

HYCconnections

A NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF HOMELESS YOUTH CONNECTION

FALL 2021

Graduation Rates Likely to Fall Nationwide Due to COVID-19

Many experts and professionals in education are sharing concerns over the obstacles and challenges that students faced during the pandemic. As learning moved to a virtual setting, accessing classes and staying engaged became a problem. Unreliable internet, lack of a computer, and unsuitable learning environments are a few of the many new obstacles that faced students. This made it much harder for high schoolers, including youth experiencing homelessness, to maintain good grades and stay on track to graduate during the pandemic. Now that many schools are reopening and shifting away from online learning, we must consider the long-term effects of school closures on youth.

According to recent data from Great Public Schools Now, graduation rates are already falling due to the pandemic. If high school students are not supported to catch up quickly, 20% of the class of 2021, 43% of the class of 2022, 37% of the class of 2023, and 30% of the class of 2024 will not graduate. This study indicates that over the next four years, tens of thousands of youth are at risk and could potentially not earn their high school diploma. This widespread learning loss disproportionately impacts Black, Latino, low-income students, English learners, students with disabilities, foster youth, and students experiencing homelessness.

This data appears alongside many other recent reports indicating the extreme negative effects the pandemic had on youth experiencing homelessness. Local school districts are reporting a more than 40% decrease in homeless youth enrolled in school. In response to these concerning reports, HYC is responding to better support youth experiencing homelessness to stay on track and graduate. In 2021, HYC launched an outreach initiative intended to identify and engage homeless youth who had dropped out of school. HYC youth coaches have worked tirelessly to locate missing youth throughout the Valley, connecting them with needed resources and helping them reenroll in school. As of May 1, 2021, HYC confirmed that 75% of these youth were in safe and stable housing, enrolled in high school, or were reconnected with HYC staff to receive services.

Although many schools are open for in-person learning and shifting toward recovery from the pandemic, HYC plans to continue applying these expanded and enhanced outreach strategies. Our goal is to improve services to our youth, maintain involvement in their education, and more successfully engage



those who are struggling. This outreach involves obtaining the most updated contact information available and using as many ways as possible to contact youth, including door-to-door canvassing, as well as engaging their social media. This also includes extended collaboration with school staff, including liaisons, social workers, and teachers, who help youth coaches connect their students with the academic resources they need to stay in school.

HYC is proud of the youth we serve and equips them with the tools they need to overcome obstacles set in their way due to the pandemic. Through increased outreach efforts, individualized case management, and meeting educational and basic needs, HYC plans to beat the statistic, and continue helping more than 90% of HYC seniors to graduate high school.

Meet Our New Board Member

HYC is Proud to Welcome Edward Brabham, Jr. to Our Board of Directors



Edward is the Senior Director DC Operations at Dick's Sporting Goods. His involvement with HYC began in August 2012. He was introduced to HYC by our founder, Larry Cervarich, which led Dick's Sporting Goods to choose HYC as their local charity.

Growing up in the Bronx, Edward saw classmates who were struggling outside of school and did not have access to resources or the opportunity to get help. After learning that HYC provides the necessary services to assist youth experiencing homelessness, he knew he wanted to be part of an organization that "positively influenced and saved many lives while enriching their future."

Edward looks forward to supporting HYC's mission, which is to eliminate barriers to graduation for homeless youth and create lasting solutions for a successful future through community support, increased awareness and fundraising. "During my nine years working with HYC, I have personally seen the positive impact it has brought to the communities and schools. Therefore, I want to be part of the continuous growth and support the mission," he said.

Originally from New York, Edward is a graduate of Penn State University and was a member of the US Air Force for 10 years, both on active duty and in the reserves. He is a passionate and supportive fan of all New York sports teams, especially the New York Yankees, Giants and Knicks. Additionally, he is an avid bowler with a 190+ average in league bowling and tournaments.

We are excited to have Edward join our team and support our mission!

Meet Our New Flagstaff Youth Coach

Jason Ibe Joined HYC as Youth Coach for the Flagstaff Community in July 2021



Jason comes to us with more than 16 years of experience in social services working with at-risk youth, youth with developmental disabilities, the elderly, and the physically disabled population in various communities. He also has experience as a counselor working collaboratively with school districts assisting youth with disabilities in their transition to life post-graduation. Jason has more than six years of experience working in and around Flagstaff, including in the Navajo, Hopi, and Apache reservations.

As a youth coach, Jason is responsible for identifying and providing the basic needs and resources homeless youth need to stay in school, graduate, and create a plan for their future. Jason sees his position at HYC as a way to further his anchored and growing passion for serving Arizona's marginalized populations and support them in achieving their goals. He spends much of his leisure time reading and learning, as well as hiking and biking Flagstaff's vast terrain. Jason also enjoys cooking—and, even more so, eating!

HYC HELPS
PXU HELP THE
COMMUNITY



One of HYC's school partners, Phoenix Union High School District (PXU), with its 13 partner elementary school districts, hosted three two-day events this summer for all individuals 12 years of age and older to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination. Events were located throughout the district in high schools and elementary schools. PXU Superintendent Dr. Chad Geston said, "The zip codes we serve have been some of the hardest hit in the nation by COVID-19 and some of the slowest to receive the vaccine supply. It is our goal to provide continued access to this vital resource."



The event, called ***Spread Love, Not COVID***, offered vaccinations, as well as food boxes, hygiene products and backpacks at no cost to families. HYC staff and our volunteers participated as community volunteers at each of the three

events to provide support at check in and help distribute giveaways.



We are grateful to all who volunteered to support this important effort and gave their time to help others in need.

GIVE BACK THIS Holiday Season

Become an HYC Holiday Helper



Fall has just arrived, and the holidays are right around the corner. As temperatures cool off, the number of youth we serve increases throughout the fall and winter. We're prepared to meet the needs of our youth, but we need your help and holiday spirit to make this time of year special. Interested in making a difference in the life of a youth experiencing homelessness? Here's how you can get involved this holiday season:

FOR THANKSGIVING, sponsor a holiday meal basket (filled with a turkey and all the trimmings) for our youth and their families. Recruit members of your church, club, or workplace to buy the groceries needed to make a holiday meal!

WANT TO SKIP THE SHOPPING? Sponsor a Thanksgiving basket, valued at \$50, online at hyc.org (please note the donation is for Thanksgiving). Or you can also sign up to volunteer and deliver these food baskets to our students' homes the week before Thanksgiving.

FOR THE WINTER HOLIDAYS, fulfill a teen's holiday wish list to help them celebrate the season. Individuals, groups, or businesses can sponsor a student through HYC's Holiday Hope for Teens program and give a youth experiencing homelessness something special this time of year. Gifts can be wrapped; the teens love to receive gift cards and notes or cards are always welcome.

PLEASE CONSIDER SIGNING UP TO BE A SPONSOR TODAY!

Your support will help to ensure gifts can be delivered to our youth before the winter holiday break. For more information on our Thanksgiving and winter holiday needs, please contact Haley Harper, Community Resources Manager, at 623-374-3747 or hharper@hyc.org.

Varsity Sports Show

Varsity Sports Show Host, Vince D'Aliesio, joined HYC at one of the Phoenix Union High School District (PXU) community events to host a remote broadcast to learn more about HYC, our work with PXU and to talk about the event and need in our community. Thank you, Vince, for highlighting HYC on your show!



Pictured L to R: Vince D'Aliesio, Host, Varsity Sports Show; Dana Bailey, COO, HYC; Cyndi Tercero, Family and Community Engagement Manager, Phoenix Union High School District; and Dawn Bogart, CEO, HYC.

HYC EXPANDING SERVICES TO FLAGSTAFF, AZ



We are excited to report that in August 2021, HYC expanded its services beyond Maricopa County to Coconino County by providing services to homeless youth in the Flagstaff Unified School District and at Ponderosa High School.

Flagstaff is a close-knit community where service providers and community partners work together to meet the needs of their community members. They have welcomed HYC to deliver services to youth experiencing homelessness that are not currently offered by existing service providers. School representatives anticipate 100 homeless youth will need services provided by HYC, especially housing for youth 18 to 24. HYC has had significant success with the Host Family program and will work to establish it in the Flagstaff community to serve unaccompanied youth.

"I am beyond thrilled with the new partnership Flagstaff Unified School District's (FUSD) McKinney-Vento (MV) Program and HYC will share to support those experiencing homelessness," said Stephanie Sivak, FUSD McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Liaison. She went on to say, "While material resources like basic needs and school fees provide needed financial assistance, it is one adult who makes a difference in a youth's life. Having an HYC youth coach meeting weekly with students to build relationships and mentor is priceless. We look forward to collaborating with HYC staff and host home supporters to walk with our resilient and resourceful youth as they pursue their dreams."

HYC has a youth coach, Jason Ibe, who lives in Flagstaff and will be meeting with homeless youth, educators, and community service providers to deliver the most comprehensive services to youth in need.



Homeless Youth
Connection

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HYConnections

Homeless Youth Connection Newsletter

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Become a Monthly Donor

Create Change in Your Community

Throughout the year, HYC works to eliminate barriers to graduation for youth experiencing homelessness and creates lasting solutions for a successful future through community support. With your help as a monthly donor, we can continue to eliminate those barriers as a community. Your monthly gift makes it possible for HYC to provide dependable resources and makes a lasting impact for youth who are experiencing homelessness.

Choose the amount you would like to give each month and give a youth experiencing homelessness hope. Your monthly contribution can and will make a difference.

\$10 PER MONTH helps with medical co-pays and prescriptions.

\$25 PER MONTH helps with technology for remote learning.

\$45 PER MONTH helps with meals for hungry youth.

\$95 PER MONTH covers case management services for one student for one month.

\$165 PER MONTH supports 10 days of emergency home services for one student in urgent crisis.



Your credit card will be charged once per month. Each January, we will send you a tax receipt for your giving history from the previous year. To enroll in our monthly giving program, visit hycaz.org/monthly-donation. **Contact Dawn Boeck at dmboeck@hycaz.org with questions or for additional information.**