

The YouthHope Post

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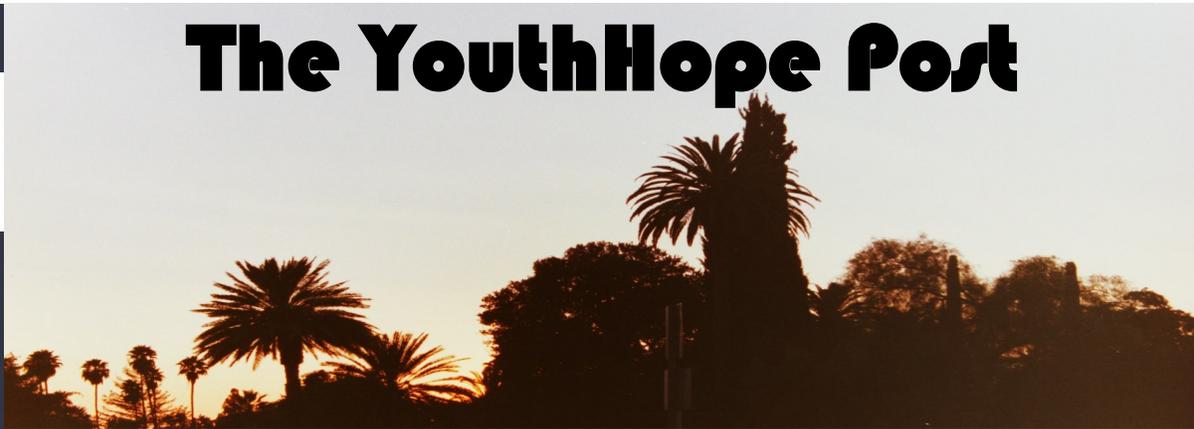
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- Ann Whitlock



Rest in Peace Rueben

On April 13, 2016, the unthinkable happened. We lost one of our beloved youth, Rueben.

Rueben was everyone's best friend. He made everyone feel welcome and never had a mean thing to say. He loved and was loved by all. He was always a peacekeeper and always saw the positive. He would make himself available to anyone who needed him and never judged someone because of the struggles that they went through.

When he would come to YouthHope he would greet everyone and hug all of the volunteers. He made sure to thank us for all of the help he received and would al-

ways end with "you rock". He made any room light up with his personality and smile.

Rueben started coming to YouthHope in 2010. He came as a shy timid boy who had a past that no one should have to endure. Over the years, we saw him grow and saw what future he had in store. A future of hope and success. He was determined to change his life around for the better. He worked so hard to leave his past .

Rueben had overcome so many obstacles in his life. He went from living on the streets to living in a house, he graduated high school, was going to school at Crafton, he started seeing a counselor, and working a part time job. He had such a bright future, but it was

blurred by the darkness of his past.

He had been through so much and we are so saddened that his achievements and life were abruptly ended.

Please keep our youth, volunteers, and staff in your thoughts and prayers. Rueben impacted all of our lives and we miss him dearly. Rest in Peace, Rueben.



Meet Ann

Ann is one of our volunteers that spends Tuesday mornings with us. She is dedicated to our clothing closet and making sure that it is in the best shape for our youth.

She hangs and organizes the clothes and cleans up the closet so when the youth come to pick out clothes, it looks like a retail clothing store.

She takes a lot of pride in her work and loves to organize

clothes so that the youth feel special and important. She makes sure that there are plenty of business style clothing for job interviews, fun, in-style clothes so the youth fit in, and comfortable clothes so the youth feel good with what they wear.

Ann chose to volunteer at YouthHope because she knows that these youth need a safe environment where they can be loved and taken care of.

When Ann is not at YouthHope, she is very involved in her wid-

ows ministry that she started with other women in the community. Ann has a heart to help the people around her and we see that in the time that she spends volunteering and the time that she spends in the community.

Thank you so much Ann for spending your mornings with us.

We are so thankful for you and the hard work you put into making our youth feel special!

Earning Trust

Trust. That's one thing I have never had. Growing up in foster homes and group homes does not come with much trust. I'm sure if I could of stayed with one foster family then it might be a different story, but as a 9 year old being taken from your parents doesn't really leave you feeling cared for.

From the beginning of my foster journey, I felt like no one cared for me. So I had to put up a wall to make sure that I was protecting myself. I didn't listen to my foster parents. I didn't know them nor did I want to. I wanted to move back with my parents.

My foster family got sick of me pretty fast and so they moved me to another foster family and then another. No one wanted me and that caused me to continue to act up. I didn't know how to properly react to feeling lonely and scared so I acted out. It's how I dealt with my hurt.

That's when they put me in a group home. I didn't last too long in there either. So I got moved again to a different home. These moves and feelings of being unwanted did some permanent damage to me. I felt worthless, hopeless, and alone. When I turned 18, they kicked me out. I was homeless. No help with housing, getting a job, finishing my high school education. NOTHING.

I was left alone on the streets.

At this point, I didn't trust anybody. My parents did not take care of me, the state took me from my parents and put me in homes where no one was willing to help me or love me, and eventually left me homeless.

I found some friends on the streets that helped me find food. We would dig in trashcans, ask for money, or find a friend that had a house and would go eat there. I would sleep behind churches, in the park, wherever I could be safe and warm.

My friends always talked about Youth-Hope. They would go there for food and to hang out. So I went with them one day for the food. I wasn't expecting much since it was another organization and I had plenty of experiences with people trying to "help" me.

So I went and ate the food. The people were nice, but there was no way that I was going to ask for help. I kept going for 6 months and slowly started talking to the

volunteers and case managers. They would ask if they could help and I would tell them no. They respected that, but kept saying "We are here for you".

I would always watch how they help other youth. One of my friends just got a job, and another is getting her GED. As I watch YouthHope help them, I am starting to feel that trust inside of me begin to open up. They don't judge. They don't get mad if my friend forgets to show up for his tutoring appointment. They understand.

I'm slowly, but surely starting to open up. I'm starting to trust a little bit. I want to get my GED and find a place to live. The Case Managers are helping me by letting me read through the books on my own and set up my own tutoring schedule when I'm ready. I like that about YouthHope.

They are always here for you whether you want to get help or just get a meal. I know with time I'm going to make it in this life.

Did You Know?

35 of our youth are graduating from High School in June!

We are so proud of these youth! We know that they have a bright future!
These youth never give up!

A Note From the Founder



On April 28, 2016 we had a memorial for one of our very special and very loved youth. Rueben took his own life on April 13.

I spent many hours with Rueben and have known him for close to 6 years. He was one of our youth that was always around. He was everyone's friend. When he came to YouthHope he would make sure to say hi to everyone and come give me a big hug. I will

miss those hugs.

As happy as Rueben seemed on the outside, he was hurting deeply on the inside. We tried our very best to help him with counselors and mentors, but his past and his circumstances were too great. My hope is that through this tragedy, our youth know how much they are loved and cared for and that they can come to us with any problem and we will help them any way that we can.

There are no words to describe

the pain that we all feel at YouthHope. It's been a time of sadness, mourning, and hugs for our youth, staff, and volunteers. With the help of counselors, we are slowly healing. Please keep YouthHope in your prayers as we continue to navigate through this tragedy. Pray for healing for our youth, our volunteers, and staff as well as helping us see the good that can come from this sad time. You are missed so much Rueben. Rest in peace.