

Faces of HOPE: Stephen Spears



HOPE 4 Youth's next chapter will draw on know-how from the past and fresh ideas from new hires, according to Board Chair Stephen Spears.

"I'm extremely hopeful about our ability to rise out of this pandemic stronger and more focused than ever before," he said. "And it will be with a healthy mix of familiar and new voices."

Spears, who works as Senior Vice President – Twin Cities Community Banking at Bremer Bank, has been a member of HOPE 4 Youth's Board of Directors for several years. He took the lead role during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak.

By then, a crisis team had ensured staff had the technology necessary to work from home and continue supporting young people experiencing homelessness. Despite the lockdown and several canceled events, leadership had also found ways to maintain the sponsorships and donations necessary to continue essential programs and services.

"We have fared well through the pandemic, with the exception of it taking a toll on our executive director," Spears said.

Earlier this year, following months of long workdays, and citing the need to rest and reflect on the remaining years of her career, [Executive Director Linda Bryant announced she would step away from her role](#) at HOPE 4 Youth.

"Stabilizing that role will be key, given the fact that we've had two directors in the past three years," Spears explained. "I'll be looking for someone who has a passion for being out among community members and who will be able to mobilize them to join our mission."

Drawing on the past in moving forward

As part of the search for an executive director and in other initiatives, Spears says he will be reinforcing HOPE 4 Youth's founding principles: showing young people they are loved, valued and supported, no matter what created their housing crisis.

"Getting back to those initial principles is a key to me," he said. "Our primary goal is to make sure

the young adults who come to us have that message as soon as possible.”

Spears is already in conversation with HOPE 4 Youth founder Brian Swanson and other longtime volunteers to see how they might renew their involvement, especially around mentorship.

“That will be one of our biggest priorities,” he said. “Our founders have a deep understanding of how mentorship can address the root causes of homelessness.”

In addition to reactivating the old guard, Spears is also excited about recent HOPE 4 Youth hires who are already bringing fresh eyes to everything from programs and services to communications and event planning.

“We’re injecting old friends and new talent into this grass-roots, community-led volunteer team,” said Spears. “I’m excited about our future and the lives that will be made better by HOPE 4 Youth.”

This story is part of a series profiling people who’ve come together to support HOPE 4 Youth’s mission to offer young people pathways out of homelessness. [Read more profiles.](#)