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Community Relations Report – Annual General Meeting October 5, 2017

I am happy to report that the Community Relations position is still the best job in the world! It is varied, fast-paced, fun and rewarding, and has room to grow with new challenges and projects. The new YANA office has been a pleasure to work in over the past year. It is bright, airy and on point in terms of our branding. Most importantly, we can tell how welcome and comfortable our clients feel in the space and how enjoyable it is for everyone else. Anecdotal evidence also has our office team as among the best in the world, so nothing has changed there! Marcie, our Executive Director, is accessible and inspiring to work with and I'm grateful to have the benefit of her guidance and razor-sharp focus. Lesley is essential to maintaining operations and she does so with humour and good spirit. Judy, as always, has carried a great deal of administrative and policy work. Darlene continues to be a huge help in making sure our gratitude is expressed to our donors and is always available as an Ambassador. Joan and Kaleen have been a welcome addition to our office team! Our Board Directors have been amazing in supporting my position, giving their time, energy, and expertise anywhere and everywhere that they are needed. Every day in this job is a reminder of the generosity and caring of our community that ensures that our YANA families are not alone.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

This year we continued to make community awareness and outreach a priority.

We had a nursing student, Molly, spend some time with us working on her fourth-year leadership projects. She was able to identify some additional locations for our rack cards and make a great video that presents YANA's mandate and services in a way that a young audience will appreciate and understand.

Again this year, our presence in local media has been very strong. Three of our four internal fundraisers had great coverage in the Record newspaper, and in particular the Simon's Cycles YANA Ride gave us the opportunity to have an impact story published. Many of our third-party fundraisers also made the paper! The Valley Vonka fundraising event sponsored in part by the Record gave us the chance to have feature stories in a supplement for four weeks in a row! We were able to highlight our history, the YANA apartments, our Emergency Funding program and a client/donor story. The community pages featured photos of many of our cheque presentations as well.

We were also included in other local publications like the Totem Times, Trio Magazine, and the CV Collective.

Our local radio stations, as always, have been generous with their air time and have helped promote a number of third-party events. Marcie and I both made a couple of on-air appearances this year promoting different events.

Board Director Hugh Mackinnon leads YANA Week In The Schools which is about sharing YANA's story with our local students. Many of them have classmates or friends who have been YANA clients so this can be a very special connection. We had a lovely response from schools, and many of them did fundraising for YANA. We also had classes from Brooklyn and Royston Elementary that did projects for YANA by creating thank-you cards for us to send to our supporters.

Thanks to our Board Directors and YANA Ambassadors we were able a strong presence out in the community. YANA representatives were at The Local Heroes Awards, Don McRae's Open House, Chamber of Commerce Mixers, and an information table at the Comox Legion's Open House.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

We have a world class group of volunteers!

YANA's capacity as an organization relies substantially on volunteers. From our office, to our fundraising, to our outreach, our volunteers are an invaluable asset.

YANA volunteers make some remarkable commitments around our big fundraisers and have leadership roles in Big Love Benefit, Simon's Cycles YANA Ride, YANA Kids' Clutter, and YANA Christmas Crackers. We are also able to provide volunteers to our third-party fundraisers, for instance The Town of Comox and Investors Group Easter Eggstravaganza and The Potter's Place Chili Bowl Fundraiser.

We formalized the YANA Ambassador Program this year, these volunteers are able to attend events on behalf of YANA, speak to our programs, engage the community, and share our gratitude.

Whether a volunteer is available once a year, on a regular basis, or has a special skill they would like to utilize, we will look for opportunities that fit. We love our volunteers and all their generosity, spirit, and big hearts!

GRATITUDE

Darlene and I work together to acknowledge our donors in writing. We are able to send personal thank-yous to all of our donors. We are happy to be able to connect in this way.

Whenever possible, we meet with third-party fundraisers after events and do a cheque presentation and photo. Each month we post these under 'Thank Yous' on our website.

Our Staff, Board Directors and YANA Ambassadors are profoundly grateful for the love in this community and we are always looking for ways to express that gratitude.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook continues to be our main use of social media and works well for us to share stories, promote events, direct traffic to our website, and express gratitude. This past year we hit a milestone with 2,000 likes on Facebook.

Facebook has been an excellent tool for us and I am very happy with the level of engagement we receive around our page. Impact posts and client stories are what our audience is most responsive to and it has been a great way to share those stories and have conversations around the scope of YANA's work in the community.

Our Facebook account links to our Twitter Account so we have a presence there as well. We have an Instagram account that is not very active but gives us room to grow.

THIRD PARTY FUNDRAISING

These fundraisers, initiated and executed by the community are responsible for a significant amount of YANA's funding. We support these wonderful events by adding them to our events calendar on Facebook and our website and sharing news stories about the events through both these channels as well. We are able to provide YANA signage and informational materials for these events and, when requested, volunteers.

If you visit the YANA website and scroll through the 'Thank Yous' you will begin to get an idea of the diverse range of community members and businesses that are spearheading these efforts as well as the diversity of the events themselves. We are very lucky to have many recurring third-party fundraisers as well as new ones. Each one is a unique testament to the caring and commitment of YANA's supporters.

Myself, Marcie, a Board Director or a YANA Ambassador were able to attend all but one event last year. Attending is a pure pleasure. These events illustrate the heart and soul of our community and I am always moved by the spirit that motivates them.

CLOSING

This has been a busy year for YANA and I have appreciated the positive working environment, our collaborative team, and our committed supporters. Thank you everyone!

Ocean Varney | YANA Community Relations