

HYCconnections

A NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF HOMELESS YOUTH CONNECTION

WINTER 2021

HYC Host Families Provide Critical Support to Unaccompanied Youth



There are thousands of youth experiencing homelessness in Arizona. While most of these youth are with their families, in a shelter, at an extended stay motel, or doubled up with relatives, about 30% are unaccompanied. Unaccompanied youth are on their own and are homeless without a guardian or parent to help care for them. These youth do whatever they must to have a place to sleep, often by couch surfing, bartering sex or labor for shelter, and sleeping in their cars. HYC meets

this need by offering safe and stable housing to unaccompanied youth through its Host Family Housing program. Community volunteers receive a stipend to help offset costs while serving as an HYC host family for the academic year, and HYC provides case management support and essential needs for the youth. Host families eliminate the worry of housing so that HYC youth can focus on school and their future.

Rebecca and Charles Johnson* became an HYC host family in March 2021. Many host families join HYC's program as volunteers with no connection to an HYC youth, but some are already housing a couch surfing student. Joining the HYC Host Family Housing program helps the youth stabilize in a safe environment, which allows them to better focus on their studies. Katie* was homeless and unaccompanied after physical and verbal abuse from her father forced her out of the house. The Johnsons, family friends of Katie, invited her to live with them in September 2020 so she would have a place to sleep. The Johnsons and Katie learned about HYC in March of 2021 through her school's counseling department.

While the Johnsons provided a safe and stable home for Katie, they did not have the resources to help her get the support she needed before joining HYC. As a result of the abuse, Katie struggles with anxiety, panic attacks, nightmares, depression, suicidal thoughts and has been diagnosed with PTSD. Katie did not have her birth certificate or medical insurance and needed financial assistance for college.

When Katie spoke with her school counselor in the spring of 2021 about her situation, she was connected with HYC and spoke to John Nesbitt, HYC's Host Family Youth Coach. John shared how the Host Family Housing program works, and after an interview and background checks, the Johnsons became an HYC host family for Katie. Once Katie joined the HYC program and the Johnsons became an HYC host family, Katie began getting the extra support she needed. "When Katie came to live with us, she had minimal clothing and

personal belongings. HYC has helped her get good shoes for work, appropriate clothes, personal care needs and school supplies," shared Rebecca. Through HYC's program and support, Katie also receives counseling and sees a nutritionist to help with her eating disorder. Katie has also been able to complete her FAFSA application for educational funding with HYC's support.

The Johnsons' generosity has helped Katie have a safe and stable home so she can stay in school and keep her job, and HYC provides crucial support and resources to help this host family thrive. "Having Katie in our home has been very rewarding. I have seen her grow and work through the challenges she faces on a daily basis. John and HYC have provided resources to us when we didn't know where to go. John has a way of supporting and encouraging Katie to stay in school and helps her prioritize her responsibilities," said Rebecca.

The Johnsons have found being a host family is "very rewarding but also very challenging." They have changed the life of an unaccompanied teen and become part of the solution to youth homelessness in Arizona. HYC equipped them with the necessary resources and support to ensure Katie can lead a healthy and stable life. "Katie is one of the most positive people I have ever met. She is always smiling, despite the obstacles that have been thrown her way. She has become part of our family."

**Names have been changed to protect identities.*

HYC is in need of more host families like the Johnsons to make an impact on the lives of youth experiencing homelessness in our community. Interested in learning more about HYC's Host Family Housing program? Reach out to us at info@hycaz.org or **623-374-3747** to see how you can get involved.

Meet Our New Board Member



HYC is Proud to Welcome Emily Striffler to Our Board of Directors

Emily Striffler is the Business Operations Manager at WESTMARC, the Western Maricopa Coalition, and first got involved after an HYC event in 2019. Wanting to support HYC youth, WESTMARC hosted a special event to raise funds for HYC, and the partnership grew from there.

Emily is passionate about the work HYC does. "As the mother of twin college sophomores, I know first-hand just how much goes into getting through the teenage/high school years, including material resources, social and motivational support, and assistance planning for the future to follow the dreams and cultivate the talents of each student," said Emily.

Emily is eager to begin supporting HYC's mission as a board member. She understands that these youth "need immediate help to be safe, but they also need skilled/experienced assistance to truly stabilize and find their path forward." She believes that community engagement and support is crucial for youth experiencing homelessness to access HYC's services and is ready to share HYC's mission.

Emily has more than 25 years of experience providing support in nonprofit and grantee environments. She is looking forward to applying her skills and knowledge to the HYC Board of Directors to help the lives of youth experiencing homelessness in Arizona.

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

Meet Our New Staff Members



Astrid Camou joined HYC as a youth coach in October 2021. They graduated with their bachelor's in social work in 2018 and have been working with nonprofit organizations ever since. They have worked directly with at-risk youth and families as a resource coordinator and have also facilitated connections among organizations to make resources more accessible to the community. As a youth coach, they are responsible for identifying and

providing essential needs and resources youth experiencing homelessness need to stay in school, graduate, and create a plan for their future. One of Astrid's main goals while taking on this role is to support and advocate for these youth while creating a safe and comfortable environment for them. In Astrid's free time, they enjoy yoga, anime, making art and hanging out with their dog.



Devin DeFendis joined HYC in November of 2021 as a program manager. She has a master's degree in social work and a passion for serving and supporting youth and families. Her professional experience includes working with survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and refugees. As a program manager at HYC, she works directly with youth coaches, ensuring they have the support they need to identify

and provide essential needs and resources homeless youth need to stay in school, graduate and create a plan for their future. She also facilitates relationships with community partners who help meet the needs of HYC youth. When not at work, Devin likes to spend time with her dog and friends, binge watch shows on Netflix, and exercise.

HYC HOLIDAY HOURS

The HYC office will be closed on Friday, December 24 and Monday, December 27, as well as Friday, December 31 and Monday, January 3. Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!



The Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation

Support Services for Youth Experiencing Homelessness



Homeless Youth Connection is pleased to share that we have received a generous grant from The Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation. "We are happy to support the

great work of Homeless Youth Connection and provide a resource to help some of the most vulnerable youth in Arizona. Students experiencing homelessness can often find themselves falling behind their peers if not for the targeted educational support that an organization like Homeless Youth Connection can provide," said Tom Egan, Halle Foundation's Executive Director.

This grant will help enhance and strengthen HYC's ability to provide essential needs and resources so youth experiencing homelessness can stay in school, complete their education and graduate with a plan for their future. Funding from The Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation will support existing programming at HYC and enhance the growth that the organization has experienced during the past year, enabling HYC to continue offering effective strategies to transition these youth to a successful future that includes sustainable living. "We are sincerely grateful to The Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation for their generous gift which will allow HYC to provide much needed resources to more youth experiencing homelessness in our community," said Dawn Bogart, HYC Chief Executive Officer.

Thank you for being a part of the solution!

Thank You!

To All Thanksgiving Sponsors and Volunteers

HYC is grateful for the tremendous support we received from the community this Thanksgiving! HYC received 193 Thanksgiving meals, with a turkey and all the trimmings, for HYC youth and their families. With the help of more than 50 community volunteers, these baskets were delivered across Maricopa County and the City of Flagstaff so that HYC youth could have a special holiday. Thank you to all who supported our Thanksgiving program!



Students from Arcadia High School participated in the HYC Thanksgiving program.



HELP YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN ARIZONA



If you are a resident of Arizona, one of the easiest ways to make a difference in the lives of youth experiencing homelessness is through the Arizona Charitable Tax Credit. This tax credit is a way for state taxpayers to redirect their state tax dollars to organizations and causes that are important to them. The state of Arizona provides an incredible incentive for taxpayers who donate to certain qualifying charities like HYC.

When you make a donation to HYC, you can receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit on your Arizona state return – up to \$400 for individuals and \$800 for those filing jointly. Donate \$800 to HYC by April 15th and get \$800 right back on your Arizona tax return. **HYC's Qualifying Charitable Tax Code is 20200.** Donors are required to use this code when taking the tax credit on their income tax returns.

Your support means youth won't have to experience the instability of homelessness.

Youth can build a plan for their future in a supportive environment.

Youth won't have to feel helpless and hopeless about their ability to be a student.

There are more than 7,400 homeless youth in grades 9-12 living in Arizona, and more than 1,800 of these youth are unaccompanied. Often, it's a result of circumstances beyond their control.

The consequences of homelessness are devastating. Many youth impacted by homelessness have to make difficult choices in order to survive on their own—they barter work or sex for shelter, often couch surf, sleep in cars or live with an abusive family member. Your charitable donation to HYC will directly help youth in Arizona who are experiencing homelessness.

GET CREDIT! GIVE TODAY.

To take full advantage of this opportunity to help youth experiencing homelessness in Arizona, please visit:

hyc.org/arizona-tax-credit

For details, consult your tax advisor.



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HYConnections

Homeless Youth Connection Newsletter

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Discover one of the easiest ways to help others while helping yourself.

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.**