

EMPOWERING YOUTH, ELEVATING OUTCOMES

A Year of Resilience, Growth, and New Beginnings

From college scholarships to safe housing, this year showed what's possible when community comes together. Every milestone reflects resilience, partnership, and the belief that every youth deserves stability and hope.



HOMELESS YOUTH CONNECTION:

WE MEET YOUTH DURING A CRITICAL CROSSROAD

when housing instability threatens to disrupt their education and their future.



LOOKING BACK ON THE PAST YEAR, we celebrated meaningful progress and new opportunities with a renewed commitment to providing stability and support for youth experiencing homelessness.

We believe every youth deserves the opportunity to graduate high school with dignity, stability, support, and hope for the future.

This past school year, because of you — our generous donors, dedicated volunteers, and community partners — 705 youth experiencing homelessness received support through HYC, marking a 9% increase from the previous year. Youth experiencing homelessness were able to access basic needs, case management, counseling, safe housing, and a pathway to graduation.

By May 2025, 406 youth were actively participating in our program. Among them, 159 were high school seniors, and we're proud to share that 129 walked across the stage — a milestone many once thought out of reach.

But they didn't stop there. Their post-graduation plans are powerful proof of their determination:

- 92 will attend college
- 8 are enrolled in vocational training
- 9 have enlisted in the military
- 27 are enrolled for the fall semester to graduate from high school
- 3 are still discerning their next steps

Additionally, 96 graduates have already applied for or entered the workforce, some while attending school, taking the next steps toward a stable and independent future.



35 DREAMS FUNDED

Celebrating Youth Whose Futures Are Being Transformed Through Education

This year, HYC awarded 35 scholarships to remarkable youth who are overcoming homelessness and pursuing higher education. Through resilience and determination, they're now pursuing dreams in fields like nursing, engineering, entrepreneurship, biomedical sciences, business, cosmetology, and skilled trades. They're stepping into colleges, trade schools, and universities, turning challenges into hopeful new beginnings.

Thanks to the generosity of the Fisher family, the Garcia Family Foundation, and our donors, the dreams of 35 youth are becoming a reality.

STABILITY IN ACTION

Safe Housing Changes Lives

At HYC, we know that when youth have a safe place to live, they are far more likely to stay in school, graduate, and plan for what comes next.

Stable housing continued to be a cornerstone of that success. This year, 42 unaccompanied youth were supported through HYC's housing programs:

- 25 in the Hatcher Transitional Living Program
- 15 in Host Family homes
- 2 at our Flagstaff transitional site

Among them, 28 were graduating seniors, and 7 were first-year college students, a powerful reminder that safe housing is the foundation for long-term success.

Securing Futures: HYC Now Owns Both Transitional Living Sites

Milestones and Community Connections Strengthen Stability for Youth



This year, HYC marked major milestones for our Transitional Living sites and strengthened ties with the community that supports our mission.

In August 2024, after six months of repairs from severe water damage, we proudly opened the doors of our Flagstaff transitional living

home – filling a critical gap in housing for unaccompanied 18 to 21-year-olds facing homelessness. Thanks to support from the Arizona Department of Housing (ADOH), this safe, stable space offers youth a fresh start in a region with no other options.

Then, in January 2025, HYC proudly became the official owner of our Phoenix Transitional Living facility, which had been leased from Catholic Charities for the past three years. Thanks to a generous grant from ADOH, what began as a leased space is now a permanent home for HYC's Transitional Living Program

(TLP) serving up to 20 young people pursuing education and long-term stability.

We are deeply grateful to ADOH for investing in our mission and to Catholic Charities for their ongoing partnership.

Together, our Flagstaff and Phoenix TLP homes provided safe housing for youth last year – offering not only shelter but also a safe place to learn, grow, and plan for a sustainable future.



HYC Champions Law for Homeless Youth Housing

In summer 2024, HYC, alongside community advocate Scott Turner and Pivotal Policy Consultants, launched an effort to raise awareness about the urgent need for safe housing for unaccompanied minors.

This work led to the passage of HB2079, sponsored by Representative Walt Blackman. After years of advocacy, this new law finally creates a safe, legal housing pathway for homeless youth ages 16 and 17 in Arizona – a major step forward after repeated setbacks in previous sessions.



We collaborated closely with housing providers, bipartisan lawmakers, the Governor's Office, and juvenile justice experts from the Arizona Supreme Court to ensure the bill's success and strong legal foundation.

HB2079 passed with overwhelming bipartisan support – 56–3 in the House and 28–1 in the Senate. Governor Hobbs signed it into law on April 18, 2025, following her strong backing.

During the process, Senate Majority Leader, Janae Shamp, honored Homeless Youth Connection with a Legislative Proclamation, recognizing our critical work in ending youth homelessness and expanding educational opportunities.

DEEPENING OUR IMPACT

Partnerships That Power Progress

This year, HYC strengthened its impact through several new partnerships designed to meet the evolving needs of the youth we serve. We were honored to be selected for two pilot initiatives – one expanding access to college financial assistance, and another centered on preventative services for youth and families.

Supporting College Access

HYC's Role in FAFSA Beta Testing



In fall 2024, HYC was honored to participate in the U.S. Department of Education's beta testing of the revised FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) for the 2024–2025 academic year. Through this

opportunity, HYC supported 23 youth in beginning their FAFSA applications. Of those, 21 successfully completed and submitted their forms during the beta testing period.

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This invitation reflected the Department's recognition of HYC's commitment to supporting youth in navigating the complex college financial aid process. HYC provided crucial one-on-one assistance to youth and their youth coaches, helping them understand and complete the new FAFSA. Youth coaches also took part in online trainings and weekly office hours with the Department's FAFSA Beta Team to ensure they were well prepared.

Nationally, completion rates during the FAFSA beta were low, but HYC successfully helped 21 of 23 youth complete their applications during the beta test window — a 91% success rate that reflects our team's commitment and preparation. While changes to the FAFSA Beta design mean HYC may not participate in the next cycle, the experience strengthened our team's capacity to support youth in their college and career journeys.

Reducing the Gap Project: *Preventing Homelessness Through Community Collaboration*



HYC continues its active partnership with the Garcia Family Foundation and St. Vincent de Paul through the *Reducing the Gap* pilot program. This initiative aims to prevent homelessness by offering quick, barrier-free support to families at risk of losing their housing — helping more families remain stably housed and reducing new instances of homelessness in our community.

Key Objectives:

- Provide swift support to prevent homelessness
- Collaborate to improve housing stability for families
- Evaluate and adapt strategies for maximum impact

While HYC primarily serves youth, many of these young people are part of families at risk of homelessness. Through these trusted relationships, HYC staff referred 36 families for support; 29 applications were approved, resulting in more than \$48,000 in assistance provided to help families remain housed.

We are grateful to our community partners and funders for making this work possible. This collaboration continues to bridge critical gaps in community resources and supports families before homelessness occurs.

PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH AND TRAINING

Strengthening Insight *Participating in Research That Informs and Protects*

In Fall 2024, HYC once again participated in the Youth Experiences Survey (YES), conducted by the Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research at Arizona State University's School of Social Work. This marked HYC's third year of participation in the study, which gathers crucial data about the risks and experiences of youth experiencing homelessness.

Our continued involvement is vital, especially because McKinney-Vento youth — particularly those who are unaccompanied — are disproportionately vulnerable to human trafficking. Each year, more of our youth voluntarily take part in the survey, receiving both a gift card and helpful resource information.

While many survey participants are not engaged in school, it's critical that McKinney-Vento youth are represented in this important research. HYC's participation helps bridge that gap. As a participating agency, HYC receives both the overall findings and a report specific to our youth respondents. These insights help deepen our understanding and allow us to tailor services that better protect and support the young people we serve.

Building Expertise to Support Youth

At HYC, we know that equipping our team with the right skills is essential to meeting the complex needs of the youth we serve. Over the past year, staff participated in a variety of training courses, both virtual and in-person, that enhanced our ability to provide trauma-informed, evidence-based care. These learning opportunities elevate our impact and ensure we continue to grow as a team dedicated to empowering youth toward stability and success.



Our staff engaged in a range of professional development opportunities, including webinars, community workshops, and online courses through the RHYTTAC (Runaway and Homeless Youth Training, Technical Assistance, and Capacity Building Center) E-Learning platform, as well as Adelante Healthcare's Opioid Crisis Training.

We also hosted in-person Motivational Interviewing training designed to deepen expertise and foster collaboration. This evidence-based, person-centered approach helps strengthen a young person's motivation for change by focusing on five core principles: expressing empathy, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance, supporting self-efficacy, and amplifying ambivalence.

Staff also participated in Human Trafficking 101. This session provided a vital overview of labor and sex trafficking, highlighted key risk factors, and equipped staff to recognize early signs of exploitation — knowledge critical for prevention and early intervention.



HOMELESS YOUTH
connection

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