



**GO BIG OR STAY HOMELESS**

**BUILDING A NEW HOME  
FROM THE GROUND UP**

# GO BIG OR STAY HOMELESS: THE CAMPAIGN TO KEEP HYA IN THE HAIGHT

## Who We Are: An Oasis of Hope & Help in the Haight

Since 1992, Homeless Youth Alliance has been a refuge and safe space for homeless and runaway teens and young adults in the Haight Ashbury, providing basic services, counseling, and medical and mental health care to 5,000 youth annually. From our earliest days as Haight Ashbury Youth Outreach Team, a program of the legendary Haight Ashbury Free Clinics, Inc, to our emergence in 2006 as a stand-alone organization under the name Homeless Youth Alliance, we've helped legions of young people protect themselves from harm, make healthy choices, and transition off the streets.

### **HYA's goals are:**

1. To treat every homeless young person we interact with with respect and dignity and without judgement, and to build relationships that give young people the opportunity to create change in their own lives.
2. To reduce rates of overdose, homelessness, and untreated physical and mental illness among homeless youth who cannot access mainstream services.
3. To prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis, and other blood-borne diseases associated with injection drug use, unsafe sex, and other high-risk behaviors among homeless youth.
4. To empower homeless youth to make healthier choices, practice preventive health measures, and avoid emergency psychiatric and medical hospitalization. The cycle of homelessness cannot be broken without addressing immediate needs, such as hunger, addiction, and mental illness. By building honest, trusting relationships with participants, we lay the groundwork for long-term change.

*For 12 years,  
HYA's Drop-In Center  
gave marginalized  
youth a place to call  
home.*

*HYA made getting clean and off the streets not only look attractive and possible - they gave me the support and the means to do both. I've been off the streets since 2006. Most of the people I was there with are also leading productive, responsible lives that include volunteer work. This place needs to exist, as much as San Francisco needs these kids to get clean and get indoors. HYA is the bridge; without it, many will not cross over. They will die, or continue to be a financial strain on the judicial and welfare systems, and a scar on the city's progressive reputation. -Stephen Johnson, 23*

## Who Does HYA Help?

HYA works with a population of approximately 5,000 youth ages 13 to 29 who live in the parks and streets of San Francisco's Haight Ashbury. They come to this famous, iconic location in search of acceptance, tolerance, and love: everything they never got growing up. Many come from backgrounds of serious trauma, mental health issues, institutionalization, and poverty. These youth are very hard to reach, wary of adults and authority, and often resistant to therapy and medical care.

- 44% of HYA participants are LGBTQ
- 57% deal with mental health issues, from PTSD to major depression to bipolar disorder and schizophrenia
- 34% spent time in the foster care system
- 17% have reported trading sex for food or a place to stay
- On average, they left home at 14. A sample of their self-reported reasons for leaving home: "I was in a group home, and being on the street is better," "There were too many mouths to feed," "I got emancipated from foster care," and "I didn't want to live with a rapist."

According to the 2013 Point-In-Time Youth Homelessness Count by the San Francisco Local Homelessness Coordinating Board, 86% of the city's homeless youth under 25 are entirely unsheltered. There are very few safe, youth-friendly spaces for them to go and get help. They often don't feel safe in the city's shelter system, and have a hard time accessing the limited city resources that are available. According to the Count,

- 40% of San Francisco's homeless youth who needed medical care in the past year reported going without care
- 1/3 of homeless youth use SF General's Emergency Room as their primary provider, and only after their conditions have reached a crisis point

*"This place is home to those of us who don't have one anymore."  
- Trixie, 19*

*"I hate doctors, and I hate hospitals. And when I was high, I didn't want to go to a doctor, because I was scared of it showing up on tests, and I didn't know what the consequences of that would be. But I feel okay getting medical care at HYA. Even when I was using [heroin], it still felt like I could take steps to not share needles, to prevent overdose, to have some responsibility. I've never gone anywhere else for services. I just always feel safe here, and that's why I was able to get off heroin eventually. I get food here, they've gotten me glasses, they take messages for me from family, and I can talk to them about anything. Everyone here is just so supportive and so good. I love seeing them. I love coming here." -Colleen, 28*

### Why HYA Works

We're not the only homeless-youth program in the city. But we are the only one that hires from within its own target population. Our Executive Director, some of our Outreach Counselors, and many of our staff, Board members and volunteers over the years have been formerly homeless youth. Because we understand what it's like, we reach a group of young people that no other program can reach. What we offer is real peer-to-peer mentorship, and real, relatable role models for kids who need nonjudgmental support and assistance. And it works.

- 10 former participants have gone on to work for us long-term, more than 75 have gone on to volunteer for us, and 2 have served on our Board of Directors
- Many of our former participants have been inspired to enter the fields of direct service, counseling or therapy as a career. Countless HYA kids have gone on to get degrees in social work and psychology. It's a refrain we hear repeatedly: "I want to give back what you guys gave to me."
- We've provided ongoing mental health care—therapy and psychiatry—to more than 2,000 youth over the past 5 years
- We've provided basic medical care in our clinic to more than 5,000 young people who can't or won't access medical care elsewhere
- Ninety percent of our surveyed participants report that HYA is the **only** place they are willing to access services

*"I'd been to so many other places, and so many other people had tried to save me and tell me how to live my life, and it never worked. There's a difference between studying something in school and actually experiencing it so that you know where people are coming from. At HYA, they knew where we were coming from." -Patricia, former HYA participant, current psychology major at Evergreen State*

*"HYA does tremendous work with kids no one else can reach or work with. Getting to know the kids served by Homeless Youth Alliance has shown me that we all have to recognize the humanity of youth on the streets."*

*- Bevan Dufty, Director, San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing Opportunity, Partnerships and Engagement (HOPE)*

## A Casualty of A Changing Climate

In January 2014, after 12 years of running our drop-in center out of a storefront on Haight Street, HYA—and, by extension, the thousands of young people who use our services—became another casualty of San Francisco’s escalating rental crisis. We lost our lease, and with it, our ability to offer youth a secure place to use the bathroom, shower, eat a hot meal, get clean clothing and basic medical care, talk confidentially with an Outreach Counselor or mental health provider, and simply take a much-needed breather from the pressures and chaos of life on the streets.

Before we lost our space, we were the **only** remaining resource in the Haight that provided comprehensive, integrated services for homeless youth, under one roof.

*“Here, we could come in and feed our pets and see a therapist or a doctor and take a shower and get help with finding a place to live, or just have someone to talk to, all in one place.” -Hillary, 23*

**WHEN OUR ORGANIZATION LOST ITS LEASE IN 2014,  
THOUSANDS OF YOUTH LOST THE ONLY PLACE THEY FELT AT HOME.**

### How We’re Adapting

Now, our Outreach Team, Mental Health Team, and Medical Team are doing their best to provide services to marginalized youth entirely on the streets and in the parks of the Haight. We’re holding case management sessions on park benches, street corners and in cafes. We’re providing clinical care, needle exchange, and HIV-prevention education from the back of a cargo van on the sidewalk. We’re holding therapy and psychiatry appointments in donated office spaces and outdoors. We’re doing our administrative work—fundraising, oversight, strategic planning—from the home of an extremely generous volunteer and Haight neighbor.

Even in these transitional and less-than-ideal circumstances, we’re making a difference. Our team continues to place vulnerable youth in permanent housing, help them access substance use treatment and benefits, provide mental health care and medical care, and give youth the tools to prevent HIV, overdose, and other fatal harms.

Since losing our lease in January 2014, HYA has:

- **Placed 16 kids in permanent housing**
- **Held 240 one-on-one case management sessions in restaurants, cafes and on the street**
- **Held 300 therapy and psychiatry appointments with 168 unduplicated youth**
- **Reached thousands of youth during street outreach, distributing snacks, hygiene supplies, and safer sex supplies, and fostering trusting relationships**
- **Facilitated more than 70 sign-ups for General Assistance, CalFresh, and other life-saving benefits programs**
- **Facilitated 37 placements in inpatient rehabilitation programs and/or detox programs**
- **Provided rapid HIV testing onsite at our mobile needle exchange to 125 youth**
- **Conducted 250 Overdose Prevention, HIV Prevention, and Safer Injection trainings at our mobile needle exchange**

We’ve done all this while homeless ourselves. We could be doing so much more, and reaching so many more kids in a sustained, consistent way, if we once again had a place to call home.

*“What I miss most is the family feeling I got at HYA. It was a place to relax and get away from all the stress going on outside. It’s where I could find some stability.” -Krissy, 18*

## The Cost of HYA's Homelessness

Since we lost our physical space, there's been an upswing in the number of homeless youth on the Haight's streets who are disconnected, adrift, and in obvious emotional and physical distress. Some of the young people who need our services the most—those who struggle with serious, disabling mental illness requiring medication, and those who are most isolated and ashamed of their physical and mental condition—no longer know where to find us. No matter how exhaustively our Outreach and Mental Health Teams canvass the parks and the streets, and no matter how familiar we are with the haunts and habits of the homeless youth subculture, our lack of a centralized, stable location means that the most at-risk, vulnerable youth are falling through the cracks, and not getting consistent help.

*"For so many of the HYA kids I see, the loss of the space reminds them of losses in their lives. It's a bit re-traumatizing, because it duplicates events in their lives that have left them feeling abandoned. If you don't have many safe, stable spaces to go in your life, you identify the program and the help you get there so much with the physical place itself." -Maurice Byrd, MFT, staff therapist at HYA*

Residents, merchants, and law enforcement agree: since HYA lost our lease, the plight of the neighborhood's homeless young people has gotten visibly worse and more desperate. Without access to bathrooms, youth are forced to relieve themselves outdoors. Without access to showers and clean, dry clothing, skin infections, abscesses, foot rot, and preventable health conditions are proliferating. Without a "one-stop-shop" where they can peacefully hang out and collect themselves, there's a greater incidence of youth congregating, at loose ends, on the streets and in Buena Vista Park—to the concern and dissatisfaction of several residents. There's also an increase in the number of kids being picked up on involuntary psychiatric holds—which are immensely costly for the city, and can be prevented with ongoing, proactive mental health care.

And despite the scarcity of accessible services in the Haight, youth continue to come to the neighborhood.

*"We don't just disappear. We're still in the Haight, but now we'll just be hanging around without a place to shower, without a bathroom, without a place to go and get our needs met and get off the sidewalk for a while." - Josh, 21*

As we mentioned earlier, our mobile services are still attracting legions of homeless youth, and we're still managing to help them make positive life transformations and protect themselves from infection, overdose, and other life-threatening harms.

But every day, we see the heartbreaking side of our enforced mobility. For example, recently a young man approached us during our outdoor needle exchange, showed us a large abscess on his arm, and asked if we could show him how to treat it and prevent it from happening again. This is a common occurrence. When we encountered such situations in our indoor exchange, we could first send the young man to our medical room to get his abscess properly treated, and then one of our Counselors could have a safer injection conversation with him, in a private and well-lit space. However, such services are much more awkward and difficult to provide, and feel less safe to the participant, when they're provided outdoors, in the dark, in the line of sight of multiple curious passersby.

An even more dramatic situation happened recently during our syringe access program when a young LGBT man approached one of our Counselors in a state of great distress, confided that he'd recently been sexually assaulted in the park, and talked about wanting to end his life. Instead of being able to talk privately with this young man in a safe and private room, our Counselor had to counsel him, troubleshoot the situation, and determine whether the young man posed an imminent threat to himself, while standing with him on the sidewalk. Over and over again, we face the same uncomfortable dynamic when participants approach us in a state of great agitation wanting to confide personal information to our Counselors. Perhaps someone has been attacked,

robbed, raped, hurt, or assaulted and wants to speak to us privately about it, even though their assailant or abuser or a police officer might appear around the street corner at any moment.

In those situations, we're forced to be resourceful as we can, creative in our efforts to make participants feel safe, unexposed, and unashamed about seeking us out, while maintaining as much discretion as possible for the participants' own safety. We can consult privately with youth one-on-one in our cargo van, but the van's size will only accommodate one meeting/training at a time. Alternately, our therapist and Outreach Counselors will meet with participants at a nearby café, where participants will at least have the chance to decompress, relax, eat, and get off the street for a brief period. Youth are receptive to these measures, but we are conscious that this mode of service delivery is not optimal for the long term. In order to provide services to the best of our ability, and to increase our capacity, **we need an indoor space.**

*"We can get food or clothes from some other program, sure. But we have to lie to them about our lives. We can't be honest with them." – Ian, 19 (feedback from HYA's first post-eviction Participant Council meeting)*

It's in the best interests of the community, the city, and obviously the youth themselves for HYA to once again have a permanent space from which to provide integrated, coordinated health and human services.

Our Campaign to secure a new permanent location, **"Go Big or Stay Homeless,"** is endorsed by the Haight Ashbury Merchants Association, Haight Ashbury Neighborhood Council, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, our District Supervisor, the Mayor's Director of Housing Opportunity, Partnerships and Engagement (HOPE), and many Haight residents, fellow nonprofits, and community groups.

*"Maintaining a stable place for the area's homeless youth to get off the streets and use the bathroom, shower, and obtain vital health and human services is an investment in the commercial viability and residential well-being of the entire neighborhood. That's why the Haight Ashbury Merchants Association (HAMA), representing over 160 merchants in the Haight-Ashbury commercial corridor, has signed on as a community partner in support of HYA's campaign to secure a new space."*

*- Christin Evans, Board Director, Haight Ashbury Merchants Association*

**Now is the time to create a new home for them. With your help, we can make it happen.**

### **What We Need: A New Permanent Drop-in Space**

Finding a new space to rent in the Haight has been an uphill battle for HYA. Since our lease termination, we've made 33 inquiries into available listings, and have been turned down 33 times. That number will have grown by the time you read this. We enlisted the services of three pro-bono real estate agents, all of whom gave up within weeks, after promising us "We won't give up!"

It doesn't matter that we have excellent letters of recommendation from our previous landlords and a documented record of being solvent, safe, and conscientious long-term tenants. San Francisco has been changing rapidly, and the Haight—once thought to be the city's last bastion of tolerance and grassroots ethos—is now home to Google buses, newly minted wealth, and real estate that's valued in the millions. Some neighbors are openly hostile to the homeless youth population, and they vocally spread the myth that homelessness is a "lifestyle choice" aided and abetted by human services: that, in short, if we build it, they will come. Clearly, this is not the case, since the numbers of homeless youth in the Haight have only increased since HYA lost its space and there's no longer a place for them to use the bathroom, shower, and get basic amenities. We've been saying it for years: disenfranchised, traumatized young people will always come to the Haight, regardless of how inhospitable it becomes. Now we're being proven right, definitively.



But in this climate, Haight property owners are reluctant to rent to a human services program for homeless youth. These days, the average office-space rental listing in this once-countercultural neighborhood comes with a tagline that sums up most landlords' ideal tenant profile: "Perfect for techies and start-ups!" Even the small office spaces we've inquired about renting for administrative-only purposes have turned us down. In certain cases, allies from City Hall have intervened on our behalf, urging property owners to rent to us, vouching for the community benefits and importance of our program from a public health standpoint. Still, no one has stepped up.

Except for fellow service providers like Huckleberry Youth Programs' Cole Street Youth Clinic, who is letting us use some of their office space to hold case management and therapy appointments with our participants. And the staff of the Page Street branch of the public library, who let us hold our Games Group and Arts Group in their Community Room. And, most significantly and extraordinarily of all, our volunteer physician, the Haight neighbor our participants call "Dr. Awesome," who has offered her private home to HYA as headquarters for our administrative operations. For the past year, we've done our fundraising, held our staff meetings, and ran the administrative branch of our program out of the living room and family room of this amazing woman and her two awesome sons, who are also avid HYA volunteers. As if that's not enough, this remarkable family bakes homemade cookies every night for our needle exchange participants.

We are unspeakably grateful to these benefactors, who have been angels to us during a time of intense transition. But it's not all about us. It's about the homeless youth of the Haight. The situation we're in now is unsustainable. Not because we don't appreciate it, but because our youth are still left out in the cold—literally. And we won't stop fighting until we can once again provide them with a secure refuge.

To adequately meet the staggering need we encounter every day, HYA needs a building. And in order to be truly effective and accessible to the very singular and hard-to-engage population we've successfully reached for decades, we must remain in the Haight neighborhood.

And if recent events have taught us anything, it's that we need to own, not rent. Even if we could find a property owner willing to rent to a human services program, commercial spaces in the Haight don't come cheap. After undergoing retrofitting and renovation, our former storefront space will be leased at \$12,000/month: a 75% hike in rent. This rate is comparable to other commercial spaces in the area. And so we need a permanent program site, safeguarded against the vagaries of the rental market, the tide of gentrification, and the whims of speculators eager to cash in on the city's transforming landscape. A place where youth can use the shower and bathroom, sit down for a hot meal, see a therapist or psychiatrist, get medical care in an atmosphere of privacy and confidentiality, and work with an Outreach Counselor to find housing and shelter, access treatment for substance use, find employment, and get the tools to protect themselves from HIV, hepatitis, overdose, and self-harm.

Ideally, we want to secure a space that has the amenities our previous drop-in center lacked:

- A larger, better-equipped medical room
- Multiple showers and bathrooms
- A full-service kitchen serving hot, balanced meals onsite
- Laundry facilities
- Additional office spaces for youth to meet privately with therapists and Outreach Counselors, so that more youth can see a mental health provider or Counselor on-demand, without a wait.

There is one way to make this possible: We need to purchase and customize a new space in the Haight.

**And we need your help to make it happen.**

## What \$5 Million Will Do

To establish a permanent refuge for homeless youth in the Haight, **we need to raise \$5 million.** These funds will allow us to:

- Purchase and customize a new space in the Haight Ashbury, which will likely cost between \$1 million and \$3 million, depending on its size, condition, and exact location.
- Assist with travel costs, publicity costs, and additional staffing costs associated with running a comprehensive Capital Campaign of this size and magnitude, including growing our Development operations so we can permanently diversify our income streams
- Permanently increase the size of our Outreach Team, Medical Team, and Mental Health Team, enabling us to engage with, treat, and serve an additional 1,000 at-risk youth annually

Homeless youth in the Haight Ashbury already face so many obstacles to stability, health, and functioning. You can help eliminate those obstacles and be part of the solution. Eliminating homelessness entirely may not be within our grasp, but what we can do—what we do every day—is make it a little easier for at-risk youth to open up, get help, and salvage their lives and their dreams. Ultimately, a permanent building will enable us to multiply our impact exponentially.

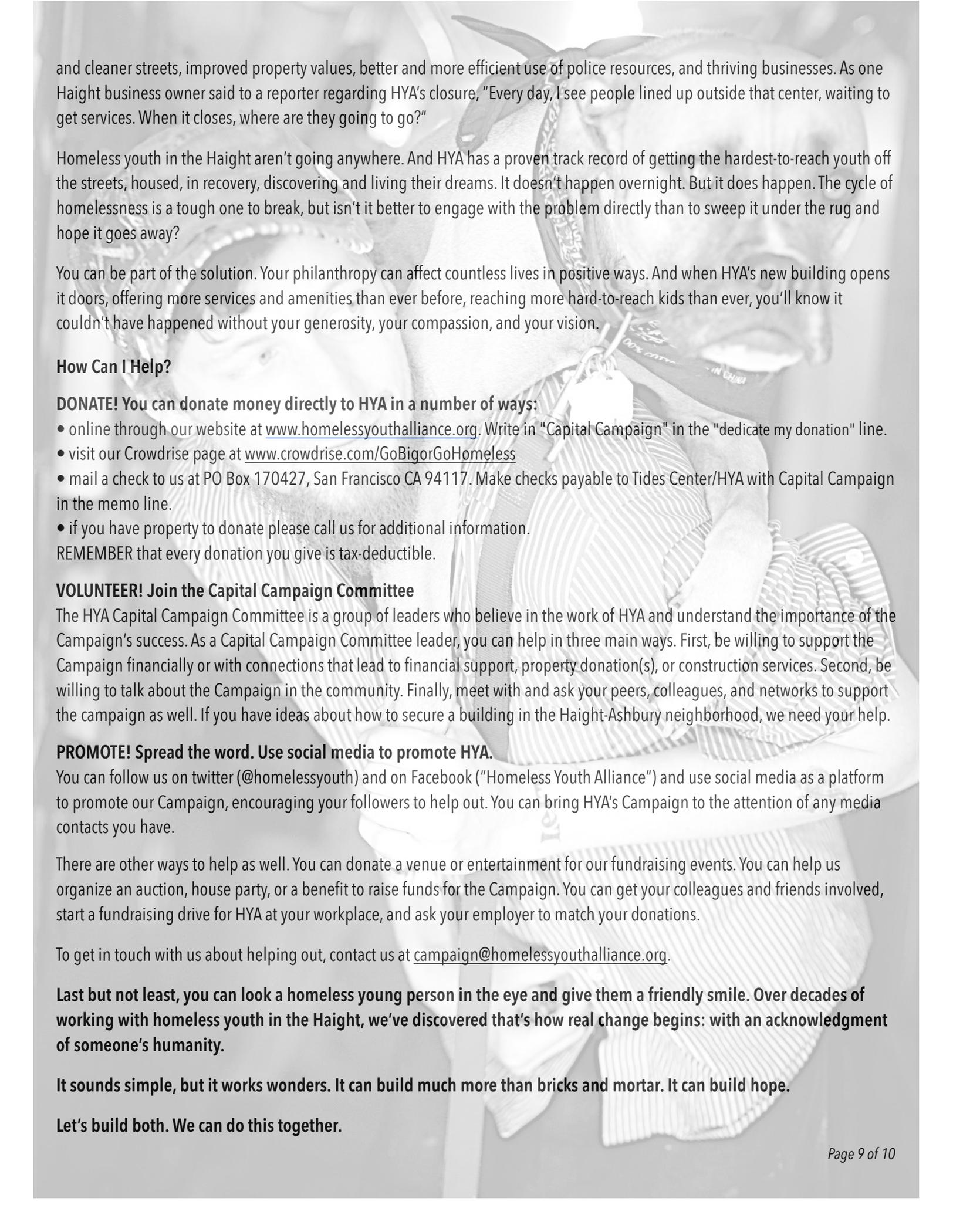
And that will create many, many more outcomes like Joseph's, a 28-year-old former participant who recently wrote the following testimonial:

*"HYA saved my life. They fed me when I couldn't feed myself, helped me get off of heroin, connected me with every possible resource available (financial assistance, new clean clothes, glasses, education). I was able to see a therapist on site every week to work out the traumas and issues I had acquired growing up as a homeless youth/ young adult. They are solely responsible for doing what is most of the time impossible, which is saving kids and young adults from never ending cycle of street life and addiction. Even for the one's everybody else has given up on, they keep trying with the diligence and patience of a loving family that most of us would never know. Once I was out of the darkness, they helped me realize that my life had value and purpose. Mary Howe, the director, whom I admire and love dearly, gave me a job doing outreach to homeless people in trouble my age. This was something I'd never known. I'd felt two things that I'd never felt in my life, direction and moral responsibility, to my community, to myself and the world at large. I went on in that direction discovering a healthy life I never knew existed. Now I have a very nice apartment, a business of my own and so much time clean and sober that I stopped keeping track."*

## Why Should I Help?

Youth homelessness in the Haight Ashbury is nothing new. Neither is the need for services that reach people who distrust traditional forms of care. In the 1960s, the famous Haight Ashbury Free Clinics opened in response to an influx of homeless youth into the Haight. At the time, setting up services for this population was highly controversial and attracted resistance from neighbors and law enforcement. But as the decades went by and marginalized youth didn't stop coming to the Haight, it became clear that there would *always* be a need for places like HYA. Treating homeless kids, and giving them a place where they can find trust and belonging, is always going to be much more effective than criminalizing homelessness and stigmatizing youth more than they already have been.

So when you contribute to HYA's Capital Campaign, you'll be making an investment in the safety, health, and well-being of the community. You'll be investing in a concrete result you'll actually be able to see and measure, in real time. Our successful Campaign will result in fewer youth at loose ends on street corners, utterly isolated, suffering from untreated medical issues, drug use, and untreated mental health issues. It'll result in a significant decrease in debris, paraphernalia, and human waste on the streets; in far fewer youth sleeping in the neighborhood's parks and doorways; of fewer youth clogging the court system with warrants from unpaid citations for sitting, lying down, and camping on the streets; and in police officers' time not being wasted on issuing countless quality-of-life citations instead of targeting real crime. Ultimately, a permanent home for HYA will mean safer



and cleaner streets, improved property values, better and more efficient use of police resources, and thriving businesses. As one Haight business owner said to a reporter regarding HYA's closure, "Every day, I see people lined up outside that center, waiting to get services. When it closes, where are they going to go?"

Homeless youth in the Haight aren't going anywhere. And HYA has a proven track record of getting the hardest-to-reach youth off the streets, housed, in recovery, discovering and living their dreams. It doesn't happen overnight. But it does happen. The cycle of homelessness is a tough one to break, but isn't it better to engage with the problem directly than to sweep it under the rug and hope it goes away?

You can be part of the solution. Your philanthropy can affect countless lives in positive ways. And when HYA's new building opens its doors, offering more services and amenities than ever before, reaching more hard-to-reach kids than ever, you'll know it couldn't have happened without your generosity, your compassion, and your vision.

### **How Can I Help?**

#### **DONATE! You can donate money directly to HYA in a number of ways:**

- online through our website at [www.homelessyouthalliance.org](http://www.homelessyouthalliance.org). Write in "Capital Campaign" in the "dedicate my donation" line.
- visit our Crowdrise page at [www.crowdrise.com/GoBigorGoHomeless](http://www.crowdrise.com/GoBigorGoHomeless)
- mail a check to us at PO Box 170427, San Francisco CA 94117. Make checks payable to Tides Center/HYA with Capital Campaign in the memo line.
- if you have property to donate please call us for additional information.

REMEMBER that every donation you give is tax-deductible.

#### **VOLUNTEER! Join the Capital Campaign Committee**

The HYA Capital Campaign Committee is a group of leaders who believe in the work of HYA and understand the importance of the Campaign's success. As a Capital Campaign Committee leader, you can help in three main ways. First, be willing to support the Campaign financially or with connections that lead to financial support, property donation(s), or construction services. Second, be willing to talk about the Campaign in the community. Finally, meet with and ask your peers, colleagues, and networks to support the campaign as well. If you have ideas about how to secure a building in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, we need your help.

#### **PROMOTE! Spread the word. Use social media to promote HYA.**

You can follow us on twitter (@homelessyouth) and on Facebook ("Homeless Youth Alliance") and use social media as a platform to promote our Campaign, encouraging your followers to help out. You can bring HYA's Campaign to the attention of any media contacts you have.

There are other ways to help as well. You can donate a venue or entertainment for our fundraising events. You can help us organize an auction, house party, or a benefit to raise funds for the Campaign. You can get your colleagues and friends involved, start a fundraising drive for HYA at your workplace, and ask your employer to match your donations.

To get in touch with us about helping out, contact us at [campaign@homelessyouthalliance.org](mailto:campaign@homelessyouthalliance.org).

**Last but not least, you can look a homeless young person in the eye and give them a friendly smile. Over decades of working with homeless youth in the Haight, we've discovered that's how real change begins: with an acknowledgment of someone's humanity.**

**It sounds simple, but it works wonders. It can build much more than bricks and mortar. It can build hope.**

**Let's build both. We can do this together.**

## \$5 Million Will Allow Success Stories Like These To Continue:

### KHRISTINE

- Found HYA at age 20
- HYA Outreach Counselor, 2006 - 2012
- HYA Advisory Board Member, 2012-present
- Current Full-Time Yoga Instructor
- "When I was a homeless IV drug user, HYA was the only place I could go at that point in my life and feel fully human."

### SARAH

- Found HYA at age 17
- HYA Outreach Counselor, 2004 - 2007
- MSW from UC Berkeley, 2010
- Became a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, 2014
- "Homeless Youth Alliance changed my life...in fact, helped me to create the life I wanted to live."

### LARRY

- Found HYA at age 26
- Junior at USF School of Nursing 3.8 GPA, Certified Personal Trainer, USA Weightlifting Level 2 Coach
- "I was able to escape a life on the streets and drug addiction disease free thanks to the philosophy of harm reduction. HYA provided a place that was safe and loving and ready to help me when I was ready. Mary's team saved my life, and in turn I plan to spend my life giving back. There were dark moments in my recovery and counseling where I dug up painful memories which left me raw. It was the counselors that took me aside and helped me process the work I was doing. There is no better feeling than having someone, anyone, believe in you, and that is what they did. Everyday I am thankful for the gift of life. I challenge myself to be better than I was the day before, not just for myself, but to honor those who helped me become who I am today."

### JENN aka YEAH YEAH

- Found HYA at age 14
- HYA Outreach Counselor, 2010 - present
- Psychology major at SF State
- "I know I'm not the only one to say this, but this place saved my life. There's really not another place like this in the city. I think it's amazing that this place makes homeless kids feel like people."

### HILLARY

- Found HYA at age 19
- Intern, Mayor's Office of Housing Opportunity, Partnership, and Engagement
- Youth Advocate & Member, Citywide Transitional Age Youth Advisory Board
- "What I remember most about being homeless is being constantly ignored. HYA was the only place that treated me like a human being. I think there should be a lot more people with stories like mine."

