

YONA



Road to Joy

Annual Fundraising Concert
For YONA



presented by 

June 2 • 7 PM

YONA's annual fundraising concert, Road to Joy presented by EPCOR, is coming up soon, and we can't wait to gather our YONA community for one of the most meaningful nights of the year.

This year's fundraiser will be on June 2nd at the Winspear Centre. We hope you can join us in celebrating our students, and helping to raise the funds needed to keep YONA running.

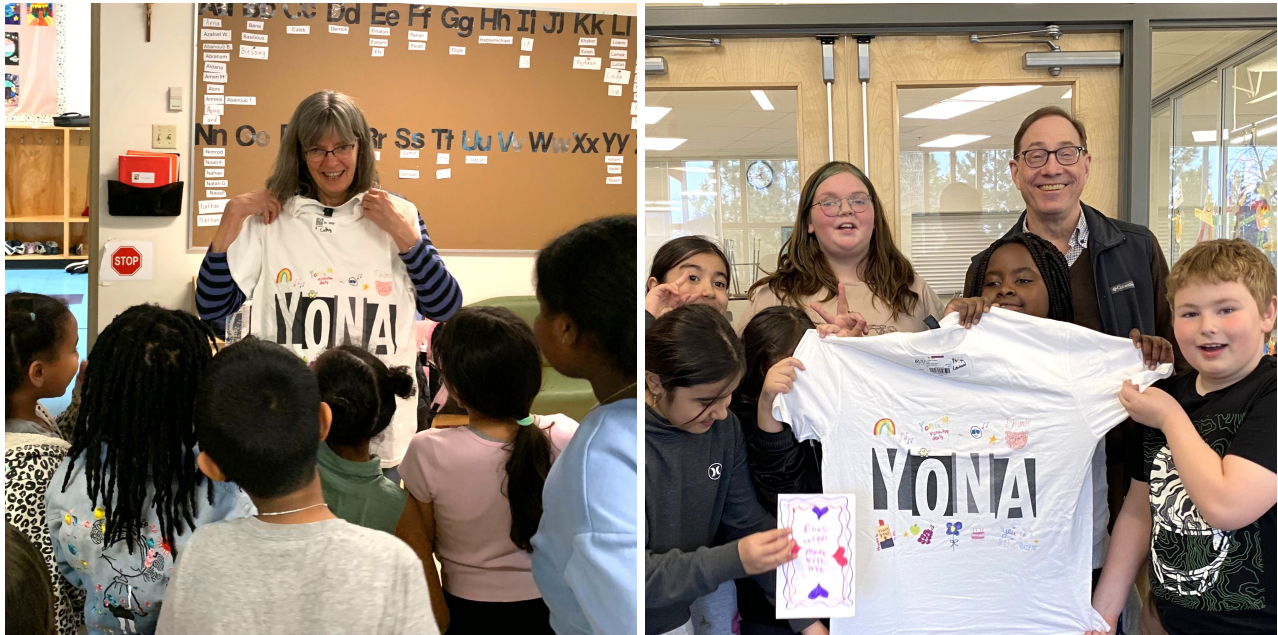
You'll see YONA students take the stage and share what they've been working on, including a joyful performance of the K-pop hit Golden. This year's event also marks a special first as YONA's new Artistic Director, Shah Sadikov, will be conducting Road to Joy for the very first time. A highlight of the night for many will be when members of the ESO take to the stage to perform alongside our students. It's always a powerful reminder of how much students grow when they are given the chance to learn, belong, and perform.

While tickets are free, guests will be encouraged to make a donation in support of YONA during the concert to help keep this program strong, growing, and free for families we serve.

Free tickets can be booked on our website. We encourage you to invite friends, neighbours, or colleagues to come enjoy the show, learn more about YONA, and be part of supporting this incredible work.

If you can't make it, you can still make an impact! YONA depends on community support to continue its work. Please consider making an online gift.

CELEBRATING OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS



Miss Cathy receiving her shirt at our St. Catherine School site and Mr. Leonard receiving his shirt at our Ivor Dent School site.

From April 19-25th, YONA celebrated National Volunteer Appreciation Week in style! Ali, YONA Site Coordinator at Ivor Dent School and a visual artist, took the lead for this year's volunteer appreciation initiative: designing a custom t-shirt using drawings by YONA students. While we recognize the value of our amazing volunteers bring to the program every day, we could not pass up the opportunity to do something extra special this appreciation week:

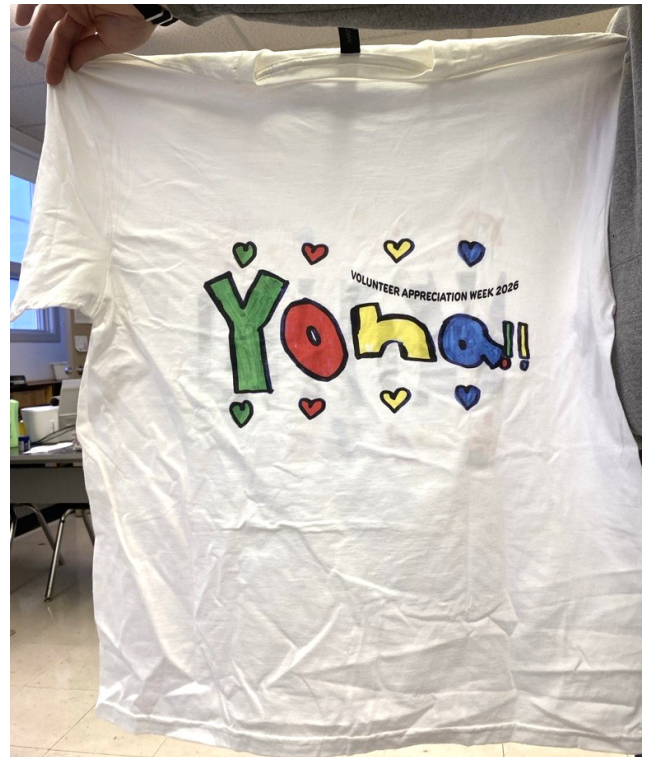
"All the Site Coordinators asked their YONA students to make drawings thanking the volunteers for all they give to YONA. I collected these and isolated small parts of their designs, turning them into vectors to collage around the YONA logo. All our staff and students have YONA shirts; the volunteers now have their own too, adorned with drawings made by the students who they support. These shirts create a colourful reminder of the joy and creativity our program nurtures, which we could not do without the care and commitment of our volunteers."

– Alexandra Bischof, YONA Site Coordinator at Ivor Dent School

YONA currently has 11 volunteers who will have contributed over 1,200 combined volunteer hours to the program by the end of the 2025-26 YONA season:

“The incredible volunteers at YONA are the sorts of people that make the world go around. Their passion for music, education, and social equity leads them to this beautiful fit with the team. It’s not just about the snack prepping, grocery runs, and moving chairs around that makes the difference; it’s the relationships with the children, being an emotional regulated adult in the room, being a role model for stability and care. Our volunteers are the lifeblood of the program, and we are forever grateful to them for what they share.”

– Turlough Myers, Philanthropy Advisor • ESO and Winspear Centre



Please join the YONA team in a huge thank you to our outstanding volunteers!

WHEN AN ASTRONAUT MET YONA



YONA students present Colonel Hadfield with his own YONA T-shirt at the Winspear Centre on April 4th, 2026.

Two groups of YONA students recently had the chance to attend Colonel Chris Hadfield's sold-out events at the Winspear Centre and sit down for a special visit with one of Canada's most celebrated explorers. Colonel Hadfield spoke about his life and work as an astronaut. He shared stories with the kind of warmth and curiosity that have made him one of the country's most trusted voices in science and education.

The kids came prepared with great questions, and Colonel Hadfield answered each one with honesty and humour. What is your favourite planet? Earth, without hesitation. How many degrees do you have? At least three, though he has been a student his whole life. How long did it take human beings to get to the moon? About 500,000 years to figure it out. How many songs have you written? Maybe 50. He told them about writing a song aboard the International Space Station, building on melodies his son had written back on Earth. For Colonel Hadfield, learning an instrument has been one of the most important threads of his life. It is a way of bringing people together, no matter where he happens to be.

That belief in music's power to connect is something Colonel Hadfield has put into practice in remarkable ways. In 2013, he performed a song called "I.S.S. (Is Somebody Singing)" live from orbit, playing guitar on the space station while the Barenaked Ladies and a choir of students joined in from Earth. It was a moment that showed how music can bridge even the greatest distances.

We are grateful to Colonel Hadfield for his support of YONA and for the time he gave our students. He showed them what hard work and discipline can build. He showed them that it is possible to reach your dreams and achieve things that advance all of humanity. For a program dedicated to giving children inspiration and aspiration, there is no greater gift.

A GLIMPSE OF THE INSTRUMENT GRADUATION AT IVOR DENT SCHOOL



The new YONA brass students at Ivor Dent school along with students from YONA's percussion and senior brass classes, and members of the ESO brass section.

Our new site at Ivor Dent School hosted its first celebration on March 4th. Students were cheered on by their families and YONA supporters as they were presented with their new brass instruments and played their first notes.



Students lining up to sign their Instrument Care Agreements, in which they promise to responsibly look after their new instruments.

“When I got my cornet, I was feeling excited and nervous. I like everything about my cornet, but my favourite part of YONA is having fun.”

– Shalom, first year YONA student



Shalom playing his first note on his cornet.

YONA SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY



We're excited to share that YONA Scholarship applications are now open to current students and alumni pursuing post-secondary education. If you or someone you know has completed at least one year with YONA and are planning to take the next step into a certificate, diploma, or degree program (9 months or longer), we'd love for you to apply.

The scholarship supports students beginning their studies in the upcoming academic year, with proof of enrollment.

The deadline to apply is June 23rd.

A heartfelt thank you to Phyllis A. Arnold and Maurine Maslen for their generosity in helping YONA students continue their journey beyond the program.

YONA SPOTLIGHT: SABRINA, BASS STUDENT



Sabrina, first year YONA student at our St. Alphonsus site

How long have you been in YONA?

This is my first year.

What instrument do you play?

Bass.

What are your favourite songs to play and why?

Twist and Shout because I love the energy.

How would you describe YONA?

It's fun, and I get to do different things instead of going home after school.

What is your favourite YONA memory?

Getting my bass for the first time.

You can keep up to date on all of the happenings at YONA, learn more about our amazing students and staff, and what they're working on.

Instagram: [@yonasistema](https://www.instagram.com/yonasistema)

Facebook: [YONA-Sistema](https://www.facebook.com/YONA-Sistema)

THANK YOU

