

Monthly Report for HOME Youth and Resource Center
Marion County Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Project
December 2011

General accomplishments:

- Partnered with Habitat for Humanity on a fun local art logo contest for their new youth program H2O. Six youth created inventive logo designs over multiple art sessions and turned them in to the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Fluid and productive dual case management work was done this month through the STEP program of the Salem-Keizer school district, Northwest Human Services, and the RHY project case managers. Increased partnerships around dual case management of homeless youth have been a priority for all agencies.
- The Outreach team met with new business community members in an effort to build positive relationships and increase services to homeless youth in need that the businesses encounter.

Barriers/Challenges:

- Lack of respite care housing and temporary transitional services for homeless youth who wait for permanent shelter or program entry.
- Lack of support services for youth who identify as lesbian, gay, and transgender.
- Encountered challenges this month with youth *and* families who had little to no motivation towards working on transitioning from homeless status, prevention of possible upcoming homeless status, and family crisis.
- Families in crisis who had private insurance were unable to access the needed supports, such as ongoing mental health counseling, under their current medical health care plan(s).

Description of Youth/Family Served:

- The team made **68 total contacts this month:** 64 were with youth aged 11-18; 4 contacts were with youth aged 19+. There were 40 new contacts this month, and 28 continued relationships.
- The Advocate and Outreach Workers are currently case managing and doing case development with 15 youth; 7 are carried over from previous months and 8 are new case managed youth being assisted.
- Advocate received 43 run reports this month, and made contact with 10 families of runaway youth (24%).
- Of all reports, 2 were adjudicated youth (5%); 8 were DHS foster care youth (17%), 2 families received messages but further contact was unavailable (5%); 19

reports were resolved in under 24 hours (44%), 5 reports were Limited English Proficiency for Spanish speaking families (12 %).

Community Connections Fostered/Supported:

- Partnered with Polk County DHS and the Marine Corps to provide identification documents and supports for a local homeless youth applying for military service.
- Partnered with members of TransActive, an advocacy and education program, for support services to local Transgender homeless youth.
- Working with the HOME Youth and Resource Center's AmeriCorps VISA on employment readiness training and education for disconnected youth.
- Partnering with the Healthy Kids Outreach Coordinator in increasing community education and access to medical insurance for homeless youth.
- Met with the City of Salem Youth Development and Prevention Coordinator, the Advocate for the Women in Transitional Situations program, and the Volunteer Coordinator for the Heroes In Training program of the Ike Box. All parties are looking at increased education for people working with youth on evidence based models, as well as increasing advocacy and supports for youth in our programs.

Outcome Data:

Connectivity to Resources:

- **38 basic needs supplies this month given out to 18 youth and families in need:** this includes clothes, socks, gloves, water, toiletries, and snacks.
- Multiple families, agencies, community members, and youth outreach contacts were referred to HOME Youth and Resource Center and the RHY Project.
- 4 youth were assisted with information and applications to the Department of Human Services for the Healthy Kids Program for medical insurance needs and SNAP program for food security. RHY staff personally took applications, or the youth themselves, to local DHS branches for eligibility determination and appointments as requested.
- 1 youth and 3 families received detailed information about, and referrals to, the Neighbor 2 Neighbor Mediation program for reducing family conflict and increasing communication.
- 1 youth was assisted in resources for obtaining new glasses for school.
- 1 youth received advocacy, support, and identification documents for entry into the Marine Corps program.
- 1 youth and family are receiving assistance in accessing resources for one time rental payments in an effort to increase housing stabilization and prevent homelessness.
- 7 youth were assisted with, and obtained, transportation for getting to shelter and agency appointments.

- 7 youth were given detailed information about, and assistance in, obtaining an Oregon ID, a Social Security Card and/or their Birth Certificate.
- 3 youth were assisted in locating current employment opportunities.

Safety:

- 8 youth and 2 families were given information about and referred to the HOST youth shelter program and/or the Emergency Night Shelter.
- 5 youth were given detailed information about local alternative shelter and housing options, and were assisted in applying for services when requested.
- 1 youth was given information about and referred to the ARCHES program for increased housing stability and safety through the RENT class.
- 1 youth was referred to the Women's Crisis Service for advocacy and support for issues around violence against women and trauma.
- 1 youth received assistance in creating multiple safety plans in an effort to prevent or reduce the possibility of victimization.
- 3 families were referred to local mental health agencies for safety and stabilization resources, as well as family advocacy and supports.
- 1 family was referred to local addiction services.
- 3 families received information and referrals to homeless services outside of the Salem area.
- 6 youth were referred to local free sexual health organizations to assist with increased education, sexual health advocacy, and increased safety.
- 1 youth and 2 families were referred to the New Solutions Program for wrap around family support services.

Continuity of Education:

- 3 youth were given information about, and application packets for, the Job Corps program. Youth are accompanied by RHY staff to the weekly Job Corps orientation meeting when requested.
- 8 youth and 1 family were referred to local alternative education programs in the Salem-Keizer area.
- 1 youth was referred to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for supports in gaining education and employment skills for people with disabilities.

Story:

When speaking about runaway youth it is not uncommon to overlook the macro picture of family dynamics that many times play a role in crisis situations. In working to assist a youth in returning home, or helping a family in their efforts to prevent future run responses from their child, multiple barriers abound. One barrier that frequently comes up is that both the youth and the guardian point fingers at each other as the cause of their current circumstances. Frequently neither side initially wishes to look at resources that address their own personal challenges; youth want the adults to change, and adults want

the youth to change. This perspective hinders the possibility of increased positive family functioning on all sides.

When a child runs away many parents we speak to feel scared, isolated, and unsure of where they can turn for help. Youth on the run feel justified, scared, and unsure of what to do to make things better. It is not uncommon to hear both parents and youth pleasantly surprised that Salem offers many free and low cost services, such as Mediation, that aim to preserve the family unit, decrease family dysfunction, and address the lack of parent-child communication skills. Through continued advocacy and supports the initial “it’s them, not me” perspective disintegrates into one of finding common ground and paths to happiness.

Two families this month had the courage to do just this. I have been encouraged at their levels of participation in looking into local resources, and their willingness to try new avenues for runaway prevention. As with other arenas of youth social work, it takes a team of community partners in a continuum of services to help those in need to our fullest capabilities. This is true for teens and their parents as well. In cases like the ones above, a little information, caring and support can go a long way in helping to guide families in crisis in the right direction for a more positive future for all.