



Connections

A Newsletter for Friends of Homeless Youth Connection

Homeless Youth Connection is Expanding!

Homeless Youth Connection has been expanding, and we want to share the news with you! There's a good reason for our expansion. Most individuals are unaware of the youth HYC serves because they are invisible. They are not part of the child welfare system, and



they don't often ask for help. Homeless youth are usually identified by their teachers, counselors, and coaches. The most recent reports from the Arizona Department of Education tell us there are more than 7,000 homeless youth attending high school in Maricopa County, and 570 of those students are unaccompanied youth, or youth on their own. That's a large number of students who face numerous barriers to education, keeping many of them from completing high school or achieving post-secondary education.

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness and The Family and Youth Services Bureau, in many urban communities, the youth homelessness system consists of programs to

assist youth only after they become homeless. The majority of nonprofit or governmental services for youth that are experiencing homelessness focus on runaways and homeless youth who are not attending high school. For youth under 18, most efforts try to help them avoid the need for emergency shelter whenever possible by connecting and/or reunifying them with members of their family or other natural supports (as defined by each young person). Far too often, youth become homeless because neither the public child welfare system nor private nonprofit agencies offer early intervention or prevention. This creates a gap through which many at-risk youth fall, creating avoidable episodes of homelessness.



HYC knows that there are a number of noteworthy programs serving homeless youth throughout the country. However, we have found that there are a limited number of programs providing services to homeless youth directly in the high

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schools like HYC does. We have found the most effective interventions are the ones that engage youth early in the cycle of homelessness. HYC uses our unique approach to stabilize youth in appropriate and supportive environments.

Thanks to our community partners, HYC has expanded from a single school district in 2010 to more than 50 high schools throughout Maricopa County. We are very excited to announce that we have recently added the Mesa Unified School District as one of our new partners. With the additional schools we are serving, HYC anticipates serving between 600 and 700 homeless youth this school year. Thank you for your part in helping us to serve our students.

Giving homeless youth a chance for a brighter future.

West Valley Mavericks Host Childspree Event for HYC Students



Sixty-five teens from Homeless Youth Connection's (HYC) program were given the opportunity to attend Childspree, a back-to-school shopping event hosted by volunteers from local men's foundation, the West Valley Mavericks. For the third year in a row, this event at the Kohl's in Avondale, Arizona allowed each participating student the chance to shop for much-needed items for school. In addition, the Wigwam Resort generously provided breakfast for the participants.

Volunteers from the West Valley Mavericks and their wives, The Mustangs, shopped with youth and assisted with transportation. In addition, The Mustangs put together donated bags of hygiene items for every student that participated. HYC is so grateful for the support of this amazing group of community members that give back so much to organizations across the West Valley.



ABOUT THE WEST VALLEY MAVERICKS:

Created in 2012 and consisting of only 21 charter members, The Mavericks are an all-volunteer, nonprofit organizational group of business and community leaders that are helping build, shape, and support our West Valley communities by creating events to raise money for charitable causes.

Thank You Dick's Sporting Goods and Walmart

Since our inception, HYC has been blessed to have the support from outstanding community partners like Dick's Sporting Goods and the Walmart Distribution Center. In addition to volunteer and financial support, these two major corporations have helped stock our Teen Exchange with basic needs including hygiene items, clothing, school supplies, household items and much more. We are sincerely grateful to Dick's and Walmart for their incredible outgoing support. Thanks to these powerhouse community partners, in addition to many generous individuals and other organizations in our community, our students' basic needs are always met.



Throughout the year, HYC receives truckloads of pallets from Walmart which helps keep our shelves of basic needs fully stocked. Because of the abundance of items, HYC is able to supplement the emergency pantries for the 10 districts we serve throughout Maricopa County. This ongoing donation ensures that more than 600 homeless youth have daily hygiene items and much more.

Over the next few months, Dick's Sporting Goods is donating several tons of clothing and sporting apparel including winter jackets, pants, leggings, tops, shorts, socks, sports bras and much more. This amazing donation will allow HYC to provide an outfit to all of the homeless youth participating in the program. On October 31,



volunteers from Helping Hands at Crossings Church in Goodyear helped unload the first of many truckloads of clothing. Thank you to Dick's for their continued support and to all of our dedicated volunteers.

HYC Holiday Hope for Teens

Sponsors and donors are needed to 'adopt' a teen for the holidays through Homeless Youth Connection's "Holiday Hope for Teens" program. Each youth currently in HYC's program has submitted a list of needed items, as well as a \$50 'wish list' gift to help them celebrate the holiday season. This year, more than 200 teens will need the help of the community to grant their holiday wishes. Lists can be sponsored by calling the Homeless Youth Connection office. Gifts can be wrapped, and notes and cards are welcome. Groups are also welcome to participate. **Sponsors are needed now, and donations will be due by December 6, 2017 to ensure that they can be delivered to students' schools before the holiday break.**

WHERE: Donations can be delivered to HYC at 9950 W. Van Buren in Avondale. For more information call the office at 623-374-3747.



Students Experiencing Homelessness Need Safe Homes

With the expansion of our program to serve schools across the Valley, we are also seeing a faster-than-expected increase in the number of unaccompanied youth who are without a safe place to sleep at night. We anticipated an increase in the number of students needing Host Family homes, but since the beginning of the school year we have had a new student without a place to call home identified **every other day**. We are doing our best to keep up, but we need the help of all the communities we serve.

These stories are just a few that have been shared with HYC recently. Sadly, we know there are more to come. What can you do to help? Please consider being a part of our Host Family program, or let a friend or family member know about our need for additional Host Family homes. For more information, call us at 623-374-3747.

These are just a few of the recent student stories:

CARL: Carl's dad is in prison and his mom lives out of the country. He lives with grandparents, but the family is slowly preparing to move out of state. They plan to move to an area where there is no extra room for Carl, and his brothers have already left. He will be homeless when his grandparents leave.

LYNN: Lynn's mom passed away over the summer, and she's never known or seen her dad. She has been staying with a friend, but that family is now suggesting that Lynn needs to find a new place to stay soon. Lynn's closest companion is her pet cat that has helped her cope with the tragic loss of her mom and only family.

ANDY: Andy was living at home when his dad moved in after being released from prison. The same night Andy met his dad for the first time, his dad went out and got drunk, then returned home and began to hit the children living there. His dad was arrested, but released the next day. The older children have moved out, but Andy was left alone. Dad also abuses drugs and threatens to kill the children. Andy needs a safe place to escape immediately.



9950 W. Van Buren, Suite 114
 Avondale, AZ 85323 • 623-374-3747
hycaz.org

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HYC Connections

Fall/Winter 2017-18

2017



Calendar of Events

Save these dates and mark your calendar with this important list of upcoming HYC events!

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2017

Empowering Youth Breakfast
 Wyndham Garden
 3600 N. 2nd Ave., Phoenix

Be sure to join us from 7:00-8:30 a.m. for this FREE event to learn more about our programs, successes and plans for the upcoming year. Please call 623-374-3747 to reserve your seat.



Thanks to our generous sponsors, this event is FREE to all guests.



*Sending you
 our very best
 wishes for the
 holiday season!*

