



FRONTLINES

A youth-empowered
charity

Our Story

As one of only a few black-led charities in Toronto and as the only black-led charity focused on youth in the Weston (York-South Weston) community, our work is informed not only by our expertise as nonprofit and business leaders, but also by our lived experiences as Weston residents and parents.

Our full-circle programs address the whole youth - from the homework club to culinary programs and leadership skills development to employment programs.

We know the potential of our youth - they dream big and we are here to support them in realizing their dreams by providing them with core skills and tools they need to succeed.

*Local charity -
Black-led,
youth-
empowered*



As an award winning charity, voted best small shop by the largest chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) and Top 10 Best Youth Engagement Charities by Charity Village, we know what success looks like. We have grown tremendously over the last 5 years, and so has the need for our services. Our programs are in demand and high-impact. The work we do to invest in children and youth is the cornerstone of community building in Weston and surrounding areas.

Frontlines emerged organically when community leaders identified the need for a safe space and programming for our children to encourage their academic potential and develop their leadership skills. We have grown from our humble beginnings to serve even more children, provide an ever-growing list of programs and activities, and also serve as an active voice for black children and youth.

At Frontlines, we work towards transforming our communities so that all children and youth can have safe and inclusive space(s) to grow, develop, and achieve health, purpose, and a sense of belonging. We are rooted in the vibrancy of the Weston community; a spirit that has propelled our energies in touching the lives of youth all across the GTA. **We are grounded in empowering youth.**



Explosive growth in community need for our services, lack of space to sustain it

Frontlines addresses the pressing needs of children and youth in Weston and surrounding communities. Through inclusive initiatives, we amplify their voices and empower them to achieve their fullest potential.

Our track record speaks for itself: We have been able to connect with hundreds of children, in person and virtually, increasing our reach from 100 youth in 2016 to over 500 in 2021. Our success is due to our strong and consistent leadership, our strategic focus on youth and our bold ambition to sow the seeds of greatness in our community. We are poised for excellence and we are positioned for growth.

Despite our excellent community reputation, and our tremendous growth over the last several years, we are facing a great deal of uncertainty due to the lack of long-term solutions for our space needs.

In 2021 we were able to secure a new space on a temporary lease which created a significant

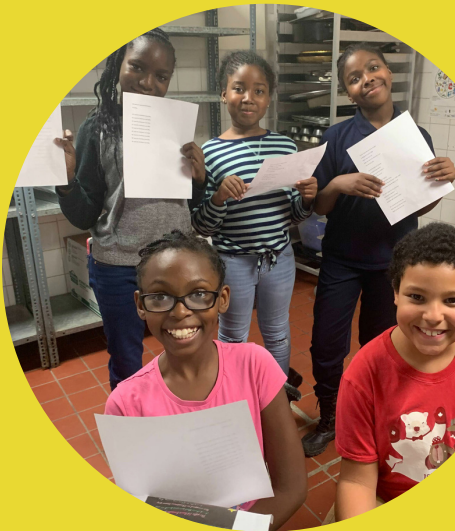
Our programs are part of the fabric which makes Weston a community of great potential, yet the spaces we occupy are not commensurate with our needs nor our potential.

Our youth deserves a place that inspires them to reach higher.



increase in our annual operating budget. While we are proud to have skillfully negotiated a great deal, we are mindful that our fortunes can turn any time and we could experience a significant rent increase. Our current space is a safe harbour for now, but it is not nearly big enough nor designed to address the specific needs of our youth. We are working towards a permanent solution which will not only bring stability to our operations but put us in a better position to address the needs of Weston children and youth.

The need for our services is only increasing. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted our community and our services are needed to ensure that our community and our youth are not left behind. We have added additional locations in Rexdale, Etobicoke, Pelham and Falstaff. Our services transform lives and spark bold ambitions in our youth, yet the spaces from which we operate are not representative of these bold ambitions.



The Frontlines Youth Excellence Centre

As a local charity, led by members of the community, we know the needs of our youth first hand. We have successfully grown our programs and expanded our services to impact every aspect of the lives of our children and youth. Our approach is collaborative and informed by the voices of the children and youth themselves. Our unique Leaders in Training (LIT) program empowers older young adults to mentor children. This allows them to develop their leadership skills and learn the value of community building, while establishing connections with younger children who are most influenced by role models and peers. Our culinary program combines career-building skills and experiences for youth which make them more likely to excel in their future careers: whether they want to own their own restaurant or become a chef, or go to university.

At Frontlines, we serve children and youth from various age groups and provide a wide range of programs. A new space will allow us to create dedicated spaces for intentional programming which is necessary for their effective delivery.



The Frontlines Youth Excellence Centre will address our current needs for dedicated spaces for programming, personal counseling and staff growth. This space will be a flagship location where we sow the seeds of greatness and welcome children and youth in a space deserving of their talent. Since we are poised for growth, this location will also harness the power and expertise of our staff in order to develop satellite programs and locations in neighboring communities.

Imagine yourself looking through the eyes of a 10-year old child coming to attend our homework club program at the Frontlines Youth Excellence Center...

You are greeted by dedicated staff and welcomed into a bright and spacious area equipped with the tools needed to help you with projects and homework. Down the hall you catch a glimpse of older boys and girls participating in a cook-off. Upstairs counselors are providing 1:1 session for your older brother about his options for going to university. After an hour or two, you have completed all your homework and can head over to the lounge area to hang out with other children and play during drop-in hours. When you leave, you know you will be back to spend more time with new friends and you know there's a place where you can be safe and empowered to explore all you can become.



Our personal counseling services are in high demand. Our youth face many challenges and systemic barriers, and our experienced counselors help them to develop coping mechanisms and strategies so they can be successful, both in the short- and long-term. We need to provide privacy for these sessions so we can establish trust and stronger relationships with youth.

In order to make our vision a reality we need a \$5-million dollar investment from government, corporate partners and community members. This will allow us to secure a permanent space in Weston, where our flagship programs will be offered. Purchasing the real-estate and retrofitting the space will take significant resources, but it will ensure that we are poised for growth.

Community leadership is in the Frontlines DNA and this dedicated space will also be a manifestation of the potential of our community. An investment in Weston youth reverberates across families and the entire community. It provides employment and economic growth opportunities for small businesses in the area. The Frontlines Youth Excellence Centre will be a space that welcomes the community and inspires our youth to dream big. It will provide dedicated programming space, one on one counseling services and leadership development training for youth.

It will be a space where dreams are born.



The Frontlines Youth Excellence Centre will be a unique space, empowered by youth, led by local community members and contributing to the vibrancy of the local economy.

Sowing the Seeds of Greatness

Maddy

In a year that has tested the resilience of our community, especially our youth, young people like Maddy have shown the true meaning of perseverance. In the face of COVID-19 and the numerous challenges that compound the experiences of marginalized youth, Maddy was able to land a full scholarship to pursue her dream of receiving a college education.

In some communities, accomplishments like this happen every day. But, in the Weston Community, where we see one of the lowest graduation rates in the Toronto District School Board, Maddy represents the true meaning of change and what Frontlines is making possible for youth.

Programs like the homework club and the (LIT) Leaders in Training provide vital opportunities that change lives allowing young people like Maddy to reach their full potential and shine bright like a diamond.

Star

Just this past summer, Star emerged the winner of the first ever Cook Off Competition held by Frontlines and judged by celebrity chef Roger Mooking and National Lifestyle and Food Editor Rita Demontis. Since then, Star has devoted her time and new skills in the kitchen to helping to ensure that the young children in the community are fed.

Her dream is to become a social worker. And, she's making inroads into learning how to relate to the community and care for young people through Frontlines' culinary and food distribution programs.

Every program we provide, helps to create stronger bonds that give our young people a sense of hope and belonging.

“ I have the opportunity to connect with the community in a way that I had not been able to before. This program has helped me gain a sense of self and what the community needs, so that I am prepared for the reality facing the community when I enter the workforce. ”

Omari

Omari Anderson has been involved with Frontlines since he was 12 years old. He is the recipient of the Roger Mooking Culinary Prize. When his mother recently passed away, Frontlines was there to help his brother secure a full scholarship to post secondary school.

“ Frontlines helped me develop my interpersonal skills and gave me access to opportunities for schooling and employment. Frontlines has always been like family. ”



Get Involved

We need your support to make our vision a reality. We are looking for dedicated volunteers and leaders to advocate on our behalf and help us raise the funds needed to establish the Frontlines Youth Excellence Centre. Join us sowing the seeds of greatness for Black youth in Weston, today.



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