

GO BIG OR STAY HOMELESS

FOR 12 YEARS, THE YOUTH OF THE HAIGHT ASHBURY HAD A REFUGE.
THAT REFUGE WAS HOMELESS YOUTH ALLIANCE'S DROP-IN CENTER.



IN 2013, WE LOST OUR LEASE.
AND HUNDREDS OF YOUTH LOST THE ONLY HOME THEY HAD.

WE CAN'T LET THEM FALL THROUGH THE CRACKS AND
BECOME CHRONICALLY HOMELESS.

OUR GOAL:

TO RESTORE INDOOR SERVICES TO HAIGHT ASHBURY'S YOUTH.

IT'S TIME. LEARN HOW YOU CAN HELP.

2018

- GO BIG OR STAY HOMELESS -

THE CAMPAIGN: GET HYA A HOME IN THE HAIGHT

WHO WE ARE: AN OASIS OF HOPE & SUPPORT IN THE HAIGHT

Since 1992, HYA has been a refuge and safe space for runaway teens and young adults living on the streets in the Haight Ashbury, providing basic needs, counseling, and medical and mental health care to over 5,500 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 accept each youth exactly as they are. To treat every young person we interact with with respect and dignity and without judgement, and to build relationships that gives them the opportunity to create change in their own lives.
2. To reduce rates of overdose, homelessness, and untreated physical and mental illness among 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 youth experiencing homelessness.
4. To empower 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.

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

"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, 23

WHO DOES HYA HELP?

We work with youth ages 12 to 29 who mainly 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 enough of growing up. Many come from backgrounds of serious trauma, mental health issues, institutionalization, and poverty. These youth can be hard to reach, wary of adults and authority, and often resistant to therapy and medical care.

- 63% of HYA participants are LGBTQQAI
- 61% deal with mental health issues, from PTSD to major depression to bipolar disorder and schizophrenia
- 36% spent time in the foster care system
- 20% have reported trading sex for food or a place to stay

On average, our participants left home at age 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."

The San Francisco Local Homelessness Coordinating Board's annual Point-in-Time Youth Homelessness Count reveals demographic information about the city's unhoused youth that mirrors and corresponds with HYA's own findings about our participants. According to the 2017 Count 81% 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:

- 49% of San Francisco's youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQQAI, as compared to 25% of the adult homeless population in SF, and as compared to 40% of the homeless youth nationally.
- 66% stay in SF year-round. (*This disputes the popularly held notion that these youth are "travelers" who only come to the City for a short time.*)
- 35% are multiracial; 29% are Hispanic; 26% are Black and 26% are white. In other words, 74% are non-white.
- 26% report a history of foster care.
- 56% were living in SF County at the time they became homeless. Only 16% were living out of state. (*This undermines the often-purported but baseless theory that homeless youth "from all over the country" flock to SF because they want to take advantage of all the services the city offers.*)
- 68% report currently being enrolled in some sort of education or vocation program, or having a job, paid internship, or other type of employment.
- 32% are experiencing homelessness for the first time. (*This illustrates how important it is to reach these youth immediately, during their first exposure to homelessness, before they slide into a state of chronic homelessness.*)
- 9% of San Francisco's youth experiencing homelessness report having HIV/AIDS.
- Factors youth cite as contributing to becoming homeless include domestic abuse (52%), financial issues (26%), and mental health issues (23%).

"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

A TROUBLING TREND: SOARING MORTALITY RATES OF SAN FRANCISCO'S YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In April 2016, UC Berkeley published a study on San Francisco's homeless youth based on six years of field research, a significant portion of which was done in the Haight Ashbury. The study reported that San Francisco's homeless youth have a mortality rate 10 times higher than their peers, mostly due to suicide and substance use. The study cited "stigma" as a major contributor to early death for these youth. And sadly, stigma in the Haight is a daily factor of life for most youth experiencing homelessness. These youth are disproportionately targeted by police for "quality of life" citations, which, if they go to warrant, can impede a youth's ability to get off the street and into housing. And they are constantly scapegoated by certain residents who simply want these youth gone, and resist any services that exist to serve them.

As Berkeley's multi-year study demonstrated, homeless youth in the Haight have always dealt with disproportionate threats to their safety and their well-being. However, in the years since HYA lost our drop-in center, the dangers youth have faced here have escalated, with tragic results. 2018, in particular, was a year of heightened losses for the homeless-youth community in the Haight: we said goodbye to 38 young people. In February 2018, over the span of a week, the Haight weathered multiple tragedies: a shooting that killed one young man and seriously injured another, and a triple accidental overdose that resulted in the loss of four young men. In the aftermath of these events, the neighborhood convened an emergency meeting that brought together concerned Haight residents, service providers, and city officials from every branch of government.

Unfortunately, but typically, the meeting devolved into what local journalist Nuala Sawyer, in an article for SF Weekly, called "a cesspool of ignorance and hatred." Sawyer wrote:

And throughout the full 90 minutes, no one – not a single person from any governmental agency, or [former District 5 Supervisor and current San Francisco Mayor] Breed herself, mentioned the victims' names. It was only Mary Howe, director of the Homeless Youth Alliance, who grabbed the mic as everyone in the room was standing to go. "There are four people that lost their lives," she said, crying as she spoke. "They had names, their lives had value. Their names were Milkon, Michael, Adam, and David. They died on the streets, in this neighborhood ... They are the reason we are here. We can do better as a community. Their lives had value, their deaths were unnecessary."

For 12 years, HYA's Drop-In Center gave youth a place to call home. In a 3-hour shift up to 150 youth accessed our services.

HOMELESS YOUTH ALLIANCE: A LIFE-SAVING PROGRAM WITHOUT A HOME

From 2001-2013, HYA operated a drop-in center for youth experiencing homelessness at the corner of Haight and Clayton in a ground-floor storefront. Happening House Ventures (HHV) leased this space to HYA at below-market-rate rent (\$3,100 a month) for 12 years. In 2013, HYA's lease was terminated. The reason given for the lease termination was that HHV was required by the city to do a retrofit of the property. HYA could not operate on the ground floor while the retrofit was being completed. HHV then announced that it was "taking the building in a different direction" and would not continue renting to HYA after the retrofit was done, despite HYA's offer to pay higher rent and despite HHV's own statements to the effect that HYA's program provides a valuable service to the city and has always been a model tenant. The storefront is currently leased to a souvenir shop at a rate of \$11,000 a month.

HYA's final day operating our programs indoors was Christmas day, December 25, 2013. Since that day, we've completely reconfigured and transformed our mode of service delivery, providing our services—outreach, case management, crisis intervention, therapy, drug treatment, syringe access and disposal and medical care—on the streets of the Haight Ashbury. In this capacity, our staff makes hundreds of contacts per month with young people who live outdoors.

HOW WE'RE ADAPTING WITHOUT A HOME: THE IMPACT ON OUR SERVICES

OUR OUTREACH & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Now, our Outreach Team and Mental Health 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 holding therapy and psychiatry appointments in donated office spaces and outdoors.

We're doing our administrative work—fundraising, oversight, case notes, staff trainings, staff meetings and supervision, entering participant data, strategic planning—in an office in the Lower Haight. The terms of our lease do not allow us to see participants onsite on this location. Throughout the day, Outreach Counselors must bounce between our Lower Haight office and the Upper Haight, where our participants are.

OUR SYRINGE ACCESS PROGRAM

From 2013 to 2017, we operated our syringe access site three nights a week on the sidewalk outside of our former drop-in center. This was a site where youth could return used syringes, obtain safer injecting equipment and Naloxone (an opiate-antagonist that reverses overdoses), get HIV and HCV testing, receive education and referrals, and get immediate medical care. We also had a therapist onsite during syringe access hours, who provided on-demand, much-needed crisis intervention and counseling to youth who were in distress.

We saw our participant numbers rise considerably at our syringe access site, once we were forced to move outdoors. In the aftermath of our lease termination, this was the only place where youth—and not only those who inject, but youth who were dealing with any number of pressing and urgent issues, from mental health crises to being the victims of assault—knew exactly where to find us, at a fixed time and location, when they needed help.

Our syringe access site became much more than a place for injection drug users to get sterile equipment. Because of its stationary location and regular hours, it was utilized by many youth who didn't inject drugs, but knew they could come there to see the doctor or therapist, get a snack, get tested for HIV, and have a case management session with one of our Outreach Counselors. This year, 4,759 people utilized our syringe access table, and our Outreach Counselors saw an additional 4,227 at their own standalone table, reserved for dealing with issues extraneous to injection drug use.

On an average night, we'd provide services to at least 50 youth at our outdoor syringe access site. The site became an ersatz "safe space" for youth, a place they came to get help when they were in crisis. Many nights, we counseled suicidal youth on the street at this location, de-escalating volatile situations and securing help and medical treatment for them on the spot. More than once, shopkeepers or neighbors would come alert us when they saw someone overdosing in the area, and we would administer Narcan and save the person's life before paramedics came. In this location, on the sidewalk, HYA's staff regularly acted as first responders, securing help and care for people who would have fallen through the cracks had we not been there.

In 2017, due to neighbors' resistance to us operating our site outdoors, we were forced to move this public health resource to the upper floor of the Haight Ashbury Free Clinics, with very little lead time to let people know we were moving. We now provide the same syringe access services, but due to our new, non-ADA-compliant, and not-highly-visible location, we're seeing fewer youth than we used to. Despite this setback, we've still managed to enhance our services to be more comprehensive than ever. Thanks to a new partnership with SFDPH's Street Medicine Team, HYA now offers low-barrier access to Suboxone, an effective outpatient treatment for opiate dependency. As of the end of 2018, we've enrolled 59 people in this treatment program.

The rest of our services—outreach, case management, mental health treatment—are still provided entirely on the streets.

WE'RE STILL MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Even in our current transitional and less-than-ideal circumstances, we're making a difference and expanding our services. 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.

HYA'S NEW TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM - The Sunset

In October HYA was approached to take over a 12-month transitional youth housing program, after the non-profit that operated it unexpectedly lost the contract. While we obviously believe that housing is the ultimate solution to homelessness, operating a housing program has never been an area of service we've aspired to directly provide. In this instance, however, we saw a specific need that we alone could fill. The City lacks adequate youth-centered housing that is actually inclusive of and engaged with young people who don't fit into a rigid set of guidelines, and we are eager to facilitate a residential program that is truly accessible to a diverse pool of youth with special challenges and needs. We currently have 38 residents, many of whom had pre-existing relationships with HYA, as they had previously received outreach and case management services from us in the Haight. We are still at the beginning of this new journey, but are looking forward to the opportunities this new addition to our services will open up for hard-to-reach youth who are ready for a long-term change.

In addition to embracing the brand-new role of housing provider, we've continued to do what we do best: reaching marginalized young people and assisting them in reaching their goals and making safer, healthier choices. These are HYA's deliverables for the first 11 months of 2018:

- Outreach Counselors made 5,421 contacts on Outreach
- Outreach Counselors held 1,466 Case Management Sessions with 402 young people: an increase from 1,009 sessions in 2017
- Our Therapist had 1,159 therapeutic contacts with 505 youth, up from 568 therapeutic contacts with 333 youth in 2016
- We reached thousands of youth during street outreach, distributing hygiene and safer sex supplies, snacks, and fostering trusting relationships
- We facilitated more than 45 educational and creative groups, attended by 389 youth
- 4,759 people received 504,630 syringes and returned 494,626 syringes. That's a 98% return rate: higher than any other SF Syringe Access program
- We assisted in securing housing for 61 young people and referred 211 youth to substance use treatment
- Our Medical Team had 699 contacts during our Syringe Access program

We've done all this, while still homeless ourselves.

However, despite the fact that our program is still making a difference, we can't deny that things have gotten more desperate for many youth on the streets since we lost our drop-in center.

"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, LMFT, staff therapist at HYA

THE COST OF HYA'S HOMELESSNESS

NO INDOOR SERVICES, NO SAFE SPACES, NO RESPITE: THE DEVASTATING EFFECT OF HYA'S EVICTION ON HOMELESS YOUTH IN THE HAIGHT-ASHBURY, 5 YEARS LATER

"Since HYA was evicted, I would argue there have been a lot more homeless youth and a lot more homeless on the streets of the Haight Ashbury."

-James Sword, President of the Haight Ashbury Neighborhood Council (HANC), quoted in an article in Hoodline, May 2016

"Leaving young people on our streets without proper emotional support is morally wrong. We must find a better way. This is a matter of life and death for so many of our youth." -SF District Supervisor Jeff Sheehy, at the Board of Supervisors Public Safety & Neighborhood Services Committee, May 11, 2017

"If people don't have their basic needs met, their mental health issues increase, and their quality of life decreases. It actually has more of a burden on the neighborhood as a whole than if we still had a drop-in center, and people still had access to water and food and a shower and a bathroom."

-Mary Howe, Executive Director of HYA, quoted in Hoodline article, May 2016

NO INDOOR SERVICES = FEWER OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH TO GET OFF STREETS

Of the nearly 1,363 unaccompanied youth counted in the City's most recent point-in-time count, 694, or more than half of the total, were located in the area served by HYA: Golden Gate Park, the Haight Ashbury, and the Castro. Since late 2013, this geographic area has been entirely without a full service drop-in center for these struggling young people.

For the past five years, the neighborhood's unhoused youth have had zero regular access to indoor bathrooms or showers. They have no access to hot meals. If they're in crisis or suicidal, they have nowhere to go. If they need to talk to a therapist on-demand, they have to do so in public, on a park bench or in a café. If they've been attacked or sexually assaulted, they are left to confide their distress to HYA's Counselors on the street, in full view of anyone who might walk by—or to not confide at all, and to cope using drugs or seclusion instead.

GREATER DANGER, FEWER RESOURCES

The city's point-in-time homeless youth counts show some alarming differences in the population's safety and well-being over the past few years. Risky behaviors and dangerous situations have been on the rise. For example, 26% of youth reported they had traded drugs for a place to stay in 2017, compared to 8% of youth in 2013. Twenty four percent reported they had traded sex for a place to stay, compared to 20% in 2015. In 2017, 50% of youth reported that their physical safety had been threatened one or more times in the past 30 days; and 37% said they had been assaulted or physically attacked while living on the street at least once in the past year, compared with 28% in 2013. And the percentage of youth who reported being victims of other forms of crime was 38% in 2017, up from 31% in 2013.

Although youth are less safe and in greater danger than ever before on the streets of the Haight, they now have no indoor refuge where they can seek a reprieve, talk privately with a counselor or therapist, or process their day-to-day traumas in a confidential, supportive environment. This utter lack of a safe indoor resource contributes to their mental health difficulties and creates a sense of hopelessness and chaos that impedes their ability to accept help or engage with service workers.

"I can't tell you the amount of times a month we sit on a sidewalk with someone who is suicidal and we cannot get any city department to come help us. We take them on the bus to [San Francisco] General Hospital, where they are discharged later."

-Mary Howe, HYA, quoted in The San Francisco Examiner, May 11, 2017

THE CITY'S FAILURE TO INTERVENE = LIVES LOST TO CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Unfortunately, the City has a long track record of failing to invest in adequate interventions for San Francisco's growing population of youth experiencing homelessness. As the San Francisco Examiner reported in May 2017, just 6 percent of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing's budget specifically targets homeless youth in the current fiscal year, while 76 percent is for homeless adults.

Adele Failes-Carpenter, director of the City's Youth Commission, on which serve 17 youth appointed by the mayor and the Board of Supervisors, recently told The San Francisco Examiner that the City's 10-year plan to create 400 new units of transitional-age youth housing by 2015 resulted in just 188 units. "Overall," she said, "there are still 120 units that are not being planned for yet at this time in order to meet the 2015 goal." The City is not on track to meet the goals it set for itself. And in the meantime, the number of marginalized and underserved youth continues to grow, especially in the Haight Ashbury.

As of November 2018, the tide seems to finally be turning in the right direction. San Francisco voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition C, a measure that will increase gross receipts taxes by slightly more than 0.5 percent on companies with more than \$50 million in annual revenue. This will secure \$300 million in additional funds for homeless services, including housing, outreach, healthcare, mental health care, shelter, and other essential resources. We are heartened by this, but change truly cannot come soon enough for the youth of the Haight. Too many lives are being jeopardized and lost, and there are too many casualties of the City's seeming indifference to this marginalized population, for us to wait any longer for a long-term solution.

"There's so much wealth in San Francisco that we can use to address a longstanding issue. This is an opportunity for all of us to come together: We all benefit from seeing people move beyond poverty and homelessness."

Mary Howe, Executive Director, Homeless Youth Alliance, quoted in a 2018 article, "Who Should Pay for California's Homelessness Crisis?" in CityLab

THE HAIGHT ASHBURY: GROUND ZERO FOR YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Since HYA lost our drop-in center to a lease termination over five years ago, the City has done little to assist this neighborhood in filling the huge service gap left by our center's closure. As a result, at-risk youth are suffering more than ever and becoming more unreachable; neighbors are more vocally frustrated than ever before with the City's negligence toward an ever-worsening situation in this neighborhood; and HYA, still providing life-saving services as a mobile program, is still unable to find a landlord willing to rent us a space for a new drop-in-center.

Since 2013, we've applied for over 200 spaces in the neighborhood, with no luck. Not because of lack of ability to pay, and not because of a lack of good references, but because landlords do not want to rent to a social services program serving youth who are homeless. There is still a pervasive stigma toward youth experiencing homelessness in the Haight, and there is still an irrational fear that having stationary services in the neighborhood will "attract homeless people," despite the fact that they are already here, and have been for decades.

In 2015 ThinkProgress reported, the biggest obstacle for youth-based services in the City, including housing development, is neighborhood opposition:

"The pushback comes from NIMBYists – residents who don't want to see these kinds of low-income housing developments in their backyards. They dispute anything from zoning changes to environmental impact reports to the potential of increased criminal activity in their neighborhoods. With resistance like this, TAY housing developments can miss important funding deadlines, adding years to a project's timeline. Some transitional housing developments, such as the Booker T. Washington and the Edward II facilities, were delayed by over three years because of lawsuits and appeals."

As HYA's situation has made abundantly clear, even non-residential services, like drop-in centers, are targets of NIMBY opposition. The opposition sends a clear message to vulnerable youth: "You are not wanted."

As Hoodline reported in 2016, HYA has documented an uptick in verbal abuse youth receive from housed residents and police since the loss of our drop-in center. In 2016, we even conducted a survey of 100 of our youth, asking about their typical neighborhood interactions in the aftermath of having lost their only source of basic hygiene services, hot food, and temporary indoor refuge in the area. One of the survey questions asked, "How many times in a month do you get something mean said to you by neighborhood residents?"

The result: 95% of youth said they received unprovoked verbal abuse multiple times a day.

This kind of pervasive stigma and abuse, along with the constant police sweeps and profiling and the lack of any indoor respite from the streets, reinforces the toxic climate that the UC Berkeley study cited as so corrosive and fatal to youth on the street.

Because of the dearth of retail spaces for rent in the Haight and the reluctance of landlords to rent to a social services program, we have explored the possibility of using city-owned property to provide our services. Unfortunately, the only city-owned property in this neighborhood is located in the Park, under the auspices of the Recreation and Parks Department. The Director of Rec & Parks is adamantly against using any buildings on park land—even ones that are under-utilized or partly-utilized—for any type of human services, which he has reiterated repeatedly to various City officials.

As a result, the Haight finds itself at a bureaucratic impasse, and both the housed and unhoused residents of this neighborhood are caught in the middle and paying the price. As one of our neighbors said during a Park Precinct police meeting, "The city doesn't care about this neighborhood, because Google and Twitter aren't here."

It's sad to think this may be the case. And it's unfortunate that some of the city's biggest tech companies—including ones that have named homelessness as a main priority for their philanthropy—limit their concern to those unhoused people who are in their employees' direct sight line. Shortly after our lease termination, for example, we had the opportunity to talk with a community liaison from Twitter. She told us the company was not interested in helping people who are homeless in the Haight, because their focus is limited to mid-Market, where Twitter headquarters is located.

"It's time for The City to intervene. We need to be looking at city-owned land. Enough is enough."

-District Supervisor Hillary Ronen, addressing the Board of Supervisors Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee regarding HYA's Lease Termination and Lack of Services in the Haight, May 11, 2017

WITHOUT BASIC SERVICES, YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS WILL BECOME CHRONICALLY HOMELESS ADULTS

"For a young person, having an extended period of homelessness is really going to relegate them to a bleaker future."

-Bevan Dufty, former San Francisco's director of Housing Opportunity, Partnerships and Engagement (HOPE)

The desperate and growing plight of unhoused youth in San Francisco has been ignored by both the City and its biggest corporate philanthropists. And despite the negligence, the problem is not going away.

Countless studies have shown that unhoused youth respond to interventions that are on-demand, culturally competent, and easily accessible; and that this population, more than any other, has the potential to transition off the streets entirely and become self-sufficient with proper help and resources.

HYA's decades of serving this population has proven this to be true. Countless young people we've worked with—teens and twenty-somethings who were in grave, desperate circumstances when we met them, who struggled with substance use, abusive pasts, domestic violence, and mental illness—have been able to turn their lives around with our help.

"HYA was the only place I could go and not feel like a piece of meat or a piece of shit. It cared for me until I cared for myself and fought for me to fight for myself. Letters to jail, accepting phone calls, going to court dates... free food cause you know no dollars went to food and if it wasn't free I didn't eat. They showed me what it feels like to show up for others and myself. It made getting clean and giving back look desirably punk rock. HYA kept me alive long enough to actually build a life I don't want to escape from and really I can't even believe my life exists and it wouldn't without HYA. Thank you Mary patron saint of homeless youth! Thank you mental health services! Thank you needle exchange! Thank you outreach workers! Thank you nurses who nonchalantly answered all my weird totally personal questions about constipation, abscesses and scabies!" -Audra, former HYA Participant, 21

"All the Homeless Youth Alliance is doing is providing services so eventually kids can, like myself, transition from being in a place where they have to live on the street to a place where they can become employable and go to school and find housing and change their lives. Those neighbors don't have to look at me any longer because I used the services, and now, I've transitioned from that period of my life."

-Lawrence Welch, former HYA Participant, now employed as an audio engineer, quoted in Hoodline, May 2016

However, without adequate, coordinated interventions and the infrastructure necessary to disseminate services flexibly, quickly, and on-demand, youth experiencing homelessness turn into chronically homeless adults. And currently, there is an entire generation of unhoused youth in this City that faces that fate, unless something is done to address the disgraceful lack of services for this population.

THE TIME IS NOW. THE PLACE IS THE HAIGHT.

"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

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. Everyone in the community benefits from a drop-in center. Our campaign to secure a new permanent location is endorsed by the Haight Ashbury Merchants Association, Haight Ashbury Neighborhood Council, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and many Haight residents, fellow nonprofits, and community groups.

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.

HYA works with a very geographically specific group of youth. These youth typically do not leave the Haight Ashbury, and they live in the Park. There are many reasons why homeless and runaway youth come to the Haight and stay there: the cultural lure of this historically countercultural area; the fact that tourist traffic creates more opportunities for panhandling; the neighborhood's adjacency to a large public park; and the fact that the Haight is considered by youth to be far safer than other city neighborhoods like the Tenderloin or South of Market. Over and over again, we hear from youth that the Haight has less crack and meth, and that there is much less pressure in the Haight to engage in sex work, and less danger of sexual assault/exploitation.

Decades of working with this particular population has demonstrated to us that HYA must operate where its participants are: in the Upper Haight. Relocating to another neighborhood would defeat the purpose of providing low-threshold, on-demand services to this critically underserved population.

Youth who are homeless in the Haight tend to be wary of service providers in the first place; they tend to live and travel in familial-type groups with pets; and they are drawn to certain locales based on where their community is and what feels safe to them, not what kind of services are available in the vicinity. They do not migrate to where services are located—not because they don't need services, but because they simply do not operate within a market-based paradigm of supply and demand. In order to be effective, the services for this population must be culturally competent, adaptive, and geographically convenient for them. The key to engaging this population successfully is to eliminate roadblocks and logistical barriers, not to create more. If services aren't easy and simple to access, youth will remain disengaged and marginalized, with potentially tragic results. We see evidence of this every day: even though their only source for showers, hot meals, bathrooms, and indoor medical care has been removed from the Haight neighborhood, youth still come here in droves and stay here. They do not relocate to the Tenderloin or elsewhere simply because they can more readily take a shower or get a hot meal there.

Our goal is to secure a space that has the amenities our previous drop-in center lacked:

- A larger, better-equipped medical room
- Multiple showers and bathrooms
- Outdoor gated community space
- 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.
- A full-service kitchen serving hot, balanced meals onsite
- Laundry facilities
- Group room

And so we need a permanent program site in the Haight, 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.

The past five years have made several factors abundantly clear:

- The Haight Ashbury has no indoor basic services for the youth who live outdoors, and they're in danger of becoming chronically homeless as a result.
- HYA has an inarguable track record of reaching the hardest-to-reach youth, lowering their rates of premature death, HIV and hepatitis, and overdose, and enabling them to permanently transition off the street.
- HYA can't reach as many youth or serve them as comprehensively as we're capable of without an indoor home base where they can get their basic physical needs met and see a doctor, therapist, and psychiatrist, INDOORS.
- The City needs to follow through on its plan to open a youth-specific, low-threshold, indoor drop-in center serving unhoused young people, using city-owned property if necessary.
- The center needs to be in the Haight, where the majority of the city's youth experiencing homelessness are living and are woefully underserved.
- HYA, as the program with the most entrenched, trusting, and successful established relationships with the unhoused youth of this neighborhood, needs to run it.

This needs to be an immediate priority, because this sizable segment of SF's homeless population has gone underserved and ignored for far too long.

The consequences: soaring costs to the city in terms of street clean-up, quality-of-life citations issued, preventable conditions being treated in our overburdened emergency rooms; and, not least of all, an entire generation of young people who will fall through the cracks and become chronically unhoused in San Francisco.

"HYA made it possible for my daughter to check in and let me know she was alive – if not well. Since the staff has all been where she is, they provide inspiration and insight in ways I simply cannot. My daughter would call and counter my concerns saying she could always tell when I was talking about something I didn't understand. In this aspect, the staff of HYA proves invaluable; through empathy and experience, they have facilitated the transition from addict to self-described, recovering addict. All kinds of kids are drawn to the Haight; my daughter was. This population exists in spite of, not because of HYA. The compassion, guidance, education and caring that this institution provides, creates a virtual safety net from which troubled youth can try to reclaim their lives. They empower street kids daily; building self-esteem in a population that may not have other support systems. Their approach is effective. Through time proven methods of outreach, HYA has been able to succeed where many families, including my own, have failed." -Madeline (A participant's mother)

WE CAN CHANGE IT FOR THE BETTER, AND FOR THE LONG-TERM

We can change this outcome, together. But it needs to happen the right way, and it needs to happen soon. The youth of the Haight Ashbury are waiting out in the cold, and they deserve a chance not only to survive, but to thrive.

WITH \$10 MILLION, THIS IS WHAT WE CAN DO:

To establish a permanent refuge for youth experiencing homelessness in the Haight, we need to raise \$10 million. These funds will allow us to:

- Purchase and customize a new space in the Haight Ashbury, which will likely cost between \$3 million and \$5 million, depending on its size, condition, and exact location.
- Permanently increase the size of our currently over-extended Mental Health Team, Outreach Team, and Medical Team, enabling us to more fully meet the demand for our services and give each youth the individual attention, follow-up, and care they need while increasing employee resiliency and support and avoiding the risk of burnout, which is so prevalent among frontline direct-services staff doing this difficult and draining work.
- Invest long-term in the development, growth, and retention of our Outreach Counselors, who are the heart and soul of our program and the reason we're able to reach so many youth. The majority of our Outreach Counselor hires were once homeless and some were even participants of our program. They all have overcome immense odds to do the work they're doing today. Their jobs are deeply rewarding, but are also stressful, emotionally grueling, and triggering. Adding to their stress is our Counselors' financial struggle to stay in the Bay Area and keep doing the important work they love while making wages that are below the poverty line for this region. Over the past few years, as rents have continued to skyrocket, we've had several staff reluctantly leave HYA—and, in many cases, leave the Bay Area altogether—simply because they can't survive financially. Not only is this exodus heartbreaking for our staff and our participants, but it erodes one of HYA's core principles: our commitment to investing in the long-term growth and potential of the youth we serve. The youth we work with today are often the leaders of tomorrow, and this is possible because our staff—former HYA youth themselves—role-model change and transformation and self-belief for our participants. Countless HYA participants have gone on to have careers in the helping professions, in social work, and in case management/substance use counseling; and this is because they learned directly from our Outreach Team that such a future was possible for them. To make sure this is always the case, we must establish an endowment that will allow us to compensate our staff competitively, so that we can recruit and retain the culturally competent and remarkable frontline staff we're known for.

Youth living outside 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.

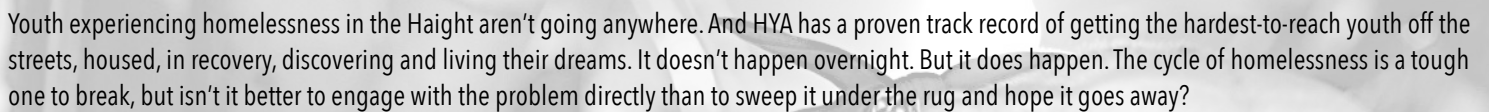
And that will create many, many more outcomes like Joseph's, a 28-year-old former participant who wrote the following testimonial:

"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. 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 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 youth experiencing homelessness, 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?"



Youth experiencing homelessness 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. Write in "Capital Campaign" in the "dedicate my donation" line.
- visit our Crowdrise page at 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! Help us fundraise and make new connections!

We invite you to be a part of helping our Capital Campaign succeed. Can you connect us with influential figures or press contacts who would be interested in learning more about our program and about the youth in the Haight? Are you able to spread the word about our Campaign in the community, by asking your peers, colleagues, and networks to support us and learn more about us? If you have ideas about how to secure a building in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, we need your help.

PROMOTE! Spread the word.

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 mary@homelessyouthalliance.org.

Last but not least, you can look a person experiencing homelessness in the eye and give them a friendly smile, say hello, get to know them. Over decades of working with youth on the street, we've discovered that's how real change begins: with an acknowledgment of someone's humanity, and that is free.

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.

"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, Former Director, San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing Opportunity, Partnerships and Engagement (HOPE)

"HYA is the only way that I realized that someone cared. HYA stuck with me through every single moment of homelessness and hardship. Now I am doing great and I owe it all to them." -Bradley, 19

"They actually came to see me face to face while I was incarcerated. No other agency has ever done that. That's a beautiful thing, when you don't have anybody and you think you don't have anybody cares about you. You're in there for an unknown amount of time and to have somebody come in, it gives you such a charge it really feels good. It made me want to do something good back." -Sparks, Age 24

\$10 MILLION WILL ALLOW STORIES OF CHANGE LIKE THESE TO CONTINUE:

"I can't say enough about how different HYA is from other agencies. That memory I had of coming here and having no judgment, that is what HYA is about. Letting us, the clients participate in a different way than any other agencies, makes us feel involved and that we have a voice in what happens to this organization. We feel like this is our safe place to be and we all respect each other here. Respect is not something you get a lot on the street." -Jax, 22

KHRISTINE

- Found HYA at age 20
- HYA Outreach Counselor, 2006 - 2012
- HYA Advisory Board Member, 2012-present
- Current Business Owner and 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 and Therapist, 2014
- "Homeless Youth Alliance changed my life...in fact, helped me to create the life I wanted to live."

LARRY

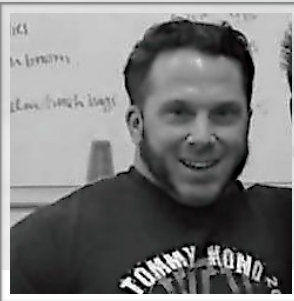
- Found HYA at age 26
- BSN and RN from University San Francisco, Certified Personal Trainer, USA Weightlifting Level 2 Coach
- "I was able to escape a life on the streets and drug addiction disease free thanks to the philosophy of harm reduction. HYA provided a place that was safe and loving and ready 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 - 2017
- 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
- Interned, Mayor's Office of Housing Opportunity, Partnership, and Engagement
- Full time Student at UC Berkeley. Working at Berkeley Free Clinic. Volunteering providing HIV/HCV testing at Punks With Lunch.
- "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."
- "I say Homeless Youth Alliance is my mom. Now they're homeless, but I'm not - because of them."



"I recently got insurance and I started going to regular doctors visits, trying to stay on top of my health. My doc put a word in for me for the hep C treatment. I got denied. Some shit from years back popped up hindering the process. Long story short. I got new paperwork and cleared it up. I tried again, and was approved! It's official, I am Negative, the treatment worked. I haven't felt this good in.. never, really. So I just wanted to let you know and again thank you for everything you have done, this journey started with you. So now I truly get my second chance to live and raise my lil girls. This was the last thing that has haunted me from my past. The one thing that lingered and reminded me of the bad choices I had made. And I always felt guilty because it was gonna keep me from watching my daughters grow up. So now everything is going great, everything is different and I'm living a positive existence. You guys made this possible, you believed in me, never judged me and showed me true love and respect." -Erik, 27