

# HYCconnections

A NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF HOMELESS YOUTH CONNECTION

SPRING 2021

## The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation Partners with HYC *Support Will Impact Lives of Youth Experiencing Homelessness*

**Homeless Youth Connection** recently received a \$250,000 grant from The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation to ensure youth experiencing homelessness receive the basic needs and resources to stay in school and complete their education.



The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation is a passionate supporter of organizations and activities that benefit the youth of our community. The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation was formed to reach low-income and underserved populations, marginalized communities and causes often overlooked or underfunded.

"We are so grateful to The Bob & Renee Parsons

Foundation for providing HYC with the support to ensure youth experiencing homelessness have the opportunity for a hopeful future," said Dawn Bogart, HYC Chief Executive Officer. "These resources will help HYC provide authentic engagement and positive youth development, so that youth experiencing homelessness will succeed and reach their highest potential."

The need is greater than ever due to the pandemic. Increased complications and additional barriers exist for youth experiencing homelessness trying to stay in school. This funding allows HYC to provide case management, housing resources, medical services, basic needs and additional educational support including access to WI-FI and laptop computers for remote learning.



*Dealing in the areas of homelessness, medical care, at-risk youth, education and the needs of wounded veterans and military families, The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation provides transformational gifts to nonprofit organizations that are successfully addressing these issues and can demonstrate and measure the impact of their work.*

In addition, HYC youth coaches work with youth on their plan for their future! The youth develop life skills that will benefit them as they enter adulthood and identify what they want to do after high school graduation, whether it is college, trade school, sustainable employment or the military. HYC is instrumental in providing youth with the resources and skills to break the cycle of homelessness.

***Thank you to The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation for partnering in our mission and supporting our youth!***

Arizona  
Charitable  
Tax Credit



**DID YOU KNOW?** Depending on your Arizona tax liability, your donation may be eligible for the Arizona Charitable Tax Credit. Find out more at [hyc.org](http://hyc.org)



## Meet Our New Board Member

### ***HYC is Pleased to Announce and Welcome Cindy Toraya to Our Board of Directors***

A native Arizonan, Cindy Toraya, is an experienced Medical Director with a demonstrated history of working in the hospital and health care industry since 1995. She has worked as a family physician, supervisor and teacher to family medicine residents, palliative medicine physician, and hospice medical director. She is skilled in health policy and health law, with a Doctor of Law (J.D.) from Seattle University School of Law. Additionally, she has a Master's in Clinical Psychology from Antioch University in Seattle. She believes education is critical to a youth's success, has been a community volunteer, loves a challenge, and considers herself to be a problem solver.

Toraya will be supporting HYC's mission to eliminate barriers to graduation for homeless youth and create lasting solutions for a successful future through community support, increased awareness and fundraising.

"I'm thrilled to be a member of the board at HYC, an amazing organization with the mission of helping support homeless youth continue their education. The homeless youth population humbles me with their strength and perseverance; to help support them along their journey is something that has been important to me for a long time. I very much appreciate this opportunity to advocate for them."

"We are excited to add someone with a wealth of knowledge and professional experience to our board to help advocate for youth experiencing homelessness," said Ginny Solis-Wright, HYC Board President. "We are proud to welcome Cindy to our board and confident that she will help us advance our work."



## Meet Our New Staff Member

### ***Haley Harper Joins the HYC Development Team as Community Resource Manager***

HYC's new Community Resource Manager, Haley Harper, will be responsible for overseeing the Emergency Resource Pantries throughout the Valley and will coordinate donation collection and distribution. She will also foster relationships with community partners, organizations, and volunteers to support programming and services provided at HYC. Haley will work closely with the development team to promote community awareness through communication and outreach initiatives.

Haley has worked in the nonprofit sector for several years supporting youth, particularly seriously ill children and refugees. She also served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Africa and collaborated with community members to create sustainable resource access for schoolchildren in her village. Haley says, "I am incredibly excited about the opportunity to further cultivate strong community support, expand our services within new communities, and bolster awareness in order to support youth programming at HYC."

Haley has her bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona where she double majored in English and history. She enjoys spending time with her friends and family, as well as reading, hiking, playing piano, and traveling. You can reach Haley at [hharper@hycaz.org](mailto:hharper@hycaz.org)

## HYC'S OUTREACH EFFORTS



***Often One  
Step Forward,  
Two Steps Back***



**AUSTIN** is a sophomore in high school who struggles with dyslexia. Austin stopped attending school when closures due to COVID-19 began early last year. He was living in an RV without electricity and sometimes without water. As a result, he could not participate in remote learning because of the lack of utilities. An HYC youth coach was able to assist the family with resources in addition to food and hygiene items and connected with his school to try to get Austin enrolled again. Soon after, Austin, his siblings and their mother fled home to a domestic violence shelter for their safety. Determined to help Austin, HYC was able to track Austin and his family again and helped with clothing, shoes, and basic needs. HYC is working hard to stay connected with Austin's family, help them, and reconnect Austin to school.



**WILLOW** is a 21-year-old student who was kicked out of her home during high school and moved in with her boyfriend. While living with her boyfriend, Willow struggled with attendance and completing her make-up credits to get back on track to graduate. Eventually, Willow ended the relationship with her boyfriend, lost her phone and dropped out of school. Months later, Willow reached out to a school counselor to help her with housing, and the school contacted HYC. However, without Willow's contact information, connecting with the student was no easy task. Fortunately, Willow's youth coach discovered her social media account on Facebook and Willow immediately responded. With support from her school and HYC, Willow was able to get re-enrolled in school. HYC provided her with a laptop, hygiene products and groceries. Willow is now attending a charter school in Mesa and is on her path to graduation.

## HYC's COVID-19 Outreach Initiative Addresses Missing Homeless Youth



John Nesbitt, HYC's Host Family Youth Coach, makes a delivery as part of the HYC Outreach Initiative.

As a result of COVID-19 and mandates for schools to move to virtual learning, thousands of youth experiencing homelessness have faced new barriers to accessing education. So far, school districts are reporting a decrease in homeless youth enrolled in school by over 40 percent. Hundreds of youth who are newly homeless, along with youth and families with historical housing instability, are missing, and schools have limited resources to find them. Therefore, HYC has created a new outreach initiative to search for, find, connect with and resolve barriers for youth to help get them re-enrolled in school.

The goal of this initiative is to find these missing youth and help them re-enroll in school, connect with their peers, and get them back on track for graduation and their future, while meeting their basic needs and providing ongoing support through program services. We are currently making contact with students who were in the HYC program during the Spring 2020 semester but are not in our program now. This may be because they are no longer McKinney-Vento\* eligible, or it may be another legitimate reason. When youth coaches are not meeting youth in school, they typically connect with our youth by phone or email, but in response to how many of our students prefer to communicate and get information, we have launched a

new Instagram page exclusively for our youth. This page provides program updates and news, as well as offers a more convenient medium for our youth to reach out to us. If HYC is unable to contact the student by phone or email and they are not enrolled in school, HYC will send a team of two youth coaches to the most recent address we have available to try to engage the student. Although our goal is to help the student re-enroll in high school by referring them to the McKinney-Vento liaison, we will also be providing the student with basic hygiene supplies and gift cards to assist with food. If they have graduated from high school but are unstably housed, etc., we will determine the best course of action. We will also reach out to district liaisons in partnership to contact previously identified McKinney-Vento students from the former school year who have disengaged and are not enrolled in the current school year.

"It is such a critical time for us to take on this challenge and expand our role within the community," said Lisa Miller, Director of Youth Services at HYC. "We've seen the numbers increase across the country, and we know that HYC is uniquely positioned to address this issue."

*\*The McKinney-Vento Act provides rights and services to children and youth experiencing homelessness, which includes those who are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; staying in motels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to the lack of an adequate alternative; staying in shelters or transitional housing; or sleeping in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or similar settings.*

## Invest in HYC... Invest in Arizona

We're excited to announce that Homeless Youth Connection is, once again, participating in Arizona Gives Day, a statewide, 24-hour online giving campaign.



Every day youth experiencing homelessness live with food insecurity, unstable housing and health issues that make them disproportionately vulnerable. With the continued challenge of COVID-19, each day is even more uncertain for this fragile group of young people. We need your help now more than ever to continue our mission.

**Please consider giving on April 6. Mark your calendar or schedule your gift in advance at [azgives.org/hycaz](https://azgives.org/hycaz)**

## ANNOUNCING THE LAUNCH OF OUR NEW WEBSITE Check Out Our New Look at [hycaz.org](https://hycaz.org)

After months of dedication and hard work, HYC is thrilled to announce the launch of our new website this spring. The new website is easier to navigate, faster and more user-friendly. We are introducing a resource

section to further support our youth, as well as a blog for our community supporters. Our fresh new look is up-to-date with program information, ways to get involved and upcoming events. This streamlined interface will help us to continue eliminating barriers to graduation for homeless youth, and create lasting solutions for a successful future through community support and increased awareness.





## HELP US CONNECT TO YOU!



Please let us know  
your preferred method  
of communication by  
taking a quick 2-minute  
survey at:

[surveymonkey.com/r/HYC-AZ](https://surveymonkey.com/r/HYC-AZ)

## HYConnections

Homeless Youth Connection Newsletter

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*Check out our new look at [hycaz.org](http://hycaz.org)*

## 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.

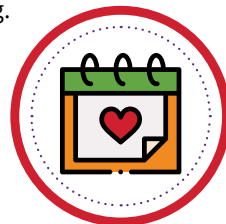
**\$10 PER MONTH** helps with medical co-pays and prescriptions.

**\$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. Visit [hycaz.org/donate](http://hycaz.org/donate) to enroll in our monthly giving program. **Contact Dawn Boeck at [dmboeck@hycaz.org](mailto:dmboeck@hycaz.org) with questions or for additional information.**