

Up Your Life guide re-published following pandemic pause

In the midst of an affordability crisis, a popular guide on how to navigate the local community on a budget has been revised and re-issued for a very different world.

The Up Your Life Guide, an initiative of the Aurora-based Your Support Services Network (YSSN), a publication formally known as York Region on a Limited Budget, was updated and re-issued last week, providing a roadmap for local residents in need.

First published under its previous name in 1997, it was originally conceived by volunteers concerned about residents facing challenges putting food on their table and accessing necessities of life.

"They came together, they pooled their collective experience living on limited incomes and navigating community services, with the goal of sharing that knowledge with others," says Kim Thorn, Executive Director of YSSN. "The results of their efforts close to 30 years later remains one of the most requested resources we have as an organization.

"Since the initial production, YSSN has facilitated ongoing efforts to update and reproduce revised editions of the guide, often with the help and input of many of its users. Growing steadily in popularity over the years, this booklet has, at times, attracted the interest and general support of community partners and founders.

"Following a pause as we navigated the pandemic years, we are pleased to now share with the community the newest edition of this resource."

Leading up to this 2024 update, Thorn thanked members of YSSN's Peer & Family Advisory Committee, for keeping their fingers on the pulse of the communities they serve and its needs.

YSSN's Gary Whetung said he joined the organization during the pandemic and, as soon as he walked through the door, he was immediately struck by the dedication of the committee.

"Some of the very first people that I met were the peers who were part of the advisory team that were revising the booklet and creating the Up Hub website that would feature all the great resources. Today, those resources are still available online and in booklet form. Many of those same peers are part of YSSN's Peer and Family Advisory Committee. This Committee, now in its third year, has been a valuable source of input and feedback on our agency's many initiatives and programs including our Strategic Plan, our Accessibility Plan and Goals, our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategies, and our Communications Efforts as an organization.

"What I really love about our Peer and Family Advisory Committee, apart from the people who have dedicated their time to it, is its very existence reinforces something fundamental about our agency. We are a team of people who see ourselves as companions walking alongside people who support their life journeys through good times, tough times, taking their lead in how we can support them and work towards the goals that they have set. Our sincere thanks to our peer and family advisory committee and more importantly for all the feedback and the ability to continually improve upon our service to the community. We couldn't do that without their support and efforts."

For more information about UpHub and Up Your Life, visit ydsn.ca/uphub.

By Brock Weir