Ukrainian Support Program. She was later joined by Olha Astashova who offers additional expertise as a financial consultant.

"Most Ukrainians come to Canada on a special program because of the war," says Olena. "Usually when you know you are going to move to another culture, you will learn a different language, or you will think about where you will work, where to live, and so on. But it was a surprise for Ukrainians."

Offering support in this unique circumstance includes meeting a range of participants' immediate needs.

Housing is one of the largest areas of support says Olena. At the program's launch, many Ukrainian families were living in hotels for several months, unable to find alternatives. "In Ukraine if you want to rent housing, you don't need to file so many applications and you don't have so much competition."

> Providing proof of income, credit score, and personal references is new for Ukrainian newcomers and something they're often unable to provide.

> > Program and Peer Leads, Olena (left) and Olha (right).

Olena and Olha assist in navigating this barrier by acting as a connection point between participants and landlords.

"I would say that many Canadians want to help Ukrainian newcomers here. Some landlords contact us and just our suggestion is enough without the bank statements and without references," says Olha.

Employment is another support that is showing positive results. Language barriers leave Ukrainians seeking any form of employment that they can access in Canada, however job applications are vastly different between the two countries. Olena and Olha host workshops and one-on-one sessions to help participants write cover letters and resumes for multiple job postings.

"When you are a director or high position in Ukraine, you're not able to find an entry level position with your typical resume," says Olena. "So we correct the resume and try to explain the differences of resumes between Canada and the Ukraine."

YWCA leaders met with politicians at Parliament Hill to discuss different barriers to housing that women and gender diverse people face. These workshops paired with job searching supports are proving successful with 80 per cent of program participants securing employment.

Alongside the program's practical guidance, its peer support connection also creates an impact.

"When we are going to our meetings, we always try to do it like they're our guests, our friends," says Olha.

"We share our experiences with them and we learn a lot of new information from them. We all share our experiences here and understand each other."

The program has served over 100 people in less than a year and is a sign that supports for newcomers are necessary.

The Ukrainian Support Program is beginning to collect feedback from participants to increase the availability and accessibility of supports as more Ukrainian families move to Canada. Doing so will help continue YWCA Halifax's vision of promoting safety and equity for all women, gender diverse people, and families.



# /// Community Support: Exceeding Expectations

YWCA Halifax's work could not be done without our friends, supporters, and partners. Carol Sinclair is a longstanding YWCA Halifax alum and continues to offer her support as a beloved monthly donor. We're happy to share Carol's words and highlight a significant thread that helps weave our beautiful community fabric.

"I joined a committee in 1973 at the encouragement of a good friend and because my mother had been involved at the local, national, and world YWCA. It was an organization I wanted to be involved with.

I continue to support YWCA Halifax because of the assistance you give to women and girls, especially those in need of support, and because I am impressed with the capable staff that I have met or corresponded with. I am also impressed with the Board Members in the past that I have met when I have attended an annual meeting. I feel it is in good hands.

I am impressed with the new ventures you have taken on and how you are reaching out in new ways to serve women, girls, and children. You have grown past what I might have expected. I have always been impressed with the help you give to women in the housing you support – a big step from the residence on Barrington Street but the same work. I enjoy reading your newsletters and finding out what new challenges you are tackling. I would encourage women to take the opportunity to learn about the work you do and the women who do it, and ask themselves if they would like to be part of it.

I continue to support YWCA Halifax because you need all the help you can get to keep doing what you do."

Sincerely, Carol Sinclair

> Carol enjoying a day with her companion



#### /// Thank You

To our donors and supporters who generously contributed and believe in our mission.

Aaron Bates Aaron Smith Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia Alan & Sheila Leard Alana Patterson Alexandra Yip Amanda Grant-Rutledge Amy Gordinier Andy Filmore Andrea Forbes-Hurley Andrew AuCoin Ann Divine Ann Smith Boswick Anne Sinclair Apple Self Storage Aritzia Ashley Harrison **Barrinique Griffin** Basia Dzierzanowska Bluedrop Training and Simulation Bridget Little **Brighid Langill Brendan Maguire Caitlin Roberts** Canadian Women's Foundation Candace Stevenson Carly LeCocq Carmen Boudreau Carol Sinclair Carrie Cussons Carrie Ricker **Catherine Bagnell Styles** Chantal Grandmaison Christ Church Dartmouth Christina and Hedley G. Ivany Charitable Foundation

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Thank you for making a difference through your compassion and generosity. We have done our best to include everyone who contributed between January 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023. We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please contact us at communications@vwcahalifax.com *if we have made an error in your* acknowledgement.

#### Wall of Honour

Every year, we recognize outstanding community members and organizations whose efforts align with our mission. Their efforts have made a lasting difference, and we are honoured to acknowledge and celebrate their contributions.

Our 2022 Wall of Honour recipients are

- United Way Halifax
- Dartmouth Child **Development Centre Board of Directors**
- Josie McKinney, Acting Executive Director, Nova Scotia Status of Women Office

### /// Financials

Financial Snapshot	Apr. 1, 2022 to Mar. 31, 2023	Jan. 1, 2022 to Mar. 31, 2022
Revenues	\$8,959,689	\$1,860,893
Expenditures	\$8,641,803	\$1,809,576
Excess of revenues over expenditures	\$317,886	\$51,317
Investments	\$35,037	\$862
Excess of revenues of expenditures	\$346,689	\$45,733

#### **Revenues Breakdown**

Government Funding and grants	\$5,815,757	\$1,144,781
Program fees and earned revenue	\$1,472,796	\$371,663
Foundations and charities	\$979,076	\$183,188
Donations and bequests	\$406,926	\$67,736
Miscellaneous	\$285,134	\$93,525

#### **Expenses Breakdown**

Salaries	\$4,902,046	\$1,044,872
Facilities	\$689,616	\$165,653
Program expenses	\$2,595,497	\$481,039
Operational	\$283,123	\$75,143
Amortization of Capital Assets	\$174,521	\$42,869

The financial time periods provided in the 2023 Annual Report reflect YWCA Halifax's shift from a January 1 - December 31 fiscal year to an April 1 - March 31 fiscal year.

### /// YWCA Halifax Staff

Together you make the world a safer and kinder place every day. Thank you for sharing your dedication, talents, and endless care.

Aarti Sharma Adebukola Shogbamu Aiswarya Jayapalan Amanda Marriott Ashley Tiller Aysha Anwar **Becky Nicholas** Belinda LeBlanc Blaine Johnston **Brighid Langill** Caitlyn Hiltz Chinwe Ngei Claire Seremba **Daljeet Bhullar** Dametre Samuels **Danielle Hodges** Danielle Walsh Danika Acton Debra Paris Pery **Dupinder Saini** Elida Dibra **Emily Bennett** Gurwinder Kaur Ha Anh Dinh Haley Saunders Hana Arada Hauwa Sanni-Kamar Hind Debbach Hyunju Kim lesha Harris Jahda Bottomley James Cooke Jan Murphy Jeanna Wagner Jennifer Ells Jenny MacNeil

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The 2022/2023 Annual Report staff list reflects the YWCA Halifax team at March 31, 2023. YWCA Halifax 358 Herring Cove Road Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3R 1V8

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