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Introduction

MISSION

The Youth Empowered Society prevents and eliminates youth homelessness through the synergy of youth, peer and ally partnerships. Our vision is that all Baltimore’s youth will easily access supportive services and stable housing to become powerful in their own lives.

VALUES

Safety
YES counters the traumatic stress of homelessness and poverty by creating a physically, morally, socially, and emotionally safe space that minimizes triggers for each person in the YES community.

Trustworthiness
YES strives to be true to our word, transparent, and dependable for each person in the YES community.

Youth and Ally Partnerships
YES practices collaboration and inclusiveness between peer and allied staff, board members, and others in the YES community through our support for leadership and skill development and use of consensus decision-making.

Dignity
YES practices a non-judgmental and kind approach, and relies on restorative practices to resolve conflict, to recognize the inherent worth and potential in each person in the YES community.

Wellness
YES supports the wellness of our youth and believes that our important work is made possible over the long haul by attending to our self and organizational care.

Anti-oppression
YES practices anti-oppression internally and externally through dialogue about privilege, equity, diversity, and power and a commitment to engaging in systemic change.

IMPACT

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 to help set its direction 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 in part by formerly homeless young adults with whom the youth could relate to and be inspired.

The vision of the BHYI leaders was realized when YES opened its doors in October 2012. YES has continued to be staffed and led by formerly homeless young adults and allies since its founding.

THANK YOU YOUTH FOUNDERS

“YES was created to honor the vision of formerly homeless youth who told advocates what they needed and what they wanted to see. The organization strives to meet the needs of young people but also strives to do better, and to live up to the values that led to its founding.”

- Sonia Kumar, Board Chair

Our Youth Founders provided the vision and foundational direction of YES, worked for the organization, and had direct experience of homelessness. In meeting with a small group of them in early 2018, they expressed the need to ensure that youth leadership was integrated at every level of the organization - within the YES Youth Leadership group, as staff within the organization, and especially as members of the board – and we began working on action plans to that end.

We want to honor their wisdom, passion, and dedication in creating this organization, their continuing to hold us accountable, and their commitment to ending youth homelessness.

Antonette Okanola
Bea’Trice
Davon “Dae Dae” Ferguson
Emmanuel Jackson
Luther Thompson

Maurice “Rees” Ayes
Nadja Bentley Hammond
Nick Jones
Samika Dewitt
Sergio “Money” Hopkins
Shawn Toyer
It took me a very long time to write this message. How do I capture all of an entire year in one page? How do I properly funnel all of the brilliance of our staff and our youth into these words? The truth is I can’t – no one person can. So, when you get a moment to, connect with our team. Grab coffee with someone on our board. Engage with one of our youth. Ask them why YES is so special. And I hope they will inspire you the same way they inspire me daily.

This past year has been one of connection, learning, and growth. We started by reconnecting with some of our Youth Founders and learning our history. We engaged with youth about what they need and how YES can improve to serve them better. We sharpened our focus on systems change. We examined our self and organizational care. We began incorporating a race equity lens into our internal policies and procedures. We worked on organizational pain points identified by both youth and staff: increasing case management capacity, securing stronger values-aligned partnerships, visioning a larger space. We’ve been working to expand and deepen our services to meet those needs, and have seen some successes!

We started new partnerships with incredible organizations like ShareBaby, Yo! Baltimore, and the Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition. Our volunteer base continues to grow and provide much needed support around donations, coaching, art, food, and keeping the drop-in center organized.

This past year, more youth and young adults have visited our drop-in center than ever before. More youth are coming in as first-time visitors, and we are connecting more youth to jobs through our Workforce Development Program and to housing through our Rapid Rehousing Program and Drop-In case management. We continue to support youth in attaining essential vital documents like IDs and birth certificates. We advocate for youth in court hearings to help them get charges dropped and records expunged, recognizing the impact that systems have on Black and Brown youth. This year, our youth participated in a Lobby Day in March on the Ending Youth Homelessness Act of 2018 - legislation that would create a grant program at the Department of Housing & Community Development to fund housing and supportive services for unaccompanied homeless youth. Youth voice and engagement were vital to the passing of this bill!

YES is special for all these reasons and so many more. But I think most of all, its because of the space we hold. One that allows our youth to build trust, process, navigate, resist, push, own, thrive, and succeed on their own terms, creating ripples of power all around them – all while working toward stability, truth telling, and changing the way the city and state works, so the next generation won’t have to push so hard to thrive. That is our work. It’s trauma healing and resistance. It’s direct service and advocacy. It’s housing. It’s jobs and wages. It’s legal support and decriminalization. It’s supporting people to get their basic needs met. It’s hiring people with lived experience and their fiercest allies. It’s listening to youth first. It’s creating programs based on what youth and young adults say they need.

Thank you for walking with us on this journey as we strive to increase access for youth to attain what they need to thrive, redistribute power to them, and vision a world where youth homelessness doesn’t have to exist.

M. Blair Franklin
Executive Director
In the last fiscal year (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018), YES achieved the following:

We served **316** youth through **6,030** unique contacts

- which includes visits to the drop in center, home visits, texts, phone calls, and bat signals. Our youth decide how and when they are ready to engage with us.

We connected **65** youth to housing.

8 of those youth were connected to temporary housing, like shelter; **57** of those youth were connected to permanent housing, like an apartment of their own;

**30** youth were connected to case management through the drop-in program and **27** youth were connected through the rapid rehousing program.

We provided at least **1,462** sessions of staff counseling to **194** youth.

We served an average of **30** youth during daily drop-in hours; we helped **73** youth obtain identification documents; and we assisted **41** youth in applying for public benefits and medical insurance – **44** benefits were obtained.

We assisted in connecting **38** youth to high school, GED programs, and college.

We engaged **20** youth in leadership development training and activities.

We provided **117** youth with assistance connecting to employment.

**60** youth achieved paid competitive employment.

We engaged **88** youth with mental health services.
Drop In & Case Management

“IT’S FEELS COMFORTABLE. IT FEELS LIKE I’M AT PEACE – I’M NOT LOOKED DOWN UPON BASED ON THE SITUATION I’M IN. I FEEL LIKE I’M PART OF A FAMILY WHEN I WALK INTO YES DOORS.”

– T

“FOR EXAMPLE, RIGHT NOW WHILE I’M TALKING TO YOU ITS EXTREMELY WINDY OUTSIDE, ITS MAYBE LIKE 20 MILE PER HOUR WINDS AND I’M NOT OUTSIDE IN THE WIND RIGHT NOW. SO, THAT’S ALWAYS A PLUS.”

– B

YES is the only dedicated drop-in center in Baltimore and across Maryland where youth experiencing homelessness can gather, access basic need resources, give and receive peer support, and engage in case management and other programming towards stability and wellness. We are guided by the core value of youth helping youth, and to that end, YES’s staff is comprised of youth/young adults, peers (folks with lived experience of homelessness), and adult allies. Our team does our work through three distinct and interconnected routes: (1) providing urgently-needed direct services to youth through trauma-informed peer and ally support; (2) developing the leadership and employment readiness of youth who have experienced homelessness; and (3) partnering with youth to advocate for systems change.

YES provides services and a sense of community for about 300 youth experiencing homelessness a year and 25-50 youth per day. YES offers in-house case management on a daily basis that includes assistance obtaining identification, enrolling in school, navigating financial aid, accessing public benefits, advocacy in legal proceedings, accessing childcare, and connecting to employment and housing. We recognize that many systems have failed our youth, and as a result, we have to work to earn the trust of youth we serve. That looks like meeting our youth where they are – sometimes just providing a place to charge a phone, take a nap, do some laundry, or get a meal – and slowly establishing supportive and reliable relationships. Youth work with peer and allied case managers that assist them in setting their own Action Plans, set goals, and make and sustain connections to long-term resources.

Follow up happens by checking in with folx each time they come in to the drop-in center and through phone calls and online messages. YES reinforces these connections with motivational interviewing and by providing the support needed to make these connections stick, such as transportation tokens, interview/employment attire, budgeting classes, tutoring, problem solving with employers and housemates, and many other needs as they arise. We act as a bridge between youth and housing opportunities, through both the Baltimore City homeless services system and supporting youth in finding their own apartments. YES typically has over 150 youth actively working with case managers at any point in time.

And through it all, the drop-in center fosters community. It’s a place where we talk about shared values and expectations, uplift each other, navigate conflict, and co-create a space that people what to be in. It’s why so many of our youth want to stay connected to us for as long as possible. It’s a place that is theirs.
Rapid Rehousing is designed to help individuals and families quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing through (1) housing identification and landlord recruitment, (2) rent and move-in assistance, and (3) rapid rehousing case management and services. This program centers the principles of Housing First – that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live – and from that place of stability, other needs can be tackled. We believe that youth experiencing homelessness should be housed as quickly as possible, without requirements or stipulations placed on them to obtaining housing.

Participants in the Rapid Rehousing program work with the Rapid Rehousing Case Managers to locate housing and are provided flexible, intensive and responsive case management, workforce development, and financial assistance — with the goal of contributing an increasing amount of their income toward their rent over the course of the program. Youth are assessed around their continued need for financial assistance every three months by the program coordinator. Goals are met through setting and continually updating a YES Action Plan.

YES completed its second year of Rapid Rehousing focused on youth ages 18-24. We tripled the number of youth in our program from year 1 to year 2. There were 32 total youth in the program and 27 youth had obtained housing before the end of the fiscal year. Additional rapid rehousing slots were available through a new funding opportunity from the Maryland Governor’s Office of Children facilitated by the Family League of Baltimore.

Given the history of redlining, land, and property ownership as a means of power brokering in the city, we seek to deepen relationships with existing landlords and form new landlord partnerships. An essential component of building these relationships is to educate people about our program, our youth, and our core values.

We encountered two major challenges related to rapid rehousing: staffing and inspection times. The inspection process and timeline, while critical, can be a hindrance to the “rapidness” of attaining housing. A failed inspection for even minor issues can add 6 more weeks to a move-in time, discouraging youth and prolonging the experience of homelessness. Additional staff we brought on board to the program allowed us to be more responsive to youth needs before and after move-in.

Moving forward the rapid rehousing team is shifting to better accommodate folks in the program. Youth have expressed that they need (1) more case management during home visits, (2) assistance resolving issues related to home repairs and damages, (3) increased guidance with budgeting and managing bills, and (4) more utility assistance. We’re working to meet those goals.

“My life has changed because I have stable housing. I’ve been connected to people who actually care. I’m a little bit more positive because at first I wasn’t. My whole life has changed in general. They’re (my kids) happier. I’m happier. So, yeah.”

– B
Gaining income is a critical part of ending youth homelessness, and YES continues to grow the number of youth we connect to employment. Last fiscal year, YES provided 117 youth with one-on-one job search supports, connection to paid job readiness programs, links to sector specific training programs and connections to employment. YES also provided onboarding assistance and post employment supports to those youth who obtained employment. We continued to develop deep partnerships with workforce training programs, provide youth stipends for participation in training programs, and provide significant barrier removal assistance such as monthly bus passes for youth in training and for newly employed youth. Eighty percent of youth who attended a summer cohort with our community partner, Art With A Heart, were successfully placed in job training and employment. Employment included maintenance work at a property management company, retail, and a warehouse certification program at Maryland New Directions.

The utilization of trauma-informed practices continues to be a central focus for YES. Through SELF Community Conversations, a trauma informed framework that can be implemented to mitigate the effects of toxic stress, YES fosters a safer space both emotionally and physically for our youth to connect and build trust. We have had much success with this model particularly within a workforce context – so much so that other partners have requested YES to provide training around the impact of trauma, youth needs, and building compassionate and communicative relationships between employers and employees. Ultimately, we hope to foster environments of critical reflection that can begin to directly address the systemic root causes of unemployment and underemployment.

Through a partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., we are starting to track wage growth among youth who gain employment with our support. For example, C.A. and J.J. are two of the most recent success stories to come out of the YES Drop-In Center. Following their completion of the AmeriCorps Program with Civic Works, both young men were hired by Summit Home Remodeling, as Marketing Consultants. Summit Home Remodeling is a roofing company and exterior remodeling company in the Baltimore area. The youth do marketing outreach in positions that are both full-time and have base salaries of $100/day, plus commission. Both young men have been very active within the YES community since their arrival, speaking on behalf of YES at public events and participating in various program activities. And after saving his own income and receiving rental assistance from YES’s case managers, J.J. began renting his own apartment over the summer.

YES has continued to expand workforce partnerships we’ve built over the years with places such as The Choice Program and HEBCAC-YO! Baltimore. One such example of that partnership is through the work of a youth, who was enrolled in the YES Rapid Rehousing Program and started going to YO! for workforce opportunities. They signed up to work with an IT program at Hopkins that had lots of on the job learning experience, and were later hired by a 3rd party contractor working within that department. No degree was required for the role and the opportunity provided 3 months of intensive training. It resulted in a paid position with a starting salary of $36,000.

“I’ve seen a lot of people that will generally look down upon homelessness and then they won’t realize that for example they’re living paycheck to paycheck, which literally means that if their job fell through, not even if they get fired or they do something, just if their job falls through, within the next thirty days they’re just going to be in my same shoes. But people never think about that. They just think this is something that can never happen to them.”

– B
Youth Leadership

“Youth voice is critical. Over the years, youth have engaged in many different kinds of leadership activities, such as attending trainings, giving presentations, offering interviews, and reviewing grants. For example, this past fiscal year our Youth Leaders presented with staff at a high school, testified at a City Council hearing regarding the needs of LGBTQ affirming homeless services, and joined staff in meetings about a new City fund for youth programming. Youth at YES have also participated in multiple advocacy efforts over the years, resulting in the establishment of the Maryland Tuition Waiver for unaccompanied homeless youth in 2014, the GED waiver for homeless youth in 2016, and helping to lead counts of youth experiencing homelessness across the city, advocating for and contributing to the first major count of youth homelessness in the state.

This past legislative session we achieved a win when the Maryland General Assembly passed the Ending Youth Homelessness Act of 2018. We worked closely with the Homeless Persons Representation Project on the bill, and this was the most involved YES youth have been in statewide legislative work. The bill establishes the Ending Youth Homelessness Grant Program within the Department of Housing and Community Development to (1) provide emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and rapid rehousing to youth and young adults across the state; (2) address disparities based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and (3) ensure that youth are involved in the planning, evaluation, and decision making of the program. We believe youth voice made the difference particularly the opportunity to address the legislative committees about their personal experiences of homelessness as a youth.

Youth also participated in testimony around a public safety and violence prevention bill that would use state public health money to fund evidence-based violence prevention services; and around a guaranty fund for those students who have been harmed by predatory for-profit colleges and to increase reporting requirements from these institutions. We understand that we have a role in addressing the intersectional issues that impact youth homelessness including but not limited to poverty, institutional oppression, racial injustice, and inequitable access to housing opportunities. Through all aspects of our work, YES aims to change dynamics of power to ensure that young people, especially those whom experience intersecting forms of structural oppression, have direct input in crafting policies and practices that directly impact youth and their communities.

“Fix up these bandos* and have them for homeless people – cause you got people who have been waiting for housing for like, almost six years, and still don’t have it. So yeah. Fix bandos.”

– L.

*bandos are abandoned houses, places that youth often stay in for shelter, and some even still have heat and electricity. In a city with so much vacant property and so little shelter, bandos can sometimes be the safest place to sleep for the night.
YES is now serving more young women than young men for the first time since opening our doors. A recent count indicated that 25 of our youth are also parenting young children – and many of them regularly ask our staff questions about feeding habits, discipline methods, and skin care products to use on newborns. There are approximately 35 children under the age of six who come to YES with their parents, and we’ve identified a critical need to better serve these families. Young parents enrolled in our programs often need additional assistance for their children (i.e. baby formula, child care assistance, diapers, wipes, car seats, etc.), and last year we spent a significant portion of our general operating funds on these items, while also utilizing our volunteer community to receive donations of baby equipment such as playpens, clothes, etc. In the last year we made a concerted effort to build partnerships with organizations who could provide much needed supports to our young parents.

Eliseba Osore is Program Director at ShareBaby, which works to ensure that Baltimore’s most vulnerable young children get the best start in life. Eliseba was a recent recipient of the Open Society Institute Fellowship, and has been an essential partner in providing much needed supplies to parenting youth. Diapers, formula, wipes, baby equipment and clothes are provided monthly and as needed to expecting parents and current parents. Youth consistently talk about how these items have alleviated their stress, reporting that they no longer have to worry about how they are going to provide for their children.

Shantell Roberts runs Touching Young Lives, an organization that strives to ensure the health and well-being of infants and children through providing public information on best practices for infant and child care. She has previously worked for BMore for Healthy Babies and has received a number of awards over the past few years, including a Baltimore Open Society Institute Fellowship, a Johns Hopkins Social Innovation Lab award, and was named a Baltimore Visionary by Baltimore Magazine in February 2018. She offers safe-sleep education, regular parenting coaching, and Portable Alternative Cribs (PAC) twice a month, with follow ups conducted at 6 weeks, 3 months, and 6 months postpartum to assess how often the PAC is used, where it is used, and to obtain general feedback.
PHASE ONE

This past fiscal year YES received consistent technical assistance from Measure4Change, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, around data measurement. We engaged staff throughout a yearlong process around data inventory, data collection procedures, and data outcomes to better serve our youth. We had several communal staff retreats that specifically addressed data. Staff were asked to consider (1) if the data we were collecting serves our youth, (2) if the data we were collecting demonstrates the work of the organization, (3) if there are redundant data points, (4) if there are missing data points that we should consider capturing, (5) the pros and cons of our existing data management system, and (6) how they would like to change the way we manage data. These conversations were facilitated using multiple engagement strategies, including data walks, visioning sessions, and creating and assessing our organizational logic models.

We also began discussions around the importance of disaggregating data, leading us toward a more comprehensive picture of the demographics of the youth we serve – and we have initiated this process by disaggregating data as it relates to our workforce outcomes, specifically around race and gender. This has helped us to continue long standing organizational conversations around the structural racism, sexism, external systems and the impact of our program. More to come!

LONG TERM GOALS we hope to achieve:

1. Increased financial stability for youth;
2. A more educated public about the needs of youth experiencing homelessness, leading to decriminalization of homelessness across the city and increased housing resources for those youth;
3. Activism and organizing being seen as a stabilizing agent for youth experiencing homelessness;
4. Youth are hired into key leading positions in organizations across the city, leading movement work with their voices front and center;
5. Increased attention and response to rising housing costs and low wages for youth;
6. More employers involved in wage and transit equity;
7. A more responsive system for youth homelessness across city and state agencies; and
8. A reduced need for our drop-in center.

Youth Demographics

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<tr>
<td>Foster Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Client Age Range

- 15-17: 10%
- 18-20: 31%
- 21-23: 38%
- 24-25: 18%
2018
YES Team

FUNDERS
Abell Foundation
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Anonymous
Archdiocese of Baltimore, Catholic Campaign for Human Development
Associated Black Charities
Baltimore Community Foundation: Leonard & Helen R.
Stulman Charitable Foundation
Baltimore Community Foundation: Oscar G. Murray Fund
David and Barbara B. Hirschhorn Foundation
DeVito Family Trust
Family League of Baltimore
Fund for Change
Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation
Helen J. Serini Foundation
John J. Leidy Foundation
Johns Hopkins Neighborhood Grant
Kenneth S. Battye Charitable Trust
Mayor’s Office of Human Services: Homeless Services Program
Mayor’s Office of Employment Development
Open Society Foundations
RISE Foundation
Summer Funding Collaborative
T. Rowe Charitable Trust
Venable Foundation
The Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund

YES STAFF
Blair Franklin  Executive Director
Ciera Dunlap  Systems Navigation Coordinator
Donovan McKinley  Volunteer Coordination VISTA
Dylan McDonough  Rapid Rehousing Coordinator
Greg King  Operations Manager
Maia Gibbons  Rapid Rehousing Case Manager
Malcolm Williams  Mental Health Therapist
Merv Dangerfield  Peer Intern
Mykell Hatcher-Mclarin  Drop-In Coordinator
Nick Brooks  Workforce Development Coordinator
Shayla White  Rapid Rehousing Case Manager
Terrylynn Tyrell  Development Director
Zion Hunter  Case Manager

YES VOLUNTEERS
Dana Jahromi  Food
Jeff Garrett  Drop-In
John Brothers  Workforce
Leah Comeau  Arts
Patricia Cobb Richardson  Trauma Informed Coach
The Park School  Organization

YES ADVISORY BOARD
Sonia Kumar  Chair
Lindsey Leslie  Vice-Chair
Margo Quinlan  Vice-Chair
Alison Jones  Treasurer
Julia Pearson  Secretary
Amber Jones
David Avruch
Elvis Guzman
Jennifer Lee
Kelley Dolan
Kumar Jayasuriya
Maceo Hallmon
Nasim Keshavarz