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YouthHope



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE STARTS WITH TODAY

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Runaway and Homeless Youth Statistics:

- 1.6 - 2.6 Million youth runaway each year (National Runaway Switchboard)
- This year 200,000 youth ages 12-17 will be homeless in California (California Homeless Youth Project)
- Only 50,000 youth are served by homeless youth programs because of the lack of resources (National Alliance to End Homelessness)

We need your help to end this homeless youth crisis in our nation. Please get involved either by offering financial support or by volunteering.

Shoes For Christmas, Hope For a Lifetime

Tis the season to begin thinking about presents. Not just any present, but a present that gives joy for an entire year. Many of you will remember that YouthHope does an annual Christmas party for the youth we serve where we give them a brand new pair of dream shoes. We ask that the community help provide this gift to the youth by providing a pair of shoes for a youth. YouthHope has once again partnered with the Vans store in Redlands to make Christmas dreams come true. When you participate you will receive a card with a youth's name and de-

sired shoe. You will then take the card to the Vans store in Redlands, and they will help you find the shoe on the card. After you have purchased the shoe we ask that you bring the shoe unwrapped to YouthHope at 100 Cajon Street in Redlands. You may drop shoes off on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays from 3pm-6pm. This special event is a great opportunity to provide homeless and at-risk youth with a gift that they truly need. Many of the youth who have previously participated in the event are still wearing the shoes they

received last year. The shoes have been through countless miles and now have holes. As we enter into the winter months the kids need shoes to keep their feet warm and free from water so they do not develop diseases of the feet. We also encourage donations of new socks, hygiene items, and \$5 gift cards to fast food restaurants. The kids also enjoy receiving handmade items such as blankets, scarves, gloves, and mittens. Please email alana@youthhope.org to receive a child's dream shoe information.

November is Runaway and Homeless Youth Month

This November as you sit down to enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday with family and friends we hope you will remember that there are youth in the community without a place to call home. They are sleeping on the cold streets either because they never had a family who cared for them or because they ran from a dangerous home life. YouthHope strives to demonstrate love to the runaway and homeless youth, but it will take the community to make

the greatest difference in their young lives. It is our goal to help the community understand that these young people are not to be feared or shunned, but to be loved and accepted. Often times people ask us the question "why are they on the streets?" The majority of the youth are on the streets because their home life is so horrible that they would rather face the dangers of the streets. Many have never learned proper social behav-

ior because no one cared enough to teach them about love and friendship. They yearn for this though and they begin to develop close relationships with other youth on the streets. So this November we encourage you to get involved in some way whether it be spreading awareness by telling those you know about the youth or by volunteering to spend time with them or by holding a new sock drive. Email us at info@youthhope.org to get involved today.

Contact Us!
We would love to hear from you. You can call us at (909)663-4543 or email us at info@youthhope.org

You can also find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter!](#)

Working Towards a Bright Future

For those who had an opportunity to attend YouthHope's "A Walk in Their Shoes" you may have read through some powerful stories. For those of you who were not able to attend, we would like to share those stories with you over the course of the next couple of months. Here is the first in the series:

When I think about all the places I've been and the people I've lived with throughout my seventeen years, I just see it as a fact of life. Others tell me I've been through a lot, though, so I suppose I have. I'm just used to moving around.

When I was little, the state decided my parents were unfit to raise me. Instead of putting me in foster care, though, I was moved around between family members and friends. I've lived with a lot of different people. When I was in third grade, I lived with an uncle and cousins who were pretty laid back. They were drunk most of the time. Sometimes when they were drunk, they would burn me with cigarettes, but other than that, they were good to me. When I was twelve, I moved to Florida and lived with my grandparents for a while. That was the happi-

est place I lived as a kid. My grandparents really loved me. It was also with my grandparents that I discovered my passion for horses. I learned to ride and became a certified horse trainer. My grandparents' health started to fail, though, and by the time I was fourteen, I had to move back home to California to live with my mom again.

My mom is bipolar and addicted to every type of prescription drug you can think of. Her boyfriend uses, too. I couldn't stand being in the house with my mom—we would get into violent arguments—so I ran away. Sometimes I slept in the park with a couple other friends. Usually, though, I was able to sleep on couches at friends' houses and no one suspected I was homeless. I kept myself clean so I wouldn't arouse suspicion at school.

While I was homeless, I started messing around with drugs. I took whatever was given to me. Thankfully, I didn't do drugs for long. One night, a friend of mine gave me a little purple pill after I had already taken some things and told me to take it when I started coming down from the high I was already on. I took it and my body went crazy. I re-

member feeling so strange. It was scary. I woke up the next day and I didn't remember how I had gotten to where I was! That incident made me realize that drugs weren't a good option. When I was about fifteen, I met my boyfriend Aaron. I moved in with him and his grandmother. Now we have our own place and our own furniture, thanks to some help from YouthHope. I stopped going to school for a while, but Heidi helped me get back into school. This last summer, I took part in the internship that YouthHope offered so I could get some work experience and learn about getting a job. Now I'm really serious about finishing high school with good grades, finding a job, and eventually going to college to become a veterinarian. I want to specialize in horses. Most people probably think it is weird for a seventeen year old to worry about paying bills on top of normal worries about schoolwork and getting good grades. Maybe it isn't normal, but you won't find me complaining. I'm working hard to make sure my life is going to be something very different from my parents'.

Note From the Founder

As we enter into the holiday season I am once again reminded of how blessed I am. The kids that we serve at YouthHope are often without family to celebrate the holidays with, but we have been able to be a family for them over the years. We have been able to offer them a safe place to eat dinner each week, a wonderful Thanksgiving meal, and a special Christmas because of blessings from the community. This Thanksgiving I am thankful for all of you who continue to show your love for these young people through

your donations, and through your volunteer hours.

As November is National Runaway and Homeless youth month, I encourage those of you who aren't involved to become involved. One volunteer who attends the meal times each week shared that she did not feel she was making much of a difference until she really started getting to know the kids and build relationships with them. She said her life will never be the same because of these kids, and she knows she has been able to make an impact on the youth she spends time with.

YouthHope is in need of volunteers to build relationships with the youth. These volunteers are essential as we cannot help the youth unless they trust that we are here to provide unconditional love. It is a commitment because it takes time to build relationships and the youth have not had much consistency throughout their lives. However, as the volunteer said if you take that step of faith and are consistent, your life and the lives you touch will never be the same. Have a wonderful and happy Thanksgiving!

- Heidi Mayer, Founder

