YES grew out of the work of the Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative (BHYI) Youth Leaders, a group of youth with personal experiences of homelessness that formed as an arm of the BHYI Coalition in 2009. Among other priorities, they identified the need for a comprehensive, "one-stop-shop" drop-in center for youth in a central Baltimore location, to be staffed by formerly homeless young adults with whom the youth could relate and be inspired. They worked tirelessly with allies to realize their vision which became a reality when YES opened its doors in October 2012.

Strong City Baltimore serves as the fiscal agent for YES. YES is supported by key staff at Strong City Baltimore who provide financial and administrative management, including accounting, invoicing, payroll, audit, insurance, and human resources to YES. Strong City Baltimore is an independent 501(c)(3) organization.
Services We Provide

Workforce
Support around building resumes, preparing for interviews, getting connected to job training, or finding a job.

Case Management
Support from peers and adult allies to help youth meet their goals at their pace.

Rapid Rehousing
Housing program accessed through the Baltimore City Coordinated Access System that helps youth find apartments and sustain them long-term.

Drop In
A safe space to receive mail, do laundry, work on a computer, get some food, grab some bus tokens, and connect with other youth and services. Onsite mental health and harm reduction (safer drug use) services.

Legal Navigation
Provides assistance connecting to lawyers, information about youth rights, and court support from staff.

Youth Leadership
Connects youth to training, advocacy, and leadership activities across the city and state, and pays them.

YES is guided by the core values of youth, peer and ally partnerships. To that end, YES’s staff is comprised of both peers and allies. Peers bring their lived experiences, insights, and perspective to every element of YES through YES’s participatory and transparent decision-making. YES also engages in system reform by engaging in youth consciousness-raising and leadership development, legislative advocacy, and work with the Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative (BHYI) and other community initiatives.

Momentum Builds to End Youth Homelessness in Maryland

Posted April 17, 2018, By the Annie E. Casey Foundation

After months of community organizing and meetings with legislators, advocates from Youth Empowered Society (YES), a Casey grantee, are celebrating a big win: The Maryland General Assembly’s passage of the Ending Youth Homelessness Act of 2018.

The bill will create a state grant program to fund community-based organizations offering supportive services — including emergency shelter and time-limited housing — for Maryland’s nearly 2,500 homeless youth.

Currently, only three jurisdictions statewide have programs specifically designed for homeless youth, despite this issue affecting every county in the state. As a result, youth experiencing homelessness throughout Maryland are often forced to seek unstable and unsafe shelter, risking violence and exploitation.

“Our young people have been championing this need since YES’s founding,” says Blair Franklin, executive director of YES. “In partnership with the Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative, their advocacy efforts helped to initiate Youth REACH, a statewide count of youth experiencing homelessness. The bill’s passage — establishing more resources and more housing — is a direct response to this data.”

YES and its other partners, including the Homeless Persons Representation Project, have a bold vision: ensure every young person in Maryland has a safe place to call home and the stability needed to thrive. YES, which runs a drop-in center for homeless youth in Baltimore City, is working to realize this vision by:

- providing urgently needed direct services to youth experiencing homelessness;
- developing the leadership and employment skills of young people who have experienced homelessness; and
- engaging in system-level policy reform.

The Ending Youth Homelessness Act will add more programs and build more equitable services for the disproportionate numbers of homeless LGBTQ youth and youth of color throughout the state. In addition, the bill aims to prioritize youth engagement by ensuring young people play a role in the grant-making process.

“Even though the bill passed, this group of youth advocates knows the fight is far from over,” adds Terrylynn Tyrell, development director for YES. “They’ve already started making recommendations on how to better engage legislators and the community and they are discussing organizing a youth-led campaign focused on housing.”