

**“BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL,  
FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY.”**

(MATTHEW 5:7)



## **OUR FAITH IN ACTION**

A Project Funded by TIA in 2016

### *Youth Central*

### *Discovering Choices Youth Council*

Our outreach program started with the Discovering Choices High Schools in 2009 to create a Youth Council at all four sites where youth are given a voice to make change. The youth that attend come from all walks of life and strive to complete their high school diploma. Youth Council can help them achieve credits and leadership skills and increase knowledge of their school and community needs. Not only do youth that participate in Youth Council have tremendous ability to help others but they quickly prove that they are more than “just outreach youth”. Giving them an opportunity to make their school and community a better place has had amazing results.

Youth Council members spend time volunteering, fundraising or helping plan school events. Youth are approached each year to join by teachers and staff and sometimes they are either hesitant or eager. The fear of being a “leader” can be daunting with anxiety or a youth that is deemed withdrawn but Youth Council tries to help work on their confidence and get them passionate about helping out.

Each year, so many youth contribute their time and energy into Youth Council but one particular youth that joined our Bowness Youth Council last year really stands out. Bridget has become a great leader and her desire to help others shines through in anything she puts her heart into. She has been involved in many volunteer events, such as Brown Bagging for Calgary’s Kids, Rainbow Society of Alberta, Calgary Food Bank, and Inn from The Cold. She has nearly perfect attendance and is a huge advocate in her school. “I’m proud of every project I’ve participated in, throughout my school and community,” Bridget writes. “Every event I contribute towards pushes me out of my comfort zone while being able to help and support others.” “It was a new school and I told myself I would only go in to do school and get home as fast as I could. My teacher at Discovering Choices signed me up for Youth Council and now after a year of being a part of it, I am so thankful she pushed me out of my comfort zone, otherwise I may not have had the great year I did.”

From her experience this past year, Bridget met new people, supportive teachers, and students from other Discovering Choices Youth Councils. She has been able to understand that her contribution to organizations and her school can come from time and support. “All you have to do is ask, ‘how can I help? If you are unsure about whether or not an organization will need your help just contact them. Even if you feel as though your participation is not needed or too small to make an impact — it isn’t. Every bit of action adds up to making a difference in our community or someone else’s life.”

Bridget continues to attend regular meetings and engages in school and community events and fundraisers. She plans on graduating this year and is still unsure on what her future will look like but she does know that “Youth Council has shown just how important your friendships and relationships with the people in your life are — it’s what makes life enjoyable. I believe no matter where I go in life I will always give a helping hand to someone who may need it; hopefully one day they may be able to do the same.”

The four Youth Councils complete over 1000 volunteer hours each year.

Submitted by Lisa Kindree, Co-Executive Director, Youth Central

