



## Transition to Adulthood: It Begins with a Place to Call Home

Each story is different and each youth is an individual, yet they all share a common need: a safe place to live. The teens and young adults who come to Community Youth Services' transitional housing programs represent a variety of family structures, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural expectations. Some have run away from home to escape negligent, violent or abusive environments, while others have been forced from their homes – or even abandoned – by their parents.



**“My case managers all taught me so much; they helped me make the leap from kid to adult. I’m *very* thankful for this program.”**

—Sarah Holland  
*R.I.S.E. participant, '07-'09*

Living in the streets and unsure of what tomorrow may bring, they come to the program needing shelter that is safe and warm, as well as caring adults whom they can trust to help them navigate a healthy transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency.

Community Youth Services' first foray into transitional housing came in 1996 when the agency wrote a successful HUD grant for \$130,000. It allowed CYC to provide case management and pay rent for apartments for ten homeless program participants. Two staff members designed the program from the

ground up, identifying the basic needs of this vulnerable population and building services to meet those needs.

But then, as now, they saw that having a house to live in was only the beginning – and not the whole solution. Services were offered to address participants' diverse barriers to success, from alcohol and drug abuse to poor communication skills, from chronic mental health issues and unplanned pregnancies to learning difficulties or an absence of simple daily living skills.

**“It's amazing to me that at one point I was the client, and now, with my social work degree, I'll be the one helping others.”**

—Kya Miller  
*R.I.S.E. participant, '05-'07*



Today, CYC owns five houses and an apartment building, and also rents numerous local apartment units throughout the community for transitional housing participants. Four distinct programs, each with different eligibility criteria, age ranges, funding sources, and expected outcomes, include:

- ▶ **R.I.S.E. (Responsibility, Independence, Support, Encouragement)** serves homeless youth, 18-21. They may remain in the program for up to two years. Funding comes from HUD through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002.

# Transitional Housing

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- ▶ **TLP (Transitional Living Program)** accepts youth and young adults, 16-21, who may remain in the program for up to 18 months. It is funded by the federal government through its Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.
- ▶ **IYHP (Independent Youth Housing Program)** is funded by Washington State through the Department of Community, Trade & Economic Development. It serves young adults, 18-23, who are exiting or have exited the state foster care system. They may participate in the program for as long as they need to, or until they turn 24.
- ▶ Finally, the state-funded **ECHO Program**, which stands for **Empowering Change through Housing and Opportunities**, serves young adults, 18-24, who have been involved with the Department of Corrections, Family Court, or Child Protective Services. They may remain in the program for up to 24 months.

In all programs, developing trusting relationships with incoming youth, and accessing available local resources—from both within and outside of CYS—are the case managers' first order of business. Most critical, however, is the requirement for youth to demonstrate their own commitment to success by being in school, maintaining or seeking employment, or somehow working toward their own stability and self-sufficiency.

Compared to earlier transitional housing, today's programs are more multi-faceted and complex, and, with stiff competition for funding dollars, there is more emphasis than ever on outcomes and accountability.

**Youth must demonstrate their own commitment to success by working toward their own stability and self-sufficiency.**

Individual case management is also more intensive and many more community partners are involved. CYS works with Behavioral Health Resources, St. Peter's Chemical Dependency Center, the Olympia Police Department, the Thurston County Health Department, and a local volunteer grandparents group, to name only a few.

Another aspect of transitional housing is the inclusion of the participants' small children; in 2008 CYS served 38 babies and toddlers. The Family Education & Support Center's Parents as Teachers program has become an important collaborative partner.

In recent years, transitional housing programs at CYS have prevented more than 80% of the participating youth from becoming chronically homeless.

"Through transitional housing services, local homeless youth are able to transition to a healthy, self-supporting lifestyle,"

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## Like Pancakes?

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Donation: \$10 per person

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**To RSVP, call Roger, (360) 491-4435 by April 23<sup>rd</sup>.**



# Meet New CYS Staff!

## Allen Stanton, Program

**Assistant in the AmeriCorps** program, recruits members to fill 70+ positions each year in schools and youth-serving non-profits in six counties. Positions include reading tutors, volunteer coordinators, youth mentors, and program assis-

tants. "I started out as an AmeriCorps member myself," he says, "so I'm familiar with each position I fill and understand its needs. I believe in what we're doing and know all our staff are committed and care about the program." For those seeking more information, Allen Stanton can be reached at (360) 943-0780, ext. 161.

**Foster Care program director Nikki Brown** began her career at a drop-in-center for at-risk youth in Ellensburg, then earned her degree in Social Services at Central Washington University. She has worked as a domestic violence/sexual assault court advocate, as a deputy public guardian for the elderly, and has performed in-home Child Protective Services investigations. Most recently, she was the Director of Residential Services for JumpStart, where she oversaw a group home for teenage girls and a crisis residential center. Welcome, Nikki!

## Dae Shogren coordinates the Independent Living Skills

program, for youth, 15-21, who are exiting or have exited foster care. "With ILS services," she says, "many foster youth receive the necessary support and guidance to achieve their education, employment, and housing goals."

Dae also supervises the new **SETuP** program, which provides academic support, goal setting, and funding assistance to foster youth, 14-18, who would like to attend college. Dae invites community members to provide meals and snacks for peer support workshops, donate clothing and backpacks needed by participants, or offer transportation to and from ILS activities. To learn more, call Dae at (360) 943-0780, ext. 124.

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says program director **Maureen McLemore**, who has been at CYS for 18 years. "Rather than using state and local resources, they become productive, contributing members of our community."

With dedicated coordinators each covering

mental health, housing, and employment issues, along with nine trained, caring, case managers, CYS transitional housing participants have a better chance at growing into productive and healthy adults — a chance they need and so richly deserve.



## OUR ENDOWMENT FUND IS GROWING!



Help us to create an ongoing source of income for CYS program expansion and development — and a measure of independence from economic uncertainty.

**A DONATION TO THE ENDOWMENT FUND IS A GREAT TAX DEDUCTION!!**



Contact Susan Alexander, [salexander@communityyouthservices.org](mailto:salexander@communityyouthservices.org) or (360) 943-0780, ext. 116, for more information.



2009 Have a Heart for Kids Breakfast proves once again:

# This Community Cares!



**Ashley  
Rhodes-  
Courter**

If you attended this year's fundraising breakfast on February 12, you might still be thinking about keynote speaker Ashley Rhodes-Courter's story. So are we! A former foster child in the Florida state foster care system, Rhodes-Courter survived extreme cruelty and neglect in 14 different foster homes. Now, a college graduate, author, lecturer and national award recipient, she is raising national awareness of the plight of children needing homes and encouraging permanent adoptions. Her intimate presentation at the Red Lion Hotel brought many guests to tears, as she poignantly credited her adoptive parents with saving her life, helping her find her voice, and showing her a better way to live.

Kurshida Begum and Jesse Drennon, former and current CYS participants, also took to the podium and shared their inspiring personal stories of survival, empowerment, and hope.

CYS has many sponsors and individuals to thank for their efforts and generous support that helped us raise a record-breaking \$66,000!

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## **TABLE CAPTAINS:**

Susan Alexander	Dale Carlson	Ed Holm	Blake Lindskog	Cathy Reiner
Mike Andritch	Casey Cochrane	Rev. David James	Neil McClanahan	Greg Rhodes
Crystal Ashley	Geoff Crooks	Dan Kimball	Ryan McGaughey	Charles Shelan
Rosemary Barnhart	Nancy Garcia	Dr. John Kooiker	Bob McGinley	John Skeen
Kathy Baros Friedt	Jon Halvorson	Jim Koval	Beth Morris	Ann Marie Stuart
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or call 943-0780, ext. 116