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A SPECIAL THANKS TO THOSE WHO SPONSORED "A WALK IN THEIR SHOES"



SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR DONORS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED \$10,000 OR MORE IN 2015

- Loma Linda University Health, Community Health Development Office



- Rita Shaw Broker and Associates



- Weingart Foundation



- Edison International



- Ann Whitlock

# The Youth Hope Post

## How do we get our statistics at YouthHope?

"I don't see any homeless kids" We hear this statement all the time when we talk about the problem of youth homelessness in our community. They don't see them sitting on the street corners, asking for money, pushing around shopping carts full of blankets and dirty clothes. And they don't. Our youth are in school sitting next to your child, they are skateboarding to their job, they are sitting outside a coffee shop using free wifi to look for cheap housing. They blend in. You have to search for them.

Why do they blend in? These youth are between the ages of 14–24 and they want to fit in. They don't want to be homeless. They want to change.

### Meet Deb

Deb is YouthHope's volunteer coordinator which means she finds, trains, and is in charge of all of our volunteers!

Deb found out about YouthHope through an art fundraiser called "Redlands Through Our Eyes". She donated a few art pieces and immediately knew that she wanted to be more invested in YouthHope.

Deb identifies with our youth because she was one of them when she was younger. She

San Bernardino County Schools, and YouthHope define "homeless" by the McKinney-Vento Act which states that any "individual who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" is considered homeless.

So the boy who couch surfs every night is homeless. The girl who lives in her car is homeless. The family who lives in a motel is homeless.

So using these parameters, we know the following statistics\* from 2014-2015:

3,952 homeless students attend a RUSD school

86 of those students live in shelters

41 live in motels

3,803 couch surf

22 live on the streets

moved out of her house when she was 17 years old and had to support herself and be her own advocate early on.

She graduated high school and college and found a stable teaching job at an elementary school where she stayed for 31 years.

Her passion to help our youth comes from her past. She knows the struggles that these youth face, and she knows that they are strong enough to succeed and she wants to pass on the hope that got her through

\*Redlands Unified School District 2014-2015 stats

At YouthHope, we saw 1200 of those homeless, runaway, and at-risk youth and saw many life changing moments.

293 bus passes were handed out for youth to attend school

30 youth signed up for college/ trade school

Over 60 youth obtained jobs.

\*Youthhope 2015 stats

There is a homeless youth problem in our community, but there are also several ways to help end this. What can you do to help?

Email [info@youthhope.org](mailto:info@youthhope.org) to get involved!

her childhood. She knows they want a better life and that they are willing to work hard for it.

When Deb isn't growing our volunteer base, she is either at the beach boogie boarding, hiking, creating art, or hanging out with her husband and sons.

Thank you for all you do Deb. Without your constant help, YouthHope wouldn't have all the wonderful volunteers that we have!

# Everyone You Meet Is Fighting Some Kind of Battle

It's strange that human beings are the only living things that can feel such long-lasting, horrendous pain on the inside. Our memories make sure we do. Some kids are able to recover from it, while others deal with a downward spiral to death. I didn't know there was an actual way out of this mess until I met Heidi and the staff at Youth-Hope.

All our stories involve massive amounts of pain. We've had to deal with neglect and abuse from parents. With hunger for food, drugs, alcohol, love. We've had that longing of wishing we were loved, wishing we were normal, wishing we weren't broken pieces. We've experienced every awful thing you would hope you never come face-to-face with.

I was three when my father put me on his lap outside, told me he would show me how to kill myself. I remember the blackness of the gun, the stench of alcohol on his breath, and the sounds of gunfire as the police arrived at our house. I remember the blood all over my dad. That's the first memory I have.

I remember being passed around to my grandparents, to my mother, to the foster system, and back to my mother. She told me everyday that she'd beat her speed addiction. She told me she loved me, even when she hit me. I felt like no one really loved me. No one cared.

I remember her locking me in a motel room for 3 days with no food while she went looking for drugs. I remember her angrily smashing the cheeseburger I purchased when I stole a dollar from her. The pain of that hunger mirrored all that I felt inside.

They say I lashed out, became angry, and unmotivated. You try to focus in school when the emotions from every awful memory come back to you. You try to do well when you change schools more times than you can count, when you have to worry about finding the means to eat, finding a place to sleep. You try to pretend that you are okay when on the inside you feel hollow and damaged.

I wanted to kill myself. But there was always something that kept me from doing it. You could call it hope, resilience, or just plain stubbornness. Luckily before I had completely given up, I came across Youth-Hope. I met kids that were just as messed up as me. I met someone who cared about

my pain, someone who told me that I didn't deserve to go through all of this.

Slowly, as I've gone through this process, I don't feel as broken. The memories and pain are more manageable. I know it comes from finally being cared for, listened to. I've never had people encourage me to pursue my dreams. I've never had people help me find a job, or get healthcare, or even tutor me through high school. Somehow they helped me out of my downward spiral and I can't even express how grateful I am.

One of my favorite quotes is "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about". Next time you see someone on the streets-someone dirty, maybe crazy, someone you know is an addict-remember that we all have battles we are dealing with. What you see is only a glimpse of the brokenness and pain that's on the inside. Thank you YouthHope for seeing beyond our damaged selves and for recognizing that we aren't a lost cause.

## YouthHope Housing Update

Congratulations to our first graduate from the YouthHope Housing Program, Kyle!

We are so proud of you Kyle and all that you have accomplished. From working full time, going to school, and now living in your own apartment.

We can't wait to see all you do in the future!

## A Note From the Founder



What a great evening we had at "A Walk In Their Shoes". We filled up The Summerbell Room while we listened to stories of our youth, alarming statistics about youth homelessness, and ways that the community can help end youth homelessness. We had record attendance and will have to find a bigger venue for next year. Every year I am amazed at the support that we receive through this benefit dinner and feel so blessed to have our community

help us fight youth homelessness.

I am so proud of our youth who came to share with us at "A Walk In Their Shoes". This was a scary thing for them to come up in front of 250 people to share their story with everyone. They have come so far and I am so happy that they chose to share their successes with everyone.

If you were unable to make it, please visit our website to read

a few stories that were told and see the video that was shown.

If you would like to donate, please visit [www.youthhope.org/donate](http://www.youthhope.org/donate).

If you attended the benefit dinner and would like more information on ways to get involved, please email [info@youthhope.org](mailto:info@youthhope.org). We would love additional volunteers, donors, tutors, and supporters.