

THE YMCA AND WALK OFF THE EARTH REIMAGINE THE Y.M.C.A. ANTHEM, FOCUSING ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

The musical collaboration introduces expanded access to the YMCA's free youth mental health program, *Y Mind*

Ottawa, Ontario, August 28, 2023 – The YMCA and Canadian indie pop band Walk off the Earth today released a modern take on the Y.M.C.A. anthem to raise awareness of expanded access to the free youth mental health program, *Y Mind*. Originally released in 1978, the hit song has brought crowds to the dance floor, with an enduring legacy internationally. The reimaged cover of the classic party anthem, performed in a more soulful and sincere tone, brings new light to the original lyrics through a mental health lens as the YMCA aims to highlight today's need for community and open dialogue surrounding mental health. Alongside the new musical arrangement, Walk off the Earth has also released an accompanying full-length music video now available on YouTube.

"We've seen how music is so connected to emotions – for us and our fans – so we were honoured to take on the challenge of reinventing such an iconic song and give new meaning to its enduring lyrics," says Sarah Blackwood, lead singer of Walk off the Earth. "When we took a look at the original lyrics, it was staggering how a message about the YMCA from 45 years ago is just as relevant and pointed today - but now we're sharing that message with a focus on mental health tied to *Y Mind*."

The collaboration aims to bring awareness to a new era the YMCA of the National Capital Region hopes to usher in, as our charity has expanded our broad range of programming to include free mental health services through *Y Mind*, serving the changing needs of Canadian communities.

Y Mind is an innovative early intervention mental health program that helps teens (ages 13-18) and young adults (ages 18-30) cope with stress and anxiety with the support of health professionals. The seven-week program is available online or in person and is offered completely free of charge thanks to support and funding by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

"We are proud to offer the *Y Mind* program here in the National Capital Region. The number of stressors that today's youth face can seem overwhelming, including the post-pandemic experience, school, and social media pressures. We recognize that cost is often one of the biggest barriers for youth in need of mental wellness programs. *Y Mind* removes that barrier for youth 13-30 so they can get the help they need," said Bob Gallagher, President and CEO, YMCA of the National Capital Region

The *Y Mind* program comes at a time when young people's stress and anxiety levels remain at an all-time high. According to a survey conducted in 2023 by Deloitte, close to half of Gen Zs (46%) and four in 10 Millennials (39%) report feeling stressed or anxious all or most of

the time.¹ Guided by qualified mental healthcare professionals, participants in the *Y Mind* program have reported reduced anxiety, improved well-being, and reduced feelings of isolation.

To learn more about the *Y Mind* program or find a location near you, visit <https://www.ymcaottawa.ca/health-fitness/mental-wellness/>

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About *Y Mind*

Y Mind was first developed by the YMCA of Greater Vancouver (now YMCA BC) and has been offered across British Columbia since 2018 thanks to financial support from the British Columbia government. *Y Mind* was born to meet the growing need for free, accessible mental health support. It quickly established itself as a pillar of support for the region's youth, serving over 3,200 young people in 54 communities. Building on this momentum, the *Y Mind* program was extended across Canada, including Quebec with *YMCA Libère ta tête*, through the support of YMCA Canada and YMCA BC. *Y Mind* has now expanded to 24 YMCAs across the country and is currently being supported through the Public Health Agency of Canada's investment *Supporting the Mental Health of Those Most Affected By COVID-19*.

About the YMCA of the National Capital Region

Founded in 1867, the YMCA of the National Capital Region is a registered charity dedicated to building healthy communities. The organization is committed to nurturing the potential of children, teens and young adults, promoting healthy living and supporting vulnerable people within the community. The Y serves thousands of people across the Ottawa region each year. A focus on inclusiveness and accessibility means people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities are served through all stages of life. To learn more visit ymcaottawa.ca.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Andrea Bailey Director, Marketing and Communications
YMCA of the National Capital Region
613.237.1320 Ext. 5167
andrea.bailey@ymcaottawa.ca

¹ <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/mt/Documents/about-deloitte/deloitte-2023-genz-millennial-survey-mental-health.pdf>