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# SYNERGY

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Youth and Community Development Society



# The seeds of a vision

Imagine a world where every single youth, adult, and senior feels welcome, supported, and connected to their community.

Youth are our future. Teens are the up-and-coming changemakers. Adults are the role models and the leaders of today. Seniors provide guidance and share experiences. These puzzle pieces need to fit together for our communities to function at their highest potential for self-sufficiency, compassion, and growth.

However, it is clear that these pieces don't just come together on their own. There is a lot of work that needs to be done to meet this vision.

Communities need the care and attention of those with their best interests top of mind to create a healthy environment that empowers individuals from all walks of life.

Fostering this broad, fundamental, and important change is our goal. But we can't do it alone.

We need your help to make these ideas a reality. Join us on our mission to **empower youth and community groups to build strong connections** through relationships, education, leadership, and programming.



At Synergy, we  
cultivate community  
potential

# Steps to growth

Synergy was created to meet the diverse and unique needs of the communities of Chestermere, Langdon, and SE Rocky View. Community Needs Assessments cited a lack of community support for the continuously growing population of youth and young families. Synergy exists to provide support, opportunities, and learning experiences targeted specifically for youth and families.

Since Synergy's establishment in 2013, we have worked to meet our objectives of providing youth and community members with meaningful volunteer opportunities, workshops, offering a safe and functional space open to anyone, and delivering structured youth programs.

We focus our actions on building relationships, fostering wellness in individuals and groups, and enriching leadership.



Connected, engaged, and  
healthy communities

In practice, this looks like providing multiple diverse programs to different age groups focusing on leadership development and wellness education. Synergy also provides consultation for community agencies and organizations along with opportunities to collaborate and communicate. This two-pronged approach allows us to implement preventative and resilience-building initiatives with both our programs and our community partners.

# Staying aware

Due to the scope of our programs, Synergy has the privilege of seeing the entire spectrum of youth in our community, from current leaders to youth-at-risk. Through volunteers, mentors, and parents, we are able to stay in touch with the adults and seniors of our communities. In addition, we listen to our community partners to understand their experiences and their needs.

On a micro-scale, here are the current challenges our communities are facing:

- Increased incidents of bullying
- A rise in mental health needs
- Inadequate access to technology
- Increased risk for vulnerable populations due to COVID-19
- Lack of access to public transit
- LGBTQ+ support and resources
- Lack of access to social development opportunities for youth and adults

On a macro-scale, the factor that has the highest potential to have the biggest impact on a wide range of support services is the reduction to government-funded grants and resources for organizations in the social support sector. This could mean the reduction of services to many youth, families, and seniors across all communities in Alberta. Now, more than ever, there is a need for Synergy's services so we can continue to provide support in the face of these losses.



# Meet Hannah and Jennifer

Jennifer Cross, the mother of Hannah Cross, registered Hannah for SHOUT Girls when she was 10 years old. Now 14 years-old, Hannah has been a participant at many of Synergy's programs, including Girls SHOUT, Langdon Summer Drop-In, Friday Fam, and now Teen SHOUT.

Although struggling to fit in at her school, Hannah was welcomed with open arms at the SHOUT Girls program. Once a week, she gathered with a group of girls who, together with a SHOUT program facilitator, created a space that emphasized wellness, healthy relationships, and supporting each other. **"Going to SHOUT to practice talking to other girls was the main reason why I continued to go back every week.** It was challenging at the beginning but eventually got easier" Hannah reflects. She ended up becoming friends with one of the girls in SHOUT, and they are still very close friends to this day.



As a resident of Langdon, a small town in southern Alberta, Hannah found that summer boredom hit hard. Even during the school months, there was never very much for young kids to do during after-school hours. "This was especially tough because the only after-school activities were sports or Girl Guides - two activities that Hannah was not interested in. **I doubt I am the only parent that is facing the challenge of inadequate access to youth groups**" Jennifer notes. In response to this need, Synergy created the Langdon Summer Drop-In program and Friday Fam, both of which offer a safe space for kids to hang out, share experiences, and build relationships with supportive adult and older teen role models. These programs also include a preventative aspect; creating strong relationships with peers and mentors keeps youth connected to their community and gives them a trusted network to discuss any challenges they may be facing before they escalate. "More programs like these ones are what Langdon needs!" Jennifer says with a smile.

When asked how Synergy has benefited her as a parent, Jennifer replies with "I think just having happy kids. Kids that are excited to go out and be with other people. What more could a parent ask for?" We know that there are more kids like Hannah who need the support of her peers and mentors that will help her develop skills important for her future. At Synergy, Hannah continues to be a friendly face in our programs and now helps us welcome others!

# Preventative and Resorative



The goal: Synergy's programs and services are preventative and supportive so that our schools, community centers, and community groups are resilient to stressors

Healthy kids don't just develop on their own. Youth's physical and mental health is dependent on the interaction of genes and the environment, cognitive development, and their experiences with adults. A key factor to developing healthy brains in youth capable of reaching their full potential as citizens is sustained and positive experiences with supportive adults. There is extensive research available about the importance of adult mentorship on child and youth development through the Alberta Mentoring Partnership, the National Mentoring Partnership, and the Search Institute ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)).

Mentorship is a clear theme throughout all Synergy programs. The presence of mentors offers an opportunity for youth to learn directly or indirectly from supportive adults and to build healthy and safe relationships. It is important to note that mentoring relationships are reciprocal, where the youth empower their elders in multiple ways and help them to feel engaged with their community.

The research supports this approach. Mentoring programs are shown to produce positive outcomes across social, emotional, behavioral, and academic areas of youth development.

# Meet Shaun

"I feel like a leader, I feel important to my community," says Shaun, a member of Synergy for over 6 years. Once a participant in our programs, Shaun now exemplifies what it means to be a great mentor.

Initially a part of YELL (Youth Encouraging Long-Lasting Leadership), Shaun came out of his shell and developed valuable leadership skills. As a member of the original group of youth that started the Pretty in Pink anti-bullying campaign in 2015, Shaun made a lasting impact on his community by starting an initiative that is still relevant and needed today. Additionally, he gained life skills and values such as time management, organization, and volunteerism which will be useful in his career development and in many aspects of his future.

After spending a summer in Synergy's Youth Internship Program and continuing to develop job-relevant skills, Shaun began volunteering with Synergy. While attending post-secondary school, he made sure to remain part of the community.

**"No matter how small of a person you are, you can always make a difference and make things better"** was one of the most valuable lessons Shaun learned from volunteering. This inspired him to mentor at Friday Fam in Langdon, where he continues to be influential in the lives of youth. "It's important for youth to experience difficult emotions and have a safe space to do so," he says, "and it is even more important for youth to know that there will always be someone there for them when they need it." We are extremely grateful to have Shaun as a part of our community and can't wait to see where life takes him from here!





## Youth Internship Program

For youth, gaining relevant job experience can be tough. The Youth Internship Program aims to provide youth with just that - an opportunity to develop practical job skills that will benefit participants for the rest of their lives. Interns receive comprehensive training prior to beginning their work including First Aid, High Five program facilitation, and much more. Throughout the summer months, youth volunteer over 100 hours in the communities of Chestermere and Langdon. They learn how to facilitate programs, assist with fundraisers, and lead community projects under the mentorship of various Synergy staff members who ensure that youth are both supported and challenged as they refine their skills.

This program acts as an important stepping stone that can open many doors for youth. Due to limited resources, there is a current need for funding to keep this program alive.

# Success stories

## Connection and Care

When anyone needs help from a professional, Synergy's Connection and Care program ensures they get the assistance they need. Through this program, youth and families can access low-cost counseling services from a Registered Provisional Psychologist and a Family Nurse Practitioner. This is crucial for those that may not have the ability to access support.

The need for this program is highlighted by the increase in mental health demands and the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Synergy continuously looks for funding to ensure this service continues.

## Dabble

Synergy identified a gap in programming for youth ages 7-9 and responded by creating Dabble in 2019, an experiential program that allows youth to explore their community and their interests.

This program was a huge success, but due to limited resources, it can only be offered as a weekly camp once or twice a year. These kids need meaningful opportunities to grow and develop their mind, body, and spirit in varying environments. Most importantly, this is a program that encourages creativity and exploration - something that some kids don't get the chance to truly dive into.

# Next steps

We have walked through some of the many ways Synergy operates to support our communities, but these services are, unfortunately, all contingent on one thing: funding and availability of resources.

Without funding for our programs, we will not be able to offer youth, families and adults the chance to develop mentorship relationships.

Without funding for Connection & Care, many will lose access to crucial counseling services.

Without funding for the Youth Internship Program, many marginalized teens will not have an opportunity to develop valuable life and job skills.

Without funding for different community initiatives, Hannah and Shaun would have never had those life-changing experiences.

Without funding, Synergy isn't able to support hundreds of people that we believe in.

You can make a difference.  
Donate today.



Empowering and educating  
youth and families

# How can I help?

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Any donation, of any size, makes an impact.

There are many options for donating. We invite you to connect with us to look at the next steps.



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Thank you for your kind consideration.

With your generosity, youth, families and adults will have access to services that will encourage their development into healthy, supported and well prepared individuals that can participate in our community in meaningful ways.

Charitable Registration no.  
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