

# Toronto shelter helps marginalized women develop digital literacy skills

Street Haven Toronto at the CrossRoads is a community organization offering pathways for women who are experiencing or are at-risk of homelessness. This is just one of the many organizations hosting a series of workshops aimed at helping adults improve their digital literacy skills.

Street Haven offers a variety of provisions for women including shelter and housing services, an addictions program, and academic and pre-employment services. The latter service offers academic upgrading in a classroom setting as well as pre-employment workshops, individual counselling and computer access program.

## The Challenge

While Street Haven's computer access program is available Monday to Friday, the women they serve haven't been fully able to tap into the resources available to them.

Why? Because they had a skills gap when it came to using technology.

Cynthia Meshorer, Manager of Academic and Pre-Employment Services at Street Haven, was keen to fill that gap. When she came across a free digital literacy program entitled *Youth Teaching Adults*, she quickly signed up her organization.

## The Solution

*Youth Teaching Adults* is a free introductory digital literacy program for adults, led by youth volunteer-tutors. A collaboration between ABC Life Literacy Canada and Youth Empowering Parents with funding from the Government of Canada through the Digital Literacy Exchange Program, the two organizations have come together to bring the program to underserved communities across Canada.

Cynthia ran a series of four workshops across four weeks with four to six women attending each one, all of whom were aged 45 or older. Women were paired up with four youth – all 16 to 17-year-old girls from local high schools – and each workshop was tailored to the learners' needs. While some learners needed help using a tablet, others needed help with resumes and email applications.

"It was great – the women just told their tutor what they needed help with and the girls just jumped right in to help," recalled Cynthia. "The women all loved it and were really appreciative and enthusiastic. They all wanted to come back each week because the programming was so individualized – they felt a sense of commitment. I think it's a great initiative and a program we're most proud of."

To learn more about *Youth Teaching Adults* or to sign up to host a free workshop, visit [YouthTeachingAdults.ca](http://YouthTeachingAdults.ca).

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Youth  
Teaching  
Adults

"We've been trying to run new programs to address some of the issues that I've seen since joining the organization, one of which is digital literacy. We have a computer lab available to the women, but there is a lack of skills, even amongst those who want to use it. It prevents them from accessing basic services, and some of the computer facilitator workshops available are too advanced for them. *Youth Teaching Adults* was the perfect program because it offers one-on-one tutoring customized to the women's needs, addressing gaps in their knowledge so that they can do important things like write a resume, fill out job applications and use email."



Cynthia Meshorer  
Manager of Academic and  
Pre-Employment Services  
at Street Haven