

IN CONVERSATION WITH... LEADS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



Funded by the
Government of Canada's
Community Services Recovery Fund

FEATURED PROGRAM

Youth 4 Youth Wellness and Leadership Development

Youth 4 Youth Wellness and Leadership Development is a one year program where 25 young individuals with disabilities team up with 25 peers without disabilities. They're all about learning and growing together, honing leadership skills, embracing teamwork, and managing mental well-being through hands-on community projects. This initiative is part of LEADS' plan to use these successful strategies—where young people support each other's mental health and disabilities—as a way to guide them towards successful careers, employment, and financial wellness.

Years of research show that disabled youth face fewer opportunities compared to their peers. LEADS noticed an increase in disabled youth seeking services but lacking civic activity options. Embracing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility principles, we applied for Canada Corps funding in 2018. Our goal: enabling disabled and nondisabled youth to collaborate in supporting nonprofits. Initially, recruiting was tough, especially in remote areas and during school closures. Yet, with school, parent, and community support, challenges eased. The pandemic posed difficulties but also revealed that with encouragement, youth could aid their community.

During the pandemic, we reached out to our clients with wellness checks. Youth felt isolated so we organized virtual wellness sessions. They teamed up for nonprofit support, crafting cards for seniors, sharing art tips online, and promoting compassion. These activities boosted engagement, camaraderie, learnings from each other, and self-worth, which formed the basis of the "helping others helps self in wellness" project. Nurturing leadership and the desire to aid others is shaping these youth into future leaders.

Funding Source

Community Service
Recovery Fund from
the United Way of
Elgin Middlesex

Community Services Recovery Fund



About Us

Since 1986, LEADS Employment Services has been dedicated to helping individuals aged 15 and above who have disabilities or face barriers to employment in Southwestern Ontario's urban and rural areas. We offer personalized skill development and employment support services, standing out as a regional champion for diversity hiring. With a track record of innovation, top-notch service, and exceeding goals, LEADS has made a mark. We have assisted more than 22,000 job seekers and partnered with over 16,000 employers.

Project Partners

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Family Counselling Thames Valley, and other not-for-profit organizations and service providers in the area.

Successes

The current project started in June 2023, so we do not yet have results to report. However, our previous project, Building Infrastructure: Fostering Youth Leadership Development with Youth with Disabilities, was the inspiration for Youth 4 Youth. It was successful for over 3.5 years and served 543 youths with 418 of them having disabilities. It resulted in 358 volunteer placements, 74 projects, and 3 youth councils established in the 6 Counties that LEADS served.

Lessons Learned

We take immense pride in the youth who stepped up during the pandemic to assist those in need. This act of helping others significantly benefited their own mental well-being. The key lesson is that, as service providers, when we offer youth role models, guidance, and support to engage in positive actions for the benefit of others, their personal fulfillment opens doors to numerous career opportunities.

Learn more about the program:
www.leadsservices.com or contact
info2@leadsservices.com

