



OVERCOMING THE ODDS— WORKING TOWARDS STABILITY

“I want to be a good mom and a good mom does not take her baby son to the shelter. . . my Youth Outreach apartment is great. it has been nice just staying in one place. Between work and moving us around I always felt exhausted and anxious, like I could fall apart any day. Work is still exhausting but it makes a big difference having a place for us.”

Roanne, age 20, mother of Tyler, age 2

Roanne is one of almost 500 homeless youth living in our county. Without intervention, Roanne (and her son) and other homeless youth will become the next generation(s) of chronic homeless, anchored to a life of crisis and chaos. Approximately 500 youth—both urban and rural—are homeless in Tompkins County. Youth Outreach now serves 250—50%—of these youths. Affordable housing is a serious problem in the county. As home to three colleges, the influx of middle and upper income students who rent housing results in stiff competition for apartments, high rents and low availability. The colleges also bring a highly educated populace with whom homeless youth must compete for low wage, service jobs. This has a profound effect on local youth, like Roanne: with limited resources and poor skills they cannot secure and maintain housing and employment.

It is indeed a partnership at Youth Outreach. Each youth must make a commitment to their own growth by working hard to make use of the services, support, and resources that we have to offer. Staff match that commitment with the full range of tools that we have available—from basic supplies and parenting training to job search support and the Housing Scholarship Program. Our participants show incredible resilience and most work very hard to achieve a better life. **THIS YEAR, 561 HOMELESS YOUTH WERE SERVED BY YOUTH OUTREACH. 469 YOUTH RECEIVED DROP IN/OUTREACH SERVICES AND 92 RECEIVED GENERAL INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM SERVICES.**

Roanne has achieved many of her goals while participating in Youth Outreach. She is realistic about her situation and has learned how much she can and cannot expect from her son's father and her family. This has allowed Roanne to reduce the stress in her life. As a single mother without a college degree and with no help from her family she is realistic about obstacles to her success/growth. She has gained promotions at work and is now enrolled in community college. She hopes to use her Associates degree to secure a job in the medical field. Roanne has developed into a responsible adult, caring parent--someone who wants better for her and her son and is willing to work for it.



Dale enjoys a visit from Bintu Sidiki, now a real estate salesperson with Audrey Edelman. Bintu stopped in to express her gratitude for the support she received while in our Housing Scholarship Program.

OUR RESULTS IN 2013

Youth Outreach served 561 youth and young adults.

469 participants: Outreach services [Duplicated count is 710 participants]

92 participants: General Independent Living Program services

Age 15-17: 165 Age 18-20: 209 Age 21-24: 187

Gender: 48% female 52% Male

100% of youth were homeless upon program admission.

At either a youth's discharge or by year's end, the following milestones were achieved:

Housing

88% of youth maintained stable housing for a 3-6 month period, 73% for a 6-18 month period. 88% of youth with a prior history of eviction, avoided further eviction.

15 youth were served in our Housing Scholarship Program. 9 youth had safe exits, and 4 are currently participating.

61 participants were eligible for Section 8 housing vouchers but avoided using them. With staff help, youth located other safe housing options that they could afford and did not use this benefit.

AN ESTIMATED \$297,540 PUBLIC DOLLARS HAVE BEEN SAVED assuming these youth's subsidies were reduced by one year.

Education

The drop out rate fell by 22%, from 40% at admission to 18% at year end.

5 participants earned their GED's or high school diplomas.

6 participant enrolled in post secondary school.

Employment

84% of participants significantly increased their employability skills.

The unemployment rate fell by 22%, from 71% at admission to 49% at year end.

32 participants worked in paid apprenticeships with community mentors.

Increasing Healthy Behaviors

95% of participants increased their ability to follow healthy life routines.

73% of participants with substance/alcohol abuse issues, decreased use in terms of frequency of use and/or the intensity of the drugs used.

55% of delinquent participants decreased involvement with people participating in criminal activity.

79% of participants increased their awareness of their personal values including personal responsibility, honesty in relationships, and deferred gratification.

Self-Sufficiency

36 participants became self-supporting (and are not using public resources)



Learning by doing, The Learning Web's underlying program strategy, builds skills for living independently. Young people build skills from housekeeping (above, a participant learns how to hang blinds in her first apartment) to parenting to employment and more.



Photo by Caroline Podraza

Apprenticeships build basic employment skills and skills specific to a youth's field of interest. This apprentice is learning sewing machine repair.

The Independent Living Program —

Youth Outreach (YO) non-residential and residential (our Housing Scholarship Program's supported apartment program) services support homeless youth who, finding themselves without adult support, want to make significant changes in their life. The individualized nature of our program design assures that each young person's unique needs are addressed. Program activities build on strengths and develop new and healthy patterns of behavior including • Assisting youth in securing safe and stable housing to support youth in working on self-sufficiency and interpersonal goals. • Group independent living activities (cooking classes, career exploration tours, college visits), • Building competencies and sparking passions through engagement in real and challenging roles; apprenticeships, employment, and completing educational goals (GED classes at our on-site computer lab, assistance re-entering school etc). • Learning self-advocacy through staff coaching as they work through real-life problems. • Creating opportunities where youth's efforts will be recognized and rewarded.

The Power of Stable Housing

Not knowing where you can sleep and having no regular place to store your belongings wreaks havoc with a healthy routine. Gina, age 19, had left home at age 17 after ongoing conflict with her parents. She “couch-surfed”, moving from place to place for 2 years when she found out about Youth Outreach. When she joined the YO program, her goals were to have a stable place to live and a decent job (she was unemployed upon admission to YO). YO staff helped her to identify a friend who would let Gina stay with her for a couple of months. Gina could use the time to focus on getting a job and earning money for housing.

Staff helped Gina identify her career interests and create a resume. Gina identified working with children as her main interest. She worked with staff to prepare for an apprenticeship at a local childcare center. She was invited to apprentice at the center and quickly became a valued member of the team. She was hired per diem at the center but was not getting enough hours to support housing expenses. Staff told her about our supported housing program, the Housing Scholarship Program (HSP), and Gina applied and was accepted.

Gina used the time in the HSP to boost her employment skills, secure a full time job, learn how to budget and save money for a security deposit and first month's rent. She earned raises and now has benefits. She accomplished her goals; graduated from the HSP, rented her own apartment without a subsidy, and is self-sufficient. She used the tools that YO offered while counting on the stability of the HSP. Gina's confidence in her ability to work, manage her money, and live on her own grew immensely over the time she spent participating in YO.

“I am really starting to feel like I am an independent person, I have an apartment and just opened my first bank account. Now I can cash my paychecks without having to beg someone to help me cash it and wait days for my money.”

The Housing Scholarship Program — A Transitional Living Program

The Housing Scholarship Program (HSP), which resides within our Youth Outreach Program fills a critical need for youth like Gina. Program services and financial support to cover rent and utilities are offered for 12 to 18 months to assist residents to amass the attitudes, skills, and behaviors necessary to maintain stable housing; identify and pursue an educational and career pathway that will provide a livable wage; and become productive, stable, and contributing members of our community.

We rent 6 scattered site apartments for HSP residents, serving 15 HSP YOUTH IN 2013. 9 young people exited the program safely in 2013 and are living independently. 7 of those youth completed the program while 2 youth left before completion. 4 youth are currently residing in the program and are working toward educational and employment goals (3 new youth are entering in January 2014). The response from local landlords has been very positive and supportive and the number of youth applying for the scholarships has far exceeded our capacity.



A graduate of our Housing Scholarship Program receives her certificate of completion with Executive Director, Dale C. Schumacher.

A Crash Course in Independent Living



Photo by Caroline Podraza

Learning how to shop economically and cook is a critical skill covered in our independent living program. Pictured here, a local chef mentors a YO participant in cooking a corn chowder. Staff reported that the chowder was delicious!



Photo by Caroline Podraza

“I am so happy to have a program like yours. Wish I would have had this help in the past.”

Youth Outreach Participant

Yvonne, age 19



Photo by Caroline Podraza



Photo by Caroline Podraza

Preparing for employment is a critical piece of the Youth Outreach Program. The apprentice pictured at left is learning how to do furniture repair.

Education & Employment— Essential Components of Self-sufficiency

Pamela was 17 when she arrived at Youth Outreach's doors. Having met a new boyfriend, she left her abusive home, only to find herself homeless within 2 months. She had only a 9th grade education and had never worked. Fast forward to 2013 after Pamela had made use of the myriad opportunities at Youth Outreach: the supported Housing Scholarship Program; apprenticeship and employment readiness; educational support; money management; and all the skills needed to find and maintain housing. Pamela was able to pass her GED, enroll in community college, and finish her first semester with solid grades. She now has her own apartment and a part time job while she attends college. Pamela is well on her way to building a satisfying and productive life.

Finishing high school and moving on to post secondary education is an important focus for our participants. 40% of participants had dropped out of school before entering YO. **22% HAD RE-ENGAGED IN SCHOOL BY THE END OF THE YEAR AND 5 HAD GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL OR EARNED THEIR GED's.** Meeting with a guidance counselor, securing school supplies, arranging for a tutor, developing a sense of career possibilities are some of the things that YO staff offers our student participants. Encouraging a healthy routine and good nutrition are also essential ingredients of staff support.

Of course, education leads to improving employment options. Reinforcing this concept with youth helps them commit to the demands of school. Developing a sense of career and employment possibilities can be the spark that inspires a youth to work hard to get ahead. Subsidized work experience in the form of a paid apprenticeship is an integral part of YO employment services. For young people who are not job-ready, a stipended apprenticeship allows them to learn about the work world and learn about their work skills while in a supportive environment. Since mentors who open their workplaces to young people do not pay the apprentice a wage, they do not expect the youth to produce at the level of someone on their own payroll. The young person is a "student" and can make mistakes and learn at a pace that is appropriate to their developmental level. The experience is structured with expectations and like any employee, the apprentice must meet the conditions agreed upon in the Learning Agreement that is designed by YO staff, the apprentice and the mentor.

32 PARTICIPANTS UNDERTOOK STIPENDED APPRENTICESHIPS THIS YEAR. For youth who are low-skilled, we have "entry-level" apprenticeships at such sites as a soup kitchen, a health club, and a construction salvage company.

These beginning level apprenticeships are utilized when youth have not demonstrated dependability or the social skills expected at our higher level apprenticeship sites. Several apprentices succeeded at high level apprenticeships in libraries, educational settings, and social services. Apprentices get a taste of what a satisfying job is and feel more motivation to include a future education/training in their plans. A successful try-out apprenticeship can result in unsubsidized work.

Staff assists many participants in finding work. **71% OF PARTICIPANTS WERE UNEMPLOYED BEFORE ENTERING YO. BY YEAR END THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DECREASED BY 22% TO 49%.** Young people secured unsubsidized jobs at businesses ranging from fast food chains and retail stores to senior living homes and child care centers. Working participants receive support to maintain and grow in their employment. Ithaca is a very difficult place to find work for our participants as there is an abundance of highly educated, underemployed people due to the colleges located here.

2013 Apprenticeship Sites

32 youth participated in apprenticeship experiences in several fields such as:

Library Science

Office assisting

Retail sales

House salvage

Arts & Theater

Food prep

Building Trades

Sports training

Early childhood education

Clothing design and sewing

Health care

Youth recreation

"I am thankful for this apprenticeship. I will add it to my resume once I complete it and receive my certificate."

Nick, YO participant

WORKING AS A TEAM — COMPLEX NEEDS REQUIRE A NETWORK OF RESOURCES

Homeless youth and young adults have a wide variety of needs that cross many human service, education, and employment sectors. Staff must be skilled at assessing and accessing local resources to support our work with participants. And, at the same time, participants must be a critical player in planning and carrying out referrals for services and for case management efforts on their behalf. During intake, staff gather information from a participant regarding other formal service providers they are using and any informal networks with which a youth may be connected. Throughout a youth's participation in our program, staff are attentive to youth needs that cannot be met through our services, and with the youth's full consent and agreement, staff make referrals and coordinate with other service providers. In these cases, staff follow our protocol for referring youth to other services and following up after a referral is made. An important piece of the process is teaching youth how to navigate the social services systems and advocate for themselves. Depending on a youth's needs, YO staff take on highly specific roles such as acting as payees for youth, being a part of a sentencing agreement, overseeing supervised visitations with children, etc. Some examples of our coordination with other providers to meet youth needs include:

- Hannah, age 20, had no work experience and was in desperate need of a paying job. Youth Outreach placed Hannah in an apprenticeship where she experienced great success. However, Hannah needed more time to solidify skills before trying to secure unsubsidized work. Staff contacted our colleagues at the Workforce NY office and initiated a referral that allowed Hannah to continue at her apprenticeship under Workforce NY after her Learning Web stipend ended. Both YO and Workforce staff worked with Hannah during her transition to the Workforce program. Hannah was able to finish her training and was able to secure an unsubsidized job with the help of the Workforce Program.
- Kenny, age 18, attends a BOCES GED prep class that is held at our Youth Outreach office. The Learning Web and TST BOCES has undertaken a collaboration in 2014 to offer GED Prep classes in our Youth Outreach Lab. It is a win-win for both organizations—BOCES has a downtown site for classes and Youth Outreach can offer a convenient and comfortable setting for participants to begin studying for their GED.
- Lizzie, age 19, worked with her Youth Outreach case manager to apply for Section 8 Housing through Tompkins Community Action, food stamps through Tompkins DSS, and a security deposit through Catholic Charities. Lizzie was able to secure an apartment and stabilize her housing.

Just offering referral information to a young person is not enough---staff facilitate a personal connection between the youth and the referral source. Youth Outreach acts as a mentor for participants, advocating for them and teaching them to be their own advocates. Using the resources of Youth Outreach and other county service providers, our participants build healthy, productive, and self-sufficient lives. The table below outlines activities provided and referred

2013 Services Provided & Referred**General Independent Living Program Participants**

Activity	Provided	Referred	Activity	Provided	Referred
Basic needs	100%	81%	Family Work	35%	10%
Housing Services	100%	77%	Youth Development Activities	65%	---
Case Management	87%	6%	Civic Participation Activities	26%	---
Independent Living Skills	100%	4%	Employment related	88%	63%
Life Skills Workshops	29%	---	Working Participant Support	48%	---
General Health Care	----	72%	Education	84%	73%
HIV/AIDS related	58%	46%	Legal	31%	24%
Substance abuse related	38%	26%	Recreation	33%	---
Counseling	81%	26%	Computer Learning Lab	88%	---
Transitional Living Program	20%	9%	Parenting Skills Training	21%	---

Taking a Good Look at Ourselves – Program Evaluation

Programs are only as valuable as they are useful to the people they serve. Ours are no different. We take seriously our commitment to evaluate all of our programs and services and the staff who work for our agency.

100 PERCENT of program objectives were achieved this year.

73 PERCENT of youth secured and maintained safe, stable housing for 6 to 18 months and transitioned responsibly from one housing situation to another.

100 PERCENT of those youth graduating from the Housing Scholarship Program made safe exits to secure housing.

95 PERCENT of youth demonstrated increased ability to follow healthy routine.

73 PERCENT of youth with substance /alcohol abuse issues decreased substance use in terms of frequency of use and/or the intensity of drugs used.

55 PERCENT of delinquent youth decreased involvement with people participating in criminal activity.

77 PERCENT of youth met all of their personal financial responsibilities.

84 PERCENT of youth significantly increased their employment skills.

39 PERCENT of youth were self-supporting.

Though this is an important measure of program and agency performance, it is only one piece of the picture. We look to our most important stakeholders: youth participants, agency staff, and the community adults who volunteer their time to work with our young people for feedback about the quality and relevance of our services and the performance of our staff. In the Youth Outreach program, we do not send parent evaluations out as most young people are alienated from their parents and do not want staff to contact a parent. We gather regular feedback about the apprenticeship services through the use of apprenticeship evaluation forms. We were very pleased with the feedback we received from apprenticeship evaluations this past year. Despite the fact that some apprentices have a difficult time fulfilling the goals of an apprenticeship, many apprentices were able to make a commitment, and their mentors' evaluations reflected satisfaction with the program and staff in almost all cases: 84 PERCENT of apprentice evaluations indicated that the youth met or exceeded their apprenticeship goals and were provided information about career options in the field of interest they explored. 78 PERCENT of mentor evaluations indicated that apprenticeship goals were met or exceeded and that their apprentice increased or significantly increased her/his knowledge of the duties, responsibilities, training, and qualifications of the career field explored.

Our program's value is best expressed by its participants--

"Being accepted into the housing Scholarship Program is a major accomplishment. This is the best chance that I have to save money to move to NYC and study fashion. Thank you so much!"

Chris, age 22

"It was amazing to be doing something useful for other people. They(residents) really seem to like me. I know a lot of people think I can't do anything but I'm ready to show that they are wrong."

Maria, age 19

"Never thought this way before I got into this program, I can be someone"

Devin, age 20