

Volunteer Feature



*Jonathon with
volunteer mentor Josh*

This July marked a milestone for UNYA's Mentorship Program. Volunteer mentor Josh Howarth and his youth mentee Jonathon became the first pair to graduate from the program, after six and a half years of mentoring. Our longest standing mentorship match, Josh was introduced to then 12-year-old Jonathan back in 2009. Now 19 years old, Jonathan is ready to graduate high school, has a part-time job, and dreams of becoming a chef. Josh's unconditional support no doubt played a significant role in his youth mentee's success. In celebration of this milestone, Mentorship Program Manager Catherine Rana took the opportunity to speak with Josh about his mentoring experience, and all the things he loves about Jonathan.

C: Tell us a bit about yourself!

J: My name is Josh and I've been volunteering with the Mentorship program since 2009. I'm a recently graduated Registered Nurse and am really enjoying all of the learning that goes with that. In my spare time, I like to enjoy the outdoors by running, biking, and hiking. Aside from that, I'm working at learning the guitar, but it's been a challenge! [continued on page 6](#)

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C: Why did you decide to join the Mentorship Program back in 2009?

J: I wanted to become more involved in my community in a way that was fun and interesting. When I was first looking for somewhere to volunteer, a friend of mine, who was a mentor at UNYA, suggested I look into the Mentorship Program. Upon learning more about the program, it sounded like a great fit!

C: What's your favourite activity you and Jonathan participated in?

J: I think my favourite activity we did was when we went paint balling on the North Shore. On the day we went, we were against a group of guys who were "professional paint ballers". Although we lost the game by a lot, it was really cool working together at something neither of us were all that good at. Lots of laughs were had!

C: Jonathan says his favourite thing about you is your laid back attitude. What's your favourite thing about Jonathan?

J: I love how care free my mentee is. The way in which he sees life is very refreshing and more often than not challenges me to see things from a different perspective. He is also pretty hilarious. He's always full of jokes and loves the spotlight!

C: You've known Jonathan for quite a while. How have you seen him grow since meeting him when he was 12?

J: I have been so honoured to be able to watch my mentee grow from a boy into a young man. When I first met him he was very much experiencing the typical challenges associated with entering the teenage years. With each year, I was continually amazed by just how much he grew, literally and metaphorically! Whatever obstacles came his way, he confronted them with determination, and has consistently found ways to overcome them. I've seen him grow socially into a young man who loves meeting new people and forming new friendships. I really couldn't be more proud of him.

C: What's been the most rewarding thing about your mentorship?

J: I'd say the strong bond between my mentee and I. I truly enjoy spending time with him and always leave having had plenty of laughs. I feel so honoured that he enjoys spending time with me even after all of these years. The fact that he still seeks my advice and values my opinions in the face of adversity is incredibly rewarding. I couldn't be more grateful to have had this experience.

With Jonathan now 19 years old, he and Josh will be transitioning to UNYA's Kinnections Program, which will provide a final year of mentoring support until Jonathan turns 20 years old. But even when that day comes, the Mentorship and Kinnections Program staff know that the friendship between Josh and Jonathan will only continue to grow.

"Our ultimate goal is to provide youth with a life-long advocate and friend. In witnessing how strong the relationship is between Josh and Jonathan, we feel wonderful knowing that we've achieved just that."

The Mentorship Program and Kinnections Program are always in need of qualified, committed volunteer mentors. To learn more about this rewarding volunteer opportunity, visit www.unya.bc.ca and click on "Volunteer."