



# Helping Youth in Custody Reach Their Potential

*Created in the image of God, each young person we serve has strengths, abilities and talents which we seek to uncover to help them reach their potential. Some have artistic or musical talents, others are great problem solvers, have an aptitude for working with their hands, or are good at sports. Some are excellent communicators and others are compassionate.*

– Jeff McCrea, Program Director, Open Custody

## Young Man Makes the Best of Custody

When Dave\* arrived at Ray of Hope’s Open Custody facility he wouldn’t look people in the eye and he mumbled. Several months later, when Dave was released he smiled, laughed, and talked easily. “Dave’s transformation can be credited first of all, to God’s grace and to prayer,” says ROH Chaplain John Murray. John also acknowledges the amazing holistic care Dave received from ROH staff at Open Custody and Youth Employment Services. Incredibly, Dave was granted an early release. The judge told him “If ‘society’ was here to see how well you have used

every program and educational opportunity available to you while in custody to improve your life, they would understand why I am granting you a review of disposition.” While in custody, Dave completed his high school credits and got his diploma. During a (volunteer) work placement at Morning Glory Catering, he received WHIMIS and SMARTServe certificates and learned valuable work skills. Dave’s family is very grateful. “He came out of his shell while with us, gained new life skills, and created a vision for his future,” says John.

\*not his real name

**Last year, there were an average of 15 youth/month in Secure Custody—most stayed about 49 days.**

## New or Enhanced Programs at Secure Custody

- In our **shop program**, youth made and sold cheese boards, Muskoka chairs, and wooden sample platters. Earnings went to renovate the Secure weight room and youth donated \$1500 to 3 local charities.
- We offer **HUB of Community Learning 2x/week** to empower youth to learn skills to overcome their risk factors for criminal activity including emotional and behavioural disorders, learning disabilities, parental abuse and neglect, poverty, and lack of maturity.
- Youth representatives from each unit belong to a **Youth Advisory Committee** that meets with staff managers and probation officers.
- Community partners offered **weekly Yoga** to help youth learn to reduce stress, build strength, and improve sleep

*Many of those we serve have experienced significant trauma. Sometimes they act out negative emotions by committing crimes, sometimes by using drugs. Many of them thrive in our program once they realize they are safe and cared for.*

– Dale Prosser, Program Director, Secure Custody