



Connections

A Newsletter for Friends of Homeless Youth Connection

He'll Do Whatever it Takes to Graduate



Tyler dreams of graduating from high school. As a senior, wanting to achieve that dream during this coronavirus pandemic makes him especially emotional.

Tyler has experienced homelessness and food insecurity while attending classes and keeping his grades up. The uncertainty of just how long the world will remain at a standstill makes it stressful and challenging.

He recently said, "I've never had someone to look up to. I want to be the first person in my family to graduate from high school.

I have to graduate. I don't want to struggle anymore."

What is it like for you to be homeless as a high school student? "For days I didn't have food. I didn't have anywhere to stay. I was sleeping at the park and when it was time for school, I would ask my girlfriend if I could take a shower."

Amid all of the worrying news, Tyler said HYC is a glimmer of hope.

"When I was younger, I always thought I would drop out. I've always been a lonesome thinker because for a long time I had to fend for myself ... No one had ever asked me what I needed. I used to steal food just so my family and I could eat ... So, when I get asked what I need it's new and weird but it feels great to know there is someone a phone call away."

With the help of HYC and its community supporters, Tyler and hundreds like him receive basic supplies and resources they need in these uncertain times.

Even with school not in session, Tyler said he isn't taking any chances to break away from his studies. Instead, he is focused on online learning and staying productive.

"I don't think people understand the amount of value a high school diploma has," he said. "When you go apply for that job, it makes you more qualified. It's worth it walking on that stage and seeing everyone congratulate you."

He added, "When I graduate, I want to make sure I give HYC a huge shout out."

During the COVID Crisis HYC is Adjusting

HYC has made changes to daily operations to keep our staff, donors, volunteers and our youth as safe as possible. At this time, HYC staff is working remotely and available via cell phone and email. Currently, our physical office is closed. Operations will continue with some modifications and HYC will still be providing services to our youth.

The critical needs our students are experiencing is quickly exceeding our budgeted resources. Currently, the best way to assist HYC is with a financial donation or making an in-kind donation that can be ordered online and shipped directly to HYC.

Visit smile.amazon.com and search for Homeless Youth Connection under "Find a List or Registry."

Visit dollaradays.com/wishlist and search for Homeless Youth Connection.

Donations Urgently Needed at HYC

Homeless Youth Connection continues to closely monitor developments related to the current outbreak of COVID-19, and taking proactive steps. Our focus continues to be the same each day — homelessness will not limit a youth's opportunity for a successful future. We are doing everything we can to meet the basic needs of our youth. The need is growing rapidly, and we anticipate that it will significantly increase in the coming weeks and months.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- **If you'd like to donate food or grocery gift cards** (\$25 Grocery Gift Cards and/or \$5 or \$10 Fast Food Gift Cards) you can mail to: 9950 West Van Buren, Suite 114 Avondale, AZ 85323
- You can also purchase and ship our most needed supplies through our **AmazonSmile Wishlist** or our **DollarDays Wishlist**.
 - **Visit smile.amazon.com** and search for Homeless Youth Connection under "Find a List or Registry".
 - **Visit dollaradays.com/wishlist** and search for Homeless Youth Connection
- **Please use digital media to repost our updates and needs!** You can connect with us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

\$25 Grocery Gift Cards

- Albertson's
- Safeway
- Fry's
- Walmart



\$5 or \$10 Food Gift Cards

- Burger King
- Jack in the Box
- Chick-fil-A
- Sonic
- Chipotle
- Subway
- Domino's
- Taco Bell
- In-N-Out Burger

Generous Donors and Amazing Volunteers

HYC is very fortunate to have ongoing relationships with corporate, community and volunteer groups. This type of support is vital to providing services to HYC youth. Earlier this year, we received very generous donations from two local corporations, both long-time donors to HYC.

This massive undertaking couldn't have been accomplished without the help of HYC volunteers. Over the course of a week, nearly 60 volunteers helped unload three truckloads of items and unpacked dozens of boxes. Volunteers also spent countless hours sorting clothing, shoes and personal care products. Lastly, our volunteers "shopped" the now sorted items for each youth in our program, preparing more than 250 bags with new outfits.

Donations like these are an important part of HYC and make up a large portion of the resources we are able to provide to our youth. These items truly enhance the lives of the youth we serve. Whether it's a donation of clothes or personal hygiene products, the youth in our program are able to rely on corporations that care about their circumstances and want to give them a chance at a better life. We can't thank our donors enough for the support they continue to provide.



Help Homeless Youth in Arizona, Get Back from the State of Arizona

If you are a resident of Arizona, one of the easiest ways to make a difference in the lives of homeless youth 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 could receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit on your AZ 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 in your AZ 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.

Homelessness affects many youth in Arizona. Your support means youth won't have to experience the instability of homelessness.

A child can build a plan for his/her future in a supportive environment.

A child won't have to feel helpless and hopeless about his/her ability to be a student.

There are nearly 30,000 homeless youth in Arizona because of the lack of consistency, stability and safety. Most of the time, it's a result of circumstances beyond their control. In turn, they are without a stable home and homeless through no fault or choice of their own.

The consequences of homelessness are devastating. Many youth impacted by homelessness do what they have to do in order to survive – sleep in cars, barter sex for shelter, couch surf or live with an abusive family member. Your charitable donation for HYC will help Arizona homeless youth, 13 to 21 years of age, and qualifies for the Arizona Charitable Tax Credit.

Bottom line? You can either pay the state or you can help transform the lives of vulnerable, at-risk youth at no additional cost to you. Please take full advantage of this opportunity to help homeless youth. For more details, consult your tax professional.

Welcome to the Team!

HYC is happy to announce that our team is growing. Please join us in welcoming our new team members!



Jeannette Cruz has joined our Development team as the new Community Engagement Manager. Jeannette will be responsible for recruiting volunteers and host families, as well as service organizations and the ecumenical community to act as support networks for our host families. Additionally, she will manage community presentations, participate in lunch and learns, third party events and community fundraising events. She will work with the Development team on aspects of community awareness, fundraising, handling in-kind donations, communications and outreach for HYC. Jeannette has worked in the area of journalism and communications for newspapers, nonprofit and for-profit organizations and multinational corporations. She has also worked as an advocate providing immediate assistance and support to survivors of domestic violence. She says, "I am enthusiastic and excited about the opportunity to share HYC's vision that homelessness will not limit a youth's opportunity for a successful future, expand our reach within new communities and serve as a voice for our courageous youth."

Jeannette has her master's degree from Grand Canyon University where she majored in Marketing and a dual bachelor's degree from Arizona State University where she majored in Journalism and English.

She has a lot to share with her new coworkers as she loves food, motivational books, TED talks, Latin dancing and participates in open mic poetry.

You can reach Jeannette at jcruz@hyc.org



Jenna Gordon joined our Case Management team. Jenna will be 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.

Jenna has worked in social services for two years and has internship experience with non-profit agencies and with the Public Defender's Office as a Defense Investigator. She says, "I am extremely excited and ready to work directly with students to assist them in achieving goals they have set out for themselves and help eliminate any barriers they may be currently facing."

Jenna has her bachelor's degree from the University of San Diego where she majored in Sociology with an emphasis in Crime, Law, and Justice Studies.

Jenna enjoys spending time with her family and two dogs as well as listening to podcasts, watching TV and documentaries, and exploring new places.

You can reach Jenna at jgordon@hyc.org

Mavericks' Shindig Spotlights HYC



HYC was thrilled to be selected as the spotlight charity for the West Valley Mavericks Annual Shindig Flyaway event on February 28 at the Goodyear Airport. The masquerade theme event attracted more than 1,000 attendees, most wearing their best Mardi Gras masks. Community restaurants were featured with delicious food throughout the event. The event was complete with roulette, craps and poker tables, a silent auction and raffle to win a VIP trip to Las Vegas for the weekend. For those who wanted to dance there was a huge dance floor and live music offering a celebration feel throughout the airplane hangar venue.

We are so appreciative to those who supported the event by purchasing tickets, making financial donations and donating to the silent auction! And, thank you to the West Valley Mavericks for inviting HYC to be a part of this spectacular event!





Homeless Youth Connection

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hycaz.org

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Be sure to donate at: azgives.org/hycaz

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Twitter: [@HYCArizona](https://twitter.com/HYCArizona)



Instagram: [@HYC_Arizona](https://www.instagram.com/HYC_Arizona)



Everyday Ways to Support HYC DONATE WHILE YOU SHOP!



Community Rewards at Fry's Food Stores

When shopping at Fry's Food Stores online, sign in using your Fry's account information.

Under "My Account," click "Community Rewards" and search for and select Homeless Youth Connection. That's it! A portion of your future Fry's purchases will now automatically be directed to Homeless Youth Connection! Visit Frysfood.com/topic/new-community-rewards-program, and click the "Enroll" button.



You shop. Amazon gives.

If you're an Amazon shopper, simply visit smile.amazon.com

and log into your regular Amazon

account. Underneath the search box, you will see the option to select a charity. Select **Homeless Youth Connection**. Now, whenever you shop on Amazon, use smile.amazon.com and a portion of your purchase will be automatically directed to HYC!