

23 Years of Gear Up!!!

November 5, 2026



We've been planning Gear Up for many years now, but for those who don't know who we are or what we're up to...

...since 2004, every year, without fail, the Gear Up event has happened. Thousands of youth and young adults have had the opportunity to participate in the "Gear Up" experience. Gear Up for Winter first came into being as a youth 'spin off' from the former adult Winter Tune Up events, when the need was recognized for something more age appropriate. We saw that youth who are experiencing houselessness can have vulnerabilities connected to their age that make adult focused events a high-risk setting. These youth still required supports though such as help navigating systems, a warm coat, or a pair of socks. Thus, the Gear Up for Winter was born as an afternoon off the streets, a one-stop-shop of selfcare activities, much needed winter gear, hygiene items, and access to youth serving supports.

At Gear Up, youth between 12 and 24 can attend and access haircuts, flu shots, or smudge supplies. They can see a nurse, a lawyer, a dental professional, get an eye exam and speak with an Elder. Youth can get, a library card, a hot meal, some hygiene supplies, warm clothes, a bus ticket, and even enroll in school. This is a safe place to pick up a Naloxone kit and other harm reduction supplies. Gear Up is a chance for youth to get a brand-new backpack, fill it up, have some fun, and get connected with youth serving organizations ALL IN ONE PLACE!!! One unique piece of Gear Up has been a "wish table", where youth can get that "extra thing" (gift card, new work boots, make up case, etc.).

Businesses and organizations within the community dedicate their time and resources to the event, and over 35 different agencies participate yearly to support Calgary's most vulnerable young people. Gear Up is an opportunity for Calgarians to reach out as a collective group, helping to bring wellness and a sense of connection to Calgary's vulnerable youth. Some of our supporters have included the CBC, Gibson Energy, Kinsmen Club of the Stampede City, Children's Hospital Aid Society, Kiwanis Club of Calgary, Stampede City Kinettes, Sock Rocket, Mark's, Devon and Lang, and many others!!!

The grassroots Gear Up committee has been planning and scheming to make this 23rd Gear Up an even bigger success, but **WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!** If you, your organization, or community would like to contribute with donations of items or other resources, please visit our website at www.gearupcalgary.com, our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/gearupcalgary, or our Instagram at @gearupforwinter. We can offer tax receipts for monetary contributions over \$20.

This year's organizing committee consists of members from: Recovery Alberta CAAMHPP, PCA Elbow River Healing Lodge, The Alex, McMan, Bow Valley College, Trellis, Calgary John Howard Society, Hull Services, Wood's Homes, Closer to Home, My Potentia, and USAY (Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth).

If you have questions or need more information about the event, or if you or your organization would like to participate in this year's event, please contact Danene Lenstra at 403.333.7270 or danene.lenstra@primarycarealberta.ca.

With heartfelt thanks,

The 2026 Gear Up Committee

