



2024

ANNUAL REPORT

TRAILS

YOUTH INITIATIVES





Our mission is to challenge and equip vulnerable youth to become contributing members of the community.



ABOUT US

Trails Youth Initiatives has been transforming lives since 1992 through a highly impactful outdoor education program. We empower vulnerable youth from underserved communities to become contributing members of society. Our uniqueness is tethered to a long-term and consistent approach that provides structure, commitment, and trust for vulnerable youth while building foundational skills in their formative years.

We are not just another program. Trails is committed to make a profound difference in the lives of Toronto's youth, helping them overcome obstacles and achieve their full potential.

OUR PROGRAMS

4

SEASONS

Starting at age 12, youth attend Trails for two weeks each summer and one weekend a month throughout the school year with the same group of 20 peers.

4

YEARS


They attend for a minimum of four years in this nature-based program that enhances both health and well-being, while also fostering genuine personal and social growth.

4

LIFE

Beyond graduation, Trails offers continued support to our 600 alumni, ensuring their success through mentorship, post-secondary bursaries and career support.

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 905-836-0285

 www.trails.ca **Charitable Reg. #: 13505 0755 RR0001**

 admin@trails.ca



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT MEL MILLWARD

When this year's Hurst Legacy Award winner first heard about Trails, she wasn't thrilled to be enrolled in yet *another program* for underserved youth in Toronto. As you'll see from her story on Page 5, she quickly learned that we are anything but "another program" and being part of Trails changed the course of her life.

This year we set out to better communicate the impact of Trails with our stakeholders. Throughout 2024, we worked through the questions, "Why Trails?" and "Why Now?" Our participants, alumni, staff and board all know what makes Trails unique and innovative and for everyone, the answer is a little different. Through the course of our research, we learned that there is not another program like Trails in the world! Our methodology, duration, commitment to education and lifelong support make Trails stand out in the worlds of outdoor education, camps, schools, bursary programs and more.

This type of program is only possible through the generous support of our community—you! Thank you for coming alongside us to transform the life trajectory of vulnerable youth for the better ... This year and beyond.

148

Participants in the Four Seasons, Four Years program

37

Year 4 and L.I.T. participants graduated in June

45

Alumni involved with mentorship through A.I.M.

69

Post-secondary bursaries provided along with mentorship

9

Post-secondary Trails Bursary graduates

“

“I love Trails so much. It helped me with my mental health and my ability to trust people more.”

-Year 1 Participant



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR GREIG CLARK

As a lifelong entrepreneur and venture capitalist, I am always curious about what makes a business unique, what is different about it. When I rejoined the Board of Trails in 2020, I asked one of the long-standing board members, Dr. Bob Henderson what makes Trails stand out. As a professor at McMaster University with a PhD in Outdoor Education, he was well-positioned to share his insights:

I have years of experience in both youth work and adventure programming. There are intensity programs (short time span/high intensity) and longevity programs (long time spans/low intensity). Few can do both intensity AND longevity and even fewer continue to add value AFTER the youth leave. Trails, with its unique Four Seasons, Four Years, For Life program does all three. This is rare indeed. As an added bonus, this kind of program design attracts, creates and retains quality committed staff. Good design creates ripple effects. I came to this conclusion about Trails when I was first introduced to it 20 years ago. I think it is even stronger today.

I couldn't have said it better myself. Trails is definitely not just another program!

FULL-TIME STAFF

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| Mel Millward
President | Josh Harney
Director of Education | Erin McLean
Director of Alumni & Volunteer Engagement |
| Amanda Abbasi
Fundraising Assistant | Anum Khan
Program Director | Tahirah Stanley
Donor Advisor |
| Carlos Belchior
Facilities Coordinator | Whitney Lorentz
Donor Engagement | Jess Taylor
Program Director |
| Emily Christie
Program Director | Rae Lorenz
Program Director | Robb Tidd
Kitchen Manager |
| Janelle Dayman
Director of Development | Leslie McGill
Office Manager/Donations | Alex Zović
Program Director |
| Lisa Evans
Program Director | Brandon McKinley
Youth Development Director | |

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Greig Clark, Chair | Dr. Bob Henderson | James Werry |
| Greg Ryan, Treasurer | Hanssa Jain | Jennifer Werry |
| Christine Chen | Lauren Mostowyk | |
| Rob Drynan | Hussain Stanley | |

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Jim Hayhurst, Jr., Chair | Gordon Cressy | Vahan Kololian |
| James Werry, Vice Chair | David Crombie | Sheldon Levy |
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| Susan Armitage | Heather Fitzpatrick | John McIntosh |
| Paul Brink | Shaun Francis | Bryan Pearson |
| Joe Canavan | Richard Hamm | Timothy Price |
| Tim Casgrain | Brooke Hunter | Aaron Regent |
| Mary Anne Chambers | David LeClaire | Steve Rogers |
| Jack Cockwell | David Kerr | William Thorsell |
| | Ashiqur Khan | Kelly Willis Green |

Hurst Legacy Award 2024

Seanice Dennis

Group: Midnight Mafia - 2005-2009

Facilitator with the Timberwolves | Trails Bursary Recipient | AIM Mentor
| RPN | Currently enrolled in BScN program

"I am my own childhood dream. I am successful."



"Not *another* program!" was the first thing I thought when my mom came home and told me about Trails. She had seen the Trails van driving down the street and took down the number. My mom - always looking to widen our village and find positive opportunities for my siblings and me - chased this prospect. The next thing I knew, my mom was taking me to my Trails interview, which I intentionally tried to sabotage because I didn't want to go. A few days later we got the call - my attempt to bomb the interview failed - I was in.

I grew up in Toronto as the middle child of a single-parent, first-generation-Canadian family. My mom worked hard to provide for us and was a strong advocate for me and my two siblings. Still, with a Learning Disability in a lower-income home, I can see why I would have been deemed "at-risk". Although I was outspoken, it was easy for me to fall through the cracks and get left behind at school without the support I needed to succeed. I also felt a lot of undirected anger and struggled with self-expression at home and school.

One of the early challenges I needed to overcome upon arriving at Trails was feeling excluded because I came a year late and was from a different neighbourhood in Toronto. Still, by the end of my first summer, the same staff who interviewed me said, "I knew you would fit in perfectly."

At Trails I experienced Facilitators who believed in me, wanted me to be successful and taught me things I would never learn anywhere else. The connections with staff, going on canoe trips, gliding across the snow on cross-country skis, being able to push myself and excelling in the wilderness gave me confidence that I lacked after years of struggling in the traditional school setting. One of my core memories is my overnight solo in Year 4, where I had to spend an entire night in the woods alone.

Coming from the inner city where there were always lights, noise and people around, it was so scary and uncomfortable to be in absolute quietness and solitude. Being able to find peace and overcome my fears, showing that ultimately I could complete this difficult challenge was a huge boost to my confidence.

As I came to the end of my four years, I realized that a big chunk of my life would be gone soon, and so I applied to be a Leader-in-Training, my first step to growing wings and giving back. A few years later, I returned to Trails as a paid staff facilitator with the Timberwolves group. I loved being able to apply and teach the skills I had learned at Trails and connect with new participants. I wanted to help them appreciate their self-worth and be their authentic selves; the same way my facilitators had done for me.

Since then, my journey to spread my wings and become a contributing member of the community has included completing post-secondary school and working for seven years as a Registered Practical Nurse, mentoring three alumni through the A.I.M. program and returning to school to complete my Bachelor of Science in Nursing. In the future, I would love to serve remote communities in Northern Ontario as a Registered Nurse.

I was also mentored by some incredible community members who saw something special in me and provided love and guidance. To anyone who has ever supported Trails as a donor or volunteer, I hope you know how much it means to participants and alumni to know that complete strangers believe in us and enable us to succeed.

Recently, I attended a Trails alumni event in an Executive Suite at a Blue Jays Game. As I stood there looking around, I realized... I am my own childhood dream. I am successful. I am something. I was often told that I would never amount to anything, but Trails believed in me and saw past the hurt child who showed up at age 12, and they have continued to believe in me which allows me to spread my wings and pay it forward.

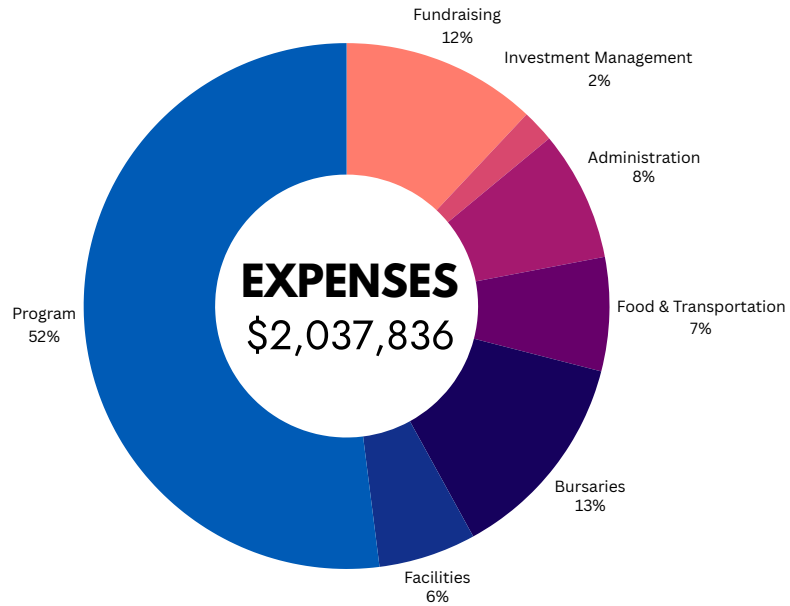
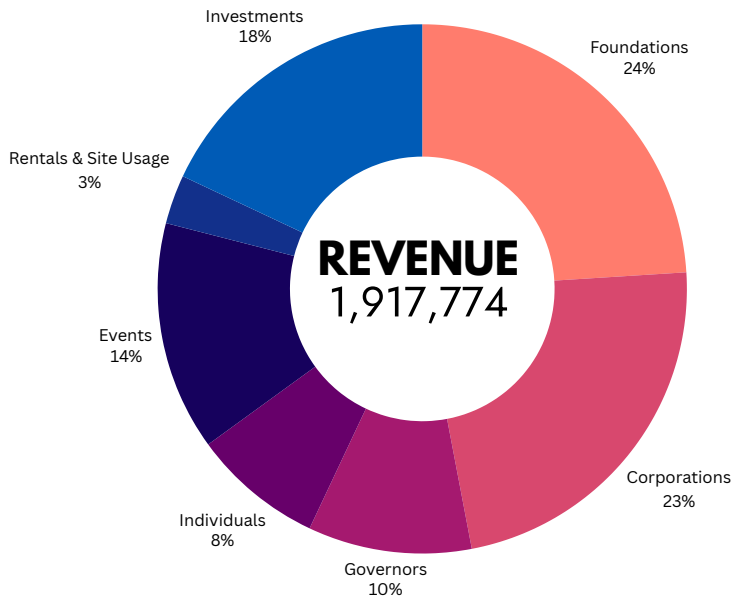
The Hurst Legacy Award was founded in 2019 to honour the incredible work of our founder, Jim "Hurst" Hayhurst. While he passed away in early 2020, his legacy lives on in the Trails Alumni who are benefiting from his creation of Trails over 30 years ago. The Hurst Legacy Award is presented annually to a Trails Alumni who consistently lives the Trails mission. This award proves that we all have the capacity and the responsibility to give back, regardless of our age, background, or abilities.



FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Fiscal Year: October 1, 2023–September 30, 2024

Trails is a registered charity and raises funds through events and donations from corporations, foundations and individuals. Trails does not seek or accept government funding.



Vision Fund Update: Established in 2016, the Vision Fund supports Trails' long-term financial security and program expansion while ensuring sustainable commitments to participants and staff. The 2024 audited financial statements report an unrealized gain of \$1,657,880 (not included in the revenue total).



October 14 marked the Power Hour at CrossFit Port Credit where 75 participants came together to sweat for Trails for an hour-long workout. Over \$100,000 was raised thanks to the incredible efforts of Kimchan Ramrattan of KCFitt and our team of volunteers.



Thank you to everyone who got outside for Trails from May 4–11. This year's event included another exciting online auction and an opportunity to meet fellow challengers on a hike at Tommy Thompson Park. Thanks to our generous sponsors and donors, we raised \$100,000!

EVENTS



A special thanks to the Run to Give team for selecting Trails as their charity of choice in 2024. September 22 was a great day for a 5K at Centennial Park, with over 85 participants raising \$20,000 for Trails.



Vancestock returned to the beautiful TD Music Hall with a smashing line-up of musical talent this fall. We continue to be so grateful to Vance Cooper and his family for creating a fun night of music and fundraising in support of Trails.

Thank You

For Making a Difference!

\$50,000+

Annual Foundation
Jack Cockwell
Lake Family's All One Fund
Navigatr

\$25,000+

BMO
Canada Post Community Foundation
Fourth Box Charitable Foundation - Steve Rogers
Interac Corporation
Murray & Susan Armitage Foundation*
Ontario Realtors Care Foundation
Paul Brink & Kate Cochrane-Brink
Petman Foundation
RBC Foundation
Robert Green & Kelly Willis Green Foundation

\$10,000+

Annie Ropar
Bell Canada - Bell Let's Talk
Catherine & Maxwell Meighen Foundation
CI Investments
Conam Charitable Foundation - David LeClaire
David Kerr
Epic Games - Rob Krajcarski
Equitable Bank
Greig & Carolyn Clark (United Church of Canada Foundation)
Home Depot
Hydro Flask Parks for All
IA Insurance & Financial Inc.
J. Cam & Randi Ivey
Jane & Tom Sabourin Family Foundation
Jumpstart - Canadian Tire
Lang Family Foundation
Leah Battista Foundation (Oakville Community Foundation)
Mackenzie Investments Charitable Foundation
MNP LLP
Nature Canada
Paul Sabourin
Peter Gilgan Foundation
Richard & Nancy Hamm
Rotary Club of Toronto Eglinton
Scotiabank
Stait Family Fund
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
TELUS
Tim & Sheila Casgrain

\$5,000+

Alice Nusbaum Memorial Bursary
Bakerhill Renovations
Brian Kusisto
Bryan Pearson
CCO Productions
Cooper Mediation
Donald F. Hunter Foundation
Douglas Grant
Greey-Lennox Charitable Foundation
Greg & Michele Ryan
Greygates Foundation (Vancouver Foundation)
Hunters International Insurance
Ian MacLeod
J & B Carroll Family Foundation
Jacma Foundation
Kololian Foundation
Limberlost Challenge
McFadco Investments - Larry & Betty McFadden
Moody Family Foundation
Newport Private Wealth Inc.
Nike Community Impact Fund
Sabourin, Kimble & Associates Limited
St. Andrew's Charitable Foundation
TEKsystems - Allegis Group
Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund

\$1,000+

Andrew Mondor
Ashiqur Khan & Nadia Islam
Avison Young
Bob Henderson
Bruce Shirreff
Burgundy Legacy Foundation
Carol Schilling
Carolyn Langill
Christine Chen
Daniel Moore
Dante Mondelli
David Hill
Driftwood Paddle Algonquin
Dusan Nedelko Foundation
Erin & Mike McLean
Eyes on Sheppard
Gandy Charitable Foundation
Herman Gil
Intact Insurance
Intesar Khan
Issa Guindo
Jackman Foundation
James Morrison
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John Grey
Jonna & Jeff Smith
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Katherine Gurney & André Nowakowski
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Mags & Andrew Moor Fund*
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Pledgling Foundation
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Susan, Sarah & Nicholas Latremoille Fund*
Tom McCullough
Tom's Place
Trish Fonberg - Reckless Thursdays
Tricia Allen
Vanessa Morgan
Weppler Family Foundation
William Thorsell
Winfield Boyd

Impact Groups

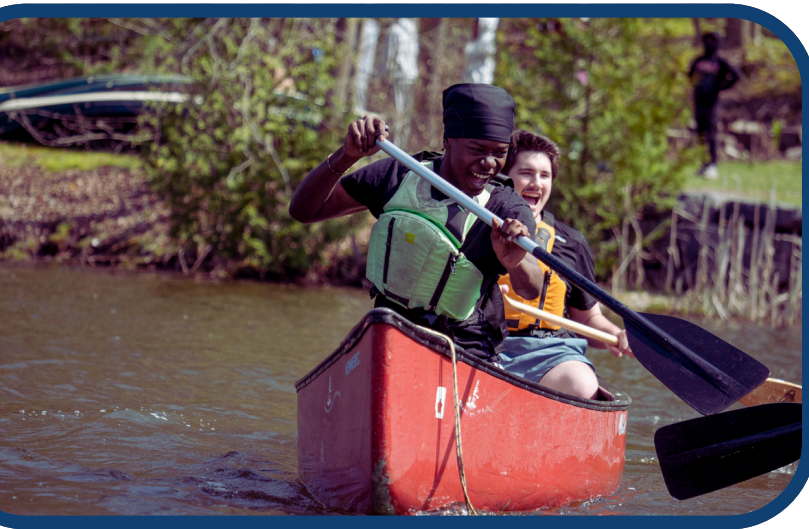
Allied Properties, Avison Young, CWP - Sunlife, Interac, Jumpstart, Mackenzie Investments, Michael Hogg - RBC, TELUS

Volunteers

Program Volunteers
Special Project Volunteers
Event Volunteers
Mentors (AIM and CARE)
Advisory Committees
Corporate Partner Volunteers

In total, over 270 alumni and community volunteers gave their time and talents to help make Trails successful this year. We are grateful for their contributions!

*at Toronto Foundation



WHAT MAKES TRAILS MORE THAN “JUST ANOTHER PROGRAM”?

Message from Jim Hayhurst, Jr. Co-Founder and Chair of Board of Governors

In late 1991, when Hurst asked me to research the ideal program, I heard what I called the “Well, but ...” syndrome.

Experts, families and kids described what was needed ... and then quickly told me why it wasn't possible.

- **Well**, it would be ideal if it's not just a camp ... **but** kids won't come if they think it's like school.
- **Well**, it's better to focus on prevention ... **but** governments mostly fund rehabilitation.
- **Well**, the best thing would be to have year-round program, not just summer ... **but** that's too expensive.
- **Well**, the biggest impact would be age 12-16 ... **but** kids will never commit for four years.
- **Well**, the ideal place would be 45 minutes of downtown ... **but** no one can afford that kind of land anymore.

So what did we do? We took their advice ... and ignored everything they said after the “But”.

We made Trails fun, so kids love being here... and so they learn better. We neither seek nor accept any government funding. We work with youth year-round and for at least four years. And we found 143 acres of pristine wilderness less than 45 minutes from Yonge and Dundas that didn't cost a fortune.

We hope that our story inspires our kids at Trails to do hard things. And look beyond the “Well, but ...” syndrome and become the best versions of themselves, too.



What continues to set us apart?

- Secondary school credits
- Commitment to completing high school
- Small group size and high staff-to-participant ratio
- Post-secondary bursaries
- Alumni mentoring alumni in the A.I.M. (Alumni in Mentorship) Program
- Financial support for participants and alumni in emergency situations
- Career Connections and job preparedness skills
- Lifelong commitment
- Skill development, including outdoor skills, leadership skills and Non-violent communication skills.

We take the best of summer camp, the best of after-school programs, the best of outdoor education, the best of post-secondary bursaries, the best of mentorship ... and we roll it into one program.



“I am grateful for the opportunities Trails has given me and I am inspired to work hard and give back in the future.”

-Trails Alumnus and Bursary Recipient