April 2021

Dear Friend:

More than 500 young people, ages 18-24, experience homelessness each year in New Haven. Right now, there are only 12 dedicated, youth crisis beds available. **With your help, that’s about to change.**

Did you know that homeless youth are afraid to go to adult shelters? They are unusually vulnerable. Physical harm, sex trafficking, and emotional abuse are very real possibilities for a young person without a home.

For young people experiencing homelessness – the majority of whom are people of color, identify as LGBTQ+, or have been part of the foster care system – finding a safe place to sleep at night is a full-time job.

Imagine being on the streets in February. It is very cold. COVID has made it impossible to find a friend’s couch. There is nowhere to turn. **Experiencing homelessness as a young adult can change the entire trajectory of your life.** Joblessness, drug addiction, violence, illness, and depression all become statistically more likely life outcomes.

At Youth Continuum, we plan to provide 20 new, safe, crisis beds; medical and mental health services; shower and laundry facilities; computer access; skills training; and hands-on work opportunities in a student-led, state-of-the-art space called “Y2Y New Haven.”

Y2Y stands for youth-to-youth. Students from area colleges and universities work with young adult clients who are experiencing homelessness. Client leaders, in turn, help to design the Y2Y physical space and programming through the Youth Advisory Board.

Did you know that young people on the streets rarely trust adults? Their homes, foster homes, and life experiences have taught them that adults can let them down.

**For young people, building trusting relationships with peers is key to finding a way out of homelessness.**
You can help change the course of a young adult’s life by supporting our innovative work.

Y2Y New Haven will include secure, gender-inclusive sleeping alcoves, single-stall bathrooms, kitchen space, a clinic, computers, social enterprise space, and the ability for young people to feel safe and build healthy relationships.

20 new beds will allow us to welcome 150 guest per year, for up to 60-day stays – time to get their lives back on track. We expect to break ground this spring.

The Y2Y approach was piloted in Cambridge by Harvard students. Youth Continuum’s adoption of the model in New Haven, and active partnership with Y2Y Network, is expanding services and improving outcomes for young people.

You can be our ally in making a difference, while also investing in a scalable model that addresses youth homelessness in a more effective way.

You’ll be in good company. Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, our community is growing, as like-minded individuals recognize the staggering challenges young people face. Our work to create a continuum of services, tailored to the unique needs of young adults, is more critical than ever.

Your generous gift this spring will allow us to provide young people who have lost hope with safe shelter, peer-to-peer relationships, and a pathway to independence in programs like Y2Y New Haven. At a time when everyone’s security and health has felt most threatened, you can help a young person find stability, hope, and independence.

Thank you for being part of our Youth Continuum family.

Our best wishes for a safe, healthy spring,

Paul Kosowsky
Chief Executive Officer

Margot Tucker
President

P.S. Your gift of $500 or greater will be acknowledged on our website and in our print and electronic material. Your visible participation can persuade others to become active in fighting youth homelessness!

‘Ashley’ lost custody of her daughter, was using hard drugs, living on the street, and involved in sex trafficking. She did not feel that adult shelters were safe places. She says, “I felt I couldn’t trust anyone. I depended on soup kitchens and panhandled daily. Drugs gave me some temporary relief – they numbed the pain and worry.”

Ashley met with Elizabeth from the Street Outreach Program and says she “took advantage of all the resources” Youth Continuum offered – food, diapers, clothes, laundry, shelter, safety.

Today, Ashley has her own apartment and custody of her daughter. She has her driver’s license, a job, and is planning to go back to school. Ashley was recently selected as co-chair of Youth Continuum’s Youth Advisory Board, a group of client leaders helping to design Y2Y New Haven.

She says, “Youth Continuum helped me believe in myself...gave me focus, support, purpose, connection….Youth Continuum saved my life!”