

SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS?

CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS?

EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS?

RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS?



LESSONS LEARNED



YMCA Aberdeen
2007 ANNUAL REPORT

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

All too often, in recent times, Christian organisations have appealed to not be marginalised by government policy. It was therefore pleasing that 2007 witnessed the launching of the Scottish Government's national youth work strategy document, '*Moving Forward: a strategy for improving young people's chances through youth work.*' The challenge, it stated in its introduction, was to 'create a youth work strategy fit for the 21st century which gives youth work the recognition and value it deserves'. Implicit within this strategy for the holistic development of young people was an acknowledgement that young people need to develop in body, mind and spirit: the founding principle of YMCA youth work. YMCA Aberdeen benefited as a consequence of this desire to enhance the recognition of youth work in Scotland with funding of £25,000 to improve services, improve facilities and have more of a say on local issues affecting young people.

The first tranche of that money, awarded via YouthLink Scotland, enabled the association to renovate its existing table-tennis area into a revitalised drop-in youth cafe designed by youth members with multi-media and satellite television facilities. This was a particularly satisfying start to 2007, providing youth members with access to first rate youth work facilities. The second tranche of funding facilitated the YMCA engaging in partnership with other organisations in the north area of Aberdeen to deliver a 'Street Football Project' to provide young people with access to first rate youth work opportunities. *Moving Forward* recognises the value of such YMCA detached youth work as contributing to young people's personal growth and to the growth of the communities they live in.

This 149th Annual Report of YMCA Aberdeen illustrates much of the quality youth work which is delivered by the association consistent with *Moving Forward*. As a voluntary organisation, our drop-in and detached youth work projects, developed by our Youth & Community Worker, provide open access youth work activities for young people, open to any young person who wishes to attend. Reference is also made to our piloted programme in a secondary school in Aberdeen where specialised targeted provision is being designed to meet the needs of young people who are particularly vulnerable. This evidence of our youth workers demonstrating increased flexibility and willingness to work across professional barriers to deliver the best outcomes for the young people they work with, fulfilling the 'Getting It Right For Every Child' agenda, articulates well with the local authority's desire to have a multi-agency approach to changing children's services. You will also read about other aspects of our informal educational provision relative to children, outdoor and international which all add up to YMCA Aberdeen delivering a 'Curriculum for Excellence' in youth work provision.

It is my privilege to thank the directors, staff and volunteers of YMCA Aberdeen who have had a significant role to play in ensuring that YMCA youth work has delivered on *Moving Forward's* broad vision for young people to be nurtured, safe, active, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible. As such they have ensured that YMCA youth work is providing young people with the opportunities to be supported and live their lives as confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens. Our aim to develop young people in body, mind and spirit, whereby we see the potential and not the problems, has now been asserted by national and local government policy and we must applaud this and give thanks to our Heavenly Father for the opportunities that this will provide for the membership of YMCA Aberdeen.

Michael G A Will MBE

Executive Chairman

CHILDRENS' WORK: P4 – P7

Our programme activities with children in the primary 4 – primary 7 age group this year has witnessed YMCA personnel developing great relationships with the young people who attend. Virtue of their younger age, peer pressure is not a factor that they have yet to contend with and therefore the tendency has been for them to be fully engaged with programme activities of sport, cooking, music, art and games. That said, children offer their own share of challenges, not least the need to be entertained with a variety of different activities regularly!

Educational related activities have included continued environmental work in 'waste aware', as a consequence of the keen interest that was shown by children in relation to this. Practical action by children included both drink can and paper collection which involved them recycling these products and taking the waste to the relevant recycling bins in the community. The female members were more adept at getting their hands dirty and undertaking the dirty work of going through the bins in the building and emptying out the drinks from the cans!

Our male members, however, were more content at demonstrating their competitive nature by participating enthusiastically in football competitions and, for that matter, any other competition. Each week they would organise a 'one-touch' football competition with points won being added to a league which ran throughout the year. This often led to disputed goals and 'arguments' which engaged YMCA staff in having to 'referee' and restore the status-quo! However, there was no doubt that this type of easy to organise and supervise activity was well appreciated by members and was great fun. As such the children have been able to develop self confidence by helping to organise it and to calculate the scores after each event.

Opportunities to share our Christian faith with young people were facilitated during discussion times when a Christian perspective would be added into discussions exploring bullying, relationships with peers and family and waste reduction activities. An inter-active series exploring the Bible from its beginning to conclusion was another topic that we explored during the session and something that the young people enjoyed as it allowed them to understand more of what they were being taught at school.

At time of going to print our Children's Workers post is vacant following the resignation of Emma earlier in the year. Currently we are relying on volunteers to support our Children's programme and they are engaged in planning to pilot a new Children's Club on a Monday evening, It has been pleasing to observe many of our children's club members attending the Junior Club after entering secondary year one in school and this can only be a positive as we witness these children growing in body, mind and spirit.

LESSON LEARNED

For youth work programmes to contribute effectively to a curriculum for excellence, the nature and purpose of youth work acknowledges the need to connect effectively with early intervention programmes and provision which focuses on children under 11 years.

(Statement of the nature and purpose of Youth Work, YouthLink Scotland, 2007.)



YOUTH WORK DROP IN FOR S1-S4 YOUTHS

Aberdeen YMCA's Christian youth work continues to be challenging to share our Christian faith through practical action and deliver a productive learning development programme that recognises that young people are individuals with different needs, abilities and learning preferences. Our drop-in youth work programme, which operates at lunch times and on two evenings a week, uses many different mediums to engage with young people to help build self-esteem and self-confidence, develop the ability to manage personal and social relationships and build the capacity of young people to make reasoned decisions and take control. These have included archery lessons, music classes, art projects, team sport, outdoor education, internet access and socialisation in our youth cafe.

Through all these activities we seek to pursue the aims of community learning and development and operate a person-centred approach to our work with young people. The relatively simple task for a youth worker, to ask a young person to organise a football competition during a youth club session, evidences the young person growing immediately in self-esteem. Many of our young people come from backgrounds whereby they are seen as being disengaged from the mainstream education process and excluded from taking part in established social activities. This means we have a responsibility to be give them the opportunity to grow in self esteem and gain new skills, which they otherwise wouldn't be able to do!

Through our group discussion times we have tackled a number of youth issues that develop a 'world view' which widens horizons and invites social commitment, for example: healthy eating, substance misuse, crime, education, and anti-social behaviour. These are issues that young people expressed a need to explore and we have witnessed changes in their behaviour patterns because of it. Some of our young people are in real need of being empowered with knowledge of what options are available to them as regards their futures or situations they have found themselves in. Using the new multi-media facilities in the youth cafe with unchurched young people has witnessed an increase in the number of young people who have asked genuine questions about exploring Christianity.

Whilst youth work opportunities can enhance the life of any young person, for some, YMCA youth work will have a more important or even critical role in enabling them to see and fulfil their true potential. That is why, for the year ahead, we are excited about offering young people the opportunity to take part in the Youth Achievement Awards, giving them a recognised certificate of achievement, which, for some, may be something that they otherwise wouldn't have.

LESSON LEARNED

That the four elements of the Curriculum for Excellence cannot progress in tandem unless the foundation of the confident individual has first been laid.

(YMCA Scotland Annual Report, 2007.)

YOUTH WORK WITH SCHOOLS

In 2007 we piloted a successful early intervention youth work project in a secondary school which was aimed at challenging and supporting young people at risk of becoming disengaged from mainstream schooling. In partnership with the Principal Teacher of Acute Support in the secondary school, groups of 8-10 young people were provided with more choices to participate in diversionary activities at the YMCA which enabled them to have more chances for developing as successful learners and confident individuals. The pilot project engaged with young people who are pre-16 and at risk of leaving school without continuing their education, entering employment or accessing training opportunities. Activities included team building activities, archery, team sports and working with others. The fact that the project took place in the YMCA building was significant because it offered an informal atmosphere whereby relationships were more easily formed. This allowed professional workers from YMCA and school to create a positive atmosphere where issues regarding self esteem and behaviour, which are major barriers in the young person's development, could be explored. A positive spin-off from this qualitative piece of youth work has been the engagement of young people in the drop-in youth clubs at the YMCA.

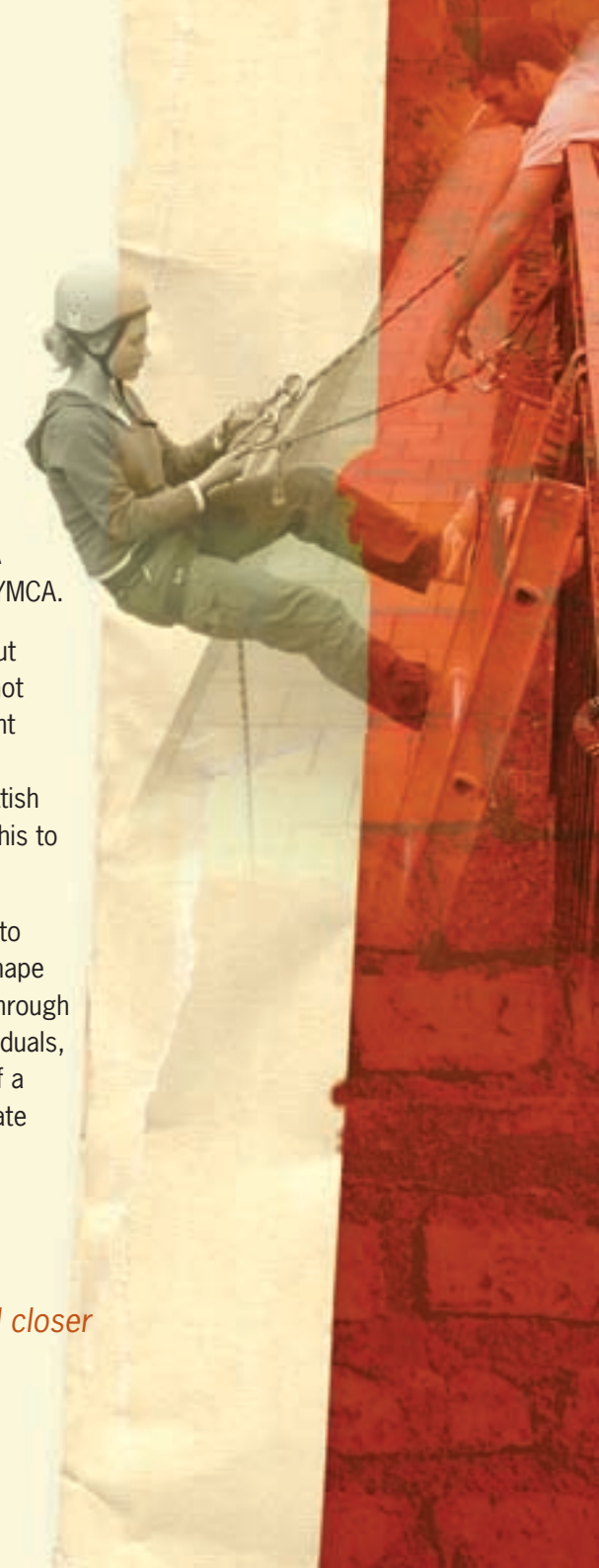
Extensive planning has also taken place in 2007 to develop a 10 week early intervention programme which, hopefully, will be rolled out in early 2008. This programme is consistent with the 'More Choices, More Chances Strategy' and will target young people at risk of not progressing to a positive destination on leaving school. The collaborative project programme will provide participants with employment training, careers talk, residential experience, college visitation, opportunity to organise a community event and outdoor education experience. In doing so, the programme will enable young people to gain the John Muir Award, Youth Achievement Award and a Scottish Qualifications Authority Group Award certificate. Our intention is for these to be presented at a parents' evening in the YMCA and for this to provide young people with a positive experience and more chances for when they leave school.

We see that there are critical lessons to be learned from our work that may help to shape pathways to success which can contribute to achievement of a Smarter Aberdeen. We have sought to provide the young people we have engaged with, with the opportunities to shape their lives. Developing such relationships and dialogue between young people and youth workers is central to the learning process. Through the Curriculum for Excellence we have progressed towards the goal that, "young people become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens." We look forward to, in 2008, the appointment, by Learning and Teaching Scotland, of a coordinator post to work with schools and the youth work sector to improve and increase links across the sectors and improve ultimate benefits for young people.

LESSON LEARNED

Young people expect to be able to find out about youth work and informal learning opportunities at schools and closer liaison between youth workers and teachers could benefit young people and ensure their needs are met better.

(Moving Forward: A Strategy For Improving Young People's Chances Through Youth Work, Scottish Executive, 2007.)





OUTDOOR EDUCATION

A key aspect of YMCA work with young people is to provide young people with opportunities to access the environment and demonstrate responsible citizenship towards it. Our outdoor programmes have impacted positively on young people's attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions and helped foster stronger relationships between members and YMCA personnel in addition to helping young people develop their interpersonal and social skills such as social effectiveness, communication skills, group cohesion and teamwork. In addition to mountain biking trips, abseiling and facilitating young people to gain a John Muir Award through environmental work, two aspects of our outdoor education programme have proven successful this year:

Hillwalking

The core outcome of our hillwalking club provide people with the opportunity to fellowship with one another in the Scottish mountains on a monthly basis. The programme provided participants with fun, adventure, the need to work as part of a team, skills in problem solving, skills in mountain craft and much rain, mist and early mornings! The programme has now facilitated participants in bagging in excess of 110 Munros (hills over 3000 ft) at time of writing. Highlights of this year included the summits of Ben Lomond, The Cobbler (which is not a Munro) and travelling north to Ben Hope, Scotland's most northerly Munro, earlier this year. Led by qualified mountain leaders, a number of new people have been drawn to participate in hill walking this year and this has been a positive development. In addition to witnessing creation and its stunning scenery, the programme facilitates participants in keeping fit and achieving personal goals.

Archery

Our indoor archery activities, delivered by YMCA personnel who are accredited archery leaders with the GNAS, are open to all. We have used our archery facilities to support, children, youth, scouts, school pupils, students and adults throughout the year. It has proven to be very popular with school pupils who benefit from the fact that archery teaches patience, which is something that is very hard for a lot of children and youth to learn! The key principles of archery are applied to life in general where we have discussed the need with participants to develop their focus, attention skills and self-confidence. Whilst there is a dangerous side to archery, which keeps leaders on their guard, the sport is useful for team building as it teaches everyone to be responsible for one another and also for the equipment they are using. We 'aim' to continue using archery in 2008 to enable those young people we come into contact with to find a sense of accomplishment and become more confident as individuals.

LESSON LEARNED

Building self-confidence and self-esteem is fundamental to any young person's development and outdoor activities provide valuable alternative avenues for achievement, often non-competitive, that encourages young people to take greater responsibility for their own learning as successful learners.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

YMCA Aberdeen operates a very active international education programme in partnership with our partner YMCAs in Germany, Romania, Belarus and Bulgaria. As part of the largest youth organisation in the world it is important that we encourage YMCA members to actively participate in international activities and develop their concept of citizenship. There is no doubt that international education plays a meaningful role in achieving all four of the Curriculum for Excellence capacities.

Our international youth exchange programme with CVJM Berlin enabled YMCA members with less opportunities to travel to Germany and spend two weeks experiencing a culture other than their own. The partnership with CVJM Berlin has existed for almost 15 years and is vital in helping young people develop a broader view of the world and a deeper understanding of themselves. In addition to bringing the concept of "Europe" to the local community, participants were able to develop leadership and communication skills, and advance international understanding. We continue to place a great deal of significance in our international education programme because of its ability to enable young people to gain independence, gaining a sense of responsibility and purpose, first hand knowledge of another culture, exploring differences between countries, understanding traditions and taboos, learning more about one's self, friends and family, a better understanding of homeland, building connections between countries, learning a foreign language and discovering abilities and limitations.

In addition to our exchange programme with the YMCA in Berlin, we have continued to develop our links, established in 1994, with CVJM Regensburg following a very busy year of activity last year. The financial support given by YMCA Aberdeen to our partner YMCAs in Cluj-Napoca (Romania) and Sofia (Bulgaria), following fundraising by youth members was a useful exercise in supporting young people to realise their potential in such a multicultural and global society. It has also been pleasing to see our international students programme, delivered in partnership with Friends International, being reestablished after it was suspended in 2006. A new cohort of students are now attending the YMCA every Thursday evening to engage with our international activities.

YMCA Aberdeen is also pleased to promote and support the work of Y-Care International (YCI), the international development agency of YMCAs across the UK, and an orphanage programme in Sierra Leone which is promoted by Aberdeen's Mission Action Church.

In 2008 we look forward to celebrating together the 125th anniversary of CVJM Berlin and the 150th anniversary of YMCA Aberdeen. We also look forward to participating in the European Alliance of YMCA's 2008 Prague Festival and visiting our partners in Romania to support their work.

The YMCA International programmes are grateful for the support they receive from the British Council.

LESSON LEARNED

The experience gained through such international education opportunities helps young people acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes and skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly interdependent world.

(Scottish Government Website, 2007)



STREET FOOTBALL PROJECT: DETACHED YOUTH WORK

In recognising that youth work must continue to evolve to reflect the lives and needs of young people, much of the latter part of 2007 has involved YMCA Leadership Team in planning to launch a 'Street Football Project' in the north of Aberdeen as a significant step forward in to the field of detached youth work. Building relationships with young people on their own personal and recreational territory, within both their geographic and interest communities, reflects the changing needs and preferences of young people as well as current trends.

The 'Street Football Project' will make available a portable sports arena, which can be set up in around 30 minutes in any open space including car parks and grassy areas, to take sport to young people in the heart of local communities with multiple deprivation in Aberdeen. Aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour and diverting young people from alcohol, drug and substance misuse, the innovative youth work project will enhance the health and fitness of the city's young people by engaging them with a quality street resource that focuses their attention and empowers them to take a positive role in their own future as responsible citizens. By ensuring significant levels of participation by individuals and communities through sport, the project will incorporate other development initiatives in areas of education and health to ensure a holistic approach to the development of young people as confident individuals. Planning is also focusing on developing holiday football programmes, after-school football programmes for primary aged young people and community events for parents and children.

The YMCA's Street Football project will cost approximately £50,000, for two years, to deliver in partnership with voluntary groups, youth groups, churches, schools, statutory agencies and local government in strategic locations around Aberdeen. At present, we have secured £25,000 from partners to provide a partnership approach which will sustain a programme of youth work activities on a weekly basis to break down barriers impacting on young people.

The YMCA Street Football Project is grateful for the support it has received from:

YouthLink
Scotland
the national youth work agency for Scotland

and



LESSON LEARNED

YMCA youth work will continue to look forward with focus and with ambition for its role. Modernising and changing, it will be right at the forefront of delivering the best possible outcomes for young people in Aberdeen.

OTHER EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

PEEP

Parents as early education partners

Making the most of children's development and learning is an important aspect of YMCA work. Being a parent is one of the most vital, and sometimes one of the most undervalued jobs in the world. YMCA Aberdeen supports the delivery of a PEEP project in our Skene Terrace centre. PEEP and YMCA believe that parents are the child's first and most important educators. Through participation in PEEP sessions at the YMCA, parents have the opportunity to have their role recognised formally through SQA accredited units. 'Making the Most of Children's Development and Learning' is a half credit Intermediate 1 course that has been developed for PEEP by the Worker's Educational Association (WEA) in Aberdeen to give parents and carers who participate in PEEP the opportunity to gain recognition for their role in their children's development and learning. This involves making a portfolio which shows that parents have understood the links between what they do with the child in their care in everyday life, and how this helps with their learning. Assessments take place outside the group and support with literacy can also be arranged. Each unit takes approximately 10 weeks and there are 4 units: introduction, babies, toddlers and `pre-school.

Scripture Union Club

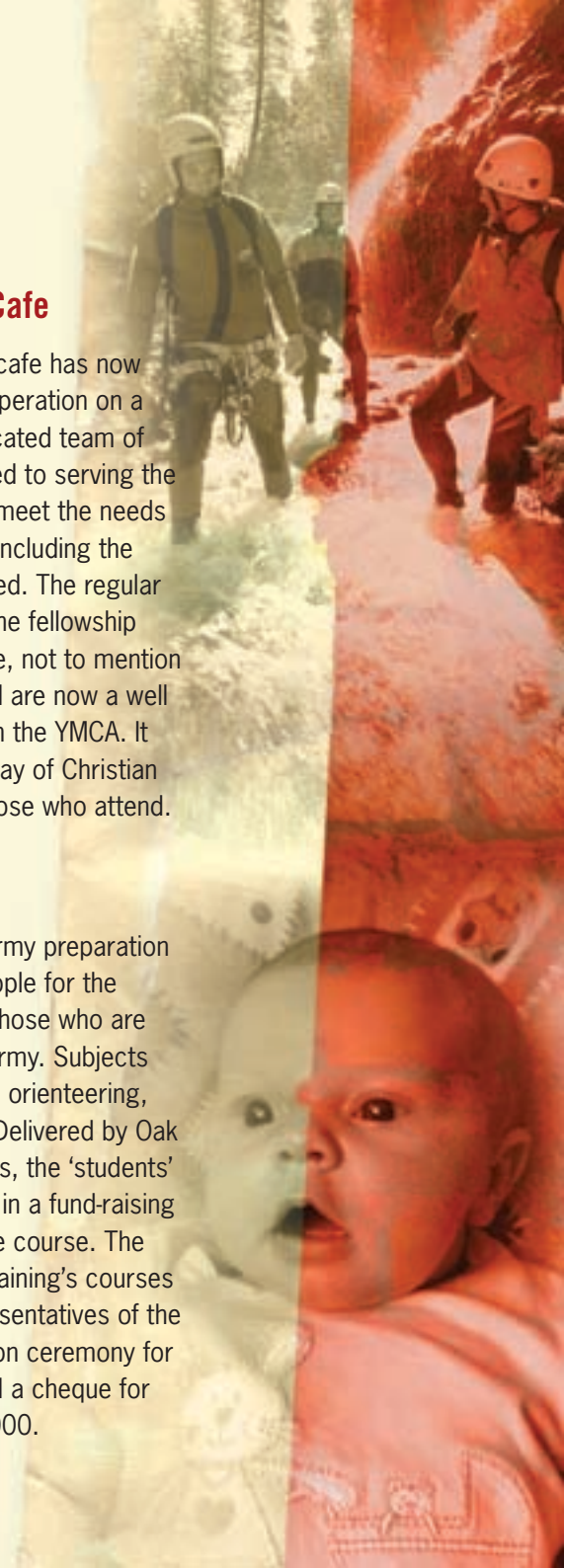
YMCA Aberdeen continues to support the Scripture Union school work at Aberdeen Grammar School. The group is well attended by secondary school teenagers who meet with school staff and YMCA personnel on a weekly basis. Sessions include lively events for young people in school or at the YMCA and explore topics or events which affect young people and apply a Christian perspective to these. For example the whole issue of relationships can be confusing for teenagers and seeing things from a Christian perspective can help teenagers to have a moral stance for living their lives, whether or not they accept Christianity for themselves. Planning meetings between YMCA and school staff ensures that young people are meeting in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, with their lunch, building good relationships and sharing a biblical thought. A highlight of the session was when Scripture Union groups from various secondary schools in the city converged upon the YMCA for an evening of recreation and fun together. It was pleasing that the YMCA could facilitate the meeting of young people from other schools together in a Christian environment and support extra-curricular programmes of other schools.

Open Door Community Cafe

Our 'Open Door' community cafe has now celebrated over 5 years of operation on a Thursday morning. Our dedicated team of volunteers who are committed to serving the needs of others continue to meet the needs of a diverse group of adults including the elderly, lonely and unemployed. The regular attenders at the cafe enjoy the fellowship and support that they receive, not to mention the free coffee and chat, and are now a well established community within the YMCA. It is encouraging that this display of Christian charity is well received by those who attend.

OAK Training

Deliver a 13 week full-time army preparation course to prepare young people for the work environment including those who are considering enlisting in the army. Subjects include exercise, hill walking, orienteering, map reading, climbing, etc. Delivered by Oak Training, using YMCA facilities, the 'students' on the course also take part in a fund-raising event as part of their full-time course. The nominated charity for Oak Training's courses is YMCA Aberdeen and representatives of the YMCA attended the graduation ceremony for recent students and received a cheque for YMCA work in excess of £1000.



ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The year to 31 May 2007 was a significant year in that grants received totalling £33,695 brought in more income to the association than investment income, totalling £27,801. This can partly be attributed to the grant of £10,000 that the association received from YouthLink Scotland towards the costs of creating a youth cafe. However the significant amount of voluntary time and effort which was invested in obtaining such grants cannot be overlooked and we are grateful for this and the support we have received from funders in recognition of the value of our work with young people. Our total incoming resources for the year totalled £83,515 which is a peak for operational income in recent history and an increase of £7,482 on the previous year.

Our resources expended totalled £89,754 which was an increase of £12,000 on operational resources expended the previous year. However our pension deficit charges of £49,650 were classed as charitable activities last year and, therefore, it appears that we have expended significantly less than is the operational case. To put things in a context, the Association operated on an operational deficit of £6,239 to year ended 31 May 2007.

Unrealised gains on our investment assets amounted to £135,423 which has contributed significantly to the total funds being carried forward of £853,345.

Michael Will, CHAIRMAN

Des Byrne, HONORARY TREASURER

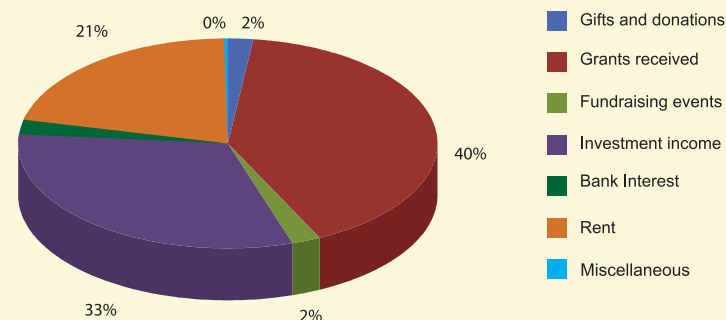
Copies of full audited accounts can be obtained by contacting the administrator at YMCA Aberdeen.

YMCA Aberdeen acknowledges the support given over the past year by the following:

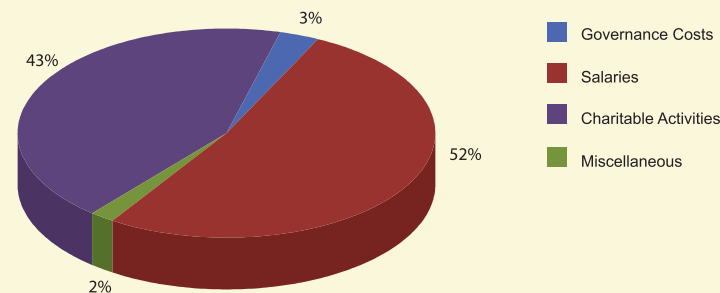
British Council, Church Guest Houses Association, John Gordon Charitable Fund, Sport Relief and YouthLink Scotland.

YMCA Aberdeen further recognises the donations and time given to the movement by churches, individuals and other bodies. Without such support YMCA Aberdeen could not maintain the range of work undertaken.....THANK YOU!

Incoming Resources to 31 May 2007



Resources Expended to 31 May 2007



YMCA ABERDEEN

Honorary President

John H Fraser

Chairman

Michael G A Will MBE

Vice Chairperson

Jacqui Mackintosh

Honorary Treasurer

Des Byrne

Directors

Jack Fraser

Alistair Michie

John Reynolds OSTJ

Major Paul Rorie TD

Isobel Walker

Rev John Watson

Sarah-Elaine Will

Youth & Community Worker

Gavin Begg

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West-End Branch

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Aberdeen

AB10 1TN

Auditors

Andrew A B Philip

Chartered Accountants

49 Carden Place

Aberdeen

AB10 1UN

Investment Advisers

Brewin Dolphin Securities Ltd

The affairs of the Association shall be managed by a Board of Directors of up to fifteen full members elected by full members at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Five Board Members shall retire annually in rotation and will be eligible for re-election. Five Board Members will form a quorum. Office-bearers with the exception of the Honorary President and Secretary shall be appointed at the first meeting of the Board of Directors following the AGM.

WHAT'S BEING SAID...

"In getting it right for every child, YMCA work with children aims to develop lasting relationships with children which can develop into adolescence and make a demonstrable difference in the lives of young people as responsible citizens."

JACQUI MACKINTOSH
VICE-CHAIRPERSON, ABERDEEN YMCA

"Through street work projects and open-access provision young people are given opportunities to divert themselves from risky behaviours, express themselves, make decisions and explore the consequences of their actions."

STEPHEN HIBBARD
PASTOR, SHEDDOCKSLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

"For those on the margins of provision, YMCA youth work is a Christian response to providing a lifeline for engaging with marginalised young people and supporting them to become confident individuals."

GAVIN BEGG
YOUTH WORKER, ABERDEEN YMCA

"Through the key skills of teamwork, decision-making, programme planning and project management, school pupils, working alongside youth workers, acquire and develop many of the skills required for working and community life."

DANNY LOBO
PRINCIPAL TEACHER OF ACUTE SUPPORT, ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

LESSONS LEARNED



YMCA Aberdeen
www.aberdeenyumca.co.uk

Registered Charity Number SC013487