

# Giving Kids the Chance to Be All They Can Be

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15 winters ago, six year old Will Heaman and his sister were playing at an outside playground near the North Hill Inn in Red Deer. "It was cold out. Les Waite was running programs for the North Hill club, and he welcomed us in to warm up. Then he told us about the Boys and Girls Club and that's how we started getting involved." We made friends and played games. They have after school activities with snacks that run until 5.30. We played in the playground – all sorts of games, and there was skating in the winter."

As he got older, Will was able to volunteer with the Club that helped him earn "YVC dollars" towards Camp Alexo. "I've been involved with the Zed Haunted House for close to eight years now, since I was 13. I'm on the city committee for it and I help plan it, run it, and take it down. When you volunteer you earn YVC dollars which you can use to pay for camp. That's mostly how I was able to go to camp as a kid. I used the YVC dollars I gained to send kids to camp who can't afford it. Last year I sent two kids."

Will is currently studying at Red Deer College and hopes to work in Finance. "The Boys and Girls Club has given me the encouragement to do things that I normally wouldn't do. Not all my friends had that kind of support and some went down a dark path into drugs and crime."

"Personally, I want to make the change in a kid that the Boys and Girls Club made in me. I want a kid to be able to experience the same thing I was able to experience."

Thanks to the Boys and Girls Club of Red Deer and District, hundreds of children in the Red Deer area get to experience the same positive impact that influenced Will's future and his desire to "give back" to his community.

"It's been a big portion of my life," said Will.



United Way invests in youth programs throughout Central Alberta, so that kids, like Will, can have the opportunity to be all that they can be.