

THE GIFT OF HOPE



HOPE 4 YOUTH
Providing Pathways to End Youth Homelessness

Happy holidays! I'm LaChelle Williams, the new executive director of HOPE 4 Youth. I'm excited to share how we've turned your donations into life-changing support for local young people facing homelessness in 2021.

First, a quick introduction: I'm honored to join this team. I bring extensive leadership experience from nonprofits that serve youth in need. I'm also a proud mom and grandma. I have been surrounded by young people my entire life. My passion is helping them achieve their dreams, so this organization is a perfect fit!

I've arrived at a very busy time. **Our HOPE 4 Youth Drop-In Center has seen a 52% increase in visitors this year, and we expect to serve even more young people in 2022.** We hope to do it without tapping into emergency-reserve funds, but that will largely depend on the generosity of supporters like you.

When you give the gift of hope, we can offer a hand up to at-risk young people and walk with them for a time as they rebuild their lives. How that support unfolds changes because hope looks different to each one of them. Here are a few examples:



HOPE is a hot meal and someone to listen to you. We offer fully prepared lunches and dinners to young people who use the HOPE 4 Youth Drop-In Center in Anoka. Just fill a plate and grab a chair — no questions asked. A volunteer named Steve says the meals create a place for young guests to be seen and heard by people who care.

"They may not have a single trusted adult in their lives," Steve says. "Often they just need some guidance. I think it's an honor to be that person for these young people."

One youth guest put it this way: "You listen and don't project things on me. You are here for me, a safe space — something I've never had."



HOPE is a warm, safe place to call home. Despite working a full-time job in the retail industry, a young man had been experiencing long-term homelessness. He had saved enough money to buy a car, which made it easier to get to and from his job. However, when his shifts ended, he didn't have a place to call home.

In August, we welcomed the young man as the newest resident of HOPE Place, our 12-unit transitional housing facility in Coon Rapids. Now, with stable, supportive housing, he is working on his next goal: earning a degree at a trade school.

HOPE is finding a way to stay together. We connected with a family of young adult men after a school social worker shared the story of them living in an apartment without parents. The two younger brothers met the government's definition of unaccompanied youth, even though they were staying with their adult brother.

Despite everyone pitching in, money was tight, and the rent was past due. Our HOPE Homes program helped with a rent stipend and gift cards for gas and household supplies, so the family could stay together until middle brother Nicolas graduated and went off to college. We gifted Nicolas a laptop for his coursework. We're happy to report he's doing well at the University of Minnesota-Duluth.



HOPE is being surprised and made to feel special. A young woman who wears larger sizes had started avoiding the clothing closet at the HOPE 4 Youth Drop-In Center because things didn't fit her. Upon seeing the young woman leaving disappointed, our volunteers sprang into action and organized a plus-size clothing drive.

I wish you could have seen the smile on the young woman's face when she returned! Volunteers helped her choose items that fit well, looked good and gave her a much-needed boost of confidence.



HOPE is a scholarship that supports your next big goal. Jack endured his parents' divorce, his mom's incarceration, transfers between homes and schools, and bouts of homelessness. Despite it all, Jack greeted the world with a heartwarming smile. He stayed focused, studied hard and earned mainly As and Bs.

When we met Jack, he was living with friends. Our HOPE Homes program helped with a stipend for his host family, along with personalized support that saw Jack through high school graduation. We also were proud to award Jack a special donor-funded \$3,000 college scholarship. He's now attending Augsburg University, pursuing a degree in business.



Thanks to our volunteers and staff who had a "hand" in this mural that now hangs outside our building.

There are so many more stories like this — young people getting help, making plans and working toward goals. I am inspired by the heartfelt thank-yous they offer: "Last year I was sleeping in a car. Now I am sheltered." "You saved me." "Thank you for changing my life."

Those notes come to us, but they're made possible by you. With your continued support, we'll be here for local young people who are at risk of homelessness — to meet their basic needs and equip them with the tools to thrive!

I hope you'll consider donating today, either with the enclosed envelope or online at HOPE4YouthMN.org.

I promise to be a good steward of your generosity.

In gratitude,

LaChelle



Our name is an acronym for our key focus areas:

Housing
Outreach
Prevention
Education/
 Employment

Drop-In Center visitors
 Jan. - Oct.

2020 > 176

2021 > 268

2022 > ↑

Drop-In Center services

- > Grab-and-go food
- > Hygiene products
- > Clean clothing for all seasons
- > Hot showers
- > Laundry facilities
- > Free computer and internet access
- > Locked storage for personal items

Caseworkers help with stable housing, employment, education and connections to other resources.