

Head for business, heart for people

Successful business exec takes lead role at Yonge Street Mission

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Special to ChristianWeek

TORONTO, ON—Angie Draskovic is excited about her new role as president and CEO of Yonge Street Mission (YSM) in Toronto. With the organization's rich, 117-year history of providing "Hope in the City" in a place as complex and diverse as Toronto, she knows she's facing a challenge. However, YSM is poised to move forward as she settles into the new role.

As the government continues to cut back on programs that provide support for alleviating poverty, there is more pressure on charities like YSM to step in, despite the challenge of maintaining donations.

One of the goals for YSM as it moves forward is to provide what Draskovic calls "wrap around" services, including transitional housing, counselling, employment assistance, and practical skills training.

Draskovic brings to YSM experience in both the non-profit and for-profit sectors. Her career began 26 years ago in telecommunications where she helped establish start-up business in competitive markets. Draskovic enjoyed the challenge and the people in the industry, but when she went back to work after her youngest child was born, she found herself evaluating her life's purpose. She decided, 16 years ago, that her work should align more with her Christian values.

"It was all part of a prayer process," she says. Draskovic found she needed more clarity to find her real calling.



Angie at the YSM seniors' barbecue.

Photo courtesy of Yonge Street Mission

She devoted herself to work that would address the needs of the poor, children and minorities, eventually joining the YSM board. While serving as a board member she noticed the "great strength, breadth of programs, and the incredible heart for and insight into the journeys of the people that the staff has."

When YSM began a search for a new president and CEO, Draskovic stepped down from the board to apply for the job that was previously held by Rick Tobias. Tobias, who led the ministry for 23 years, helped YSM grow to a multi-dimensional mission with a budget of more than \$11 million annually. He currently serves as a community advocate.

Draskovic says YSM is continually adapting and advancing, moving to a more integrated community development model, where it teaches members of the community how to develop programs and services for their community while still maintaining its well-known

relief and support programs.

YSM serves the community with its broad range of programs, including one of its most successful, computer training. In 2002, a teenage girl in Grade 7 from Bangladesh entered the course. While attending high school later, she volunteered to help other students. A scholarship from YSM provided her with assistance for four years at the University of Toronto, where she graduated in 2012. She now calls YSM her second home.

Stories like this illustrate YSM's strong reputation for putting faith into action.

As it develops its programs and works with the community, Draskovic says the ministry remains clearly Christian in its approach. "We are demonstrating God's love. And where there is a chance to start a conversation, we do."

For more information about Yonge Street Mission visit www.ysm.ca

Spots

- The Yonge Street Mission (YSM) now hosts more than 180,000 visits each year from men, women, street-involved youth, families and children looking for help with food security, housing and employment.
- More than 3,400 volunteers assist YSM's staff of 100 employees.
- The Evergreen Health Centre provides \$2.5 million annually in free health services to street-involved youth, and their children.
- YSM serves 140,000 meals annually through lunch and dinner programs.
- More than 3,800 students have graduated from the TD Securities Computer Literacy Centre, which enrolls 600 children in classes each year.
- More than 500 children, youth, adults and seniors go camping each summer as part of YSM programs.
- The Evergreen Drop-in Centre is a place where youth can go for meals and counselling, in addition to employment services and the health centre.
- Church at the Mission offers spiritual care, addiction recovery support and prison visitation.



YONGE
STREET
MISSION

Yonge Street Mission is called to demonstrate God's love, peace and justice to people living with economic, social and spiritual poverty in Toronto.

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