



Community Concerns

Helping Young People Rebuild Their Lives

Homeless Youths Are Finding A Home And Hope

(NAPSA)—A program committed to helping young people make the transition from homelessness and hopelessness to stability and success is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Each year, more than one million young people under age 21 find themselves homeless in the United States. Many are runaways, throwaways (young people asked to leave home) or youths who have aged out of the foster care system.

For these homeless youths, life on the streets means not knowing where or when they will get another meal. Often, life on the streets can lead to more dangerous and damaging activities such as drug abuse, gang affiliation, prostitution and panhandling.

Fortunately for these young people, Covenant House administers a program called Rights of Passage that's designed to assist motivated young people ages 18 to 21 who need a place to stay while they train for a job with a future.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the Rights of Passage program enables young people to live at Covenant House for up to 18 months while they learn a vocation, earn a GED, work a steady job or take college courses. When these young people graduate from the program, most are in a position to live stable and productive lives off the streets.

In 2005, Covenant House enabled nearly 60,000 young people throughout the U.S. to take their first steps toward a brighter future thanks to Rights of Passage and the many other programs offered by Covenant House—a nonprofit child welfare agency with 15 sites in the United States.

"For Rights of Passage to reach this historic mark is a very special moment for Covenant House,"



Celebrating its 20th anniversary is a program that gives homeless youths a place to live while they learn a vocation, work a steady job or earn a GED.

said Bruce J. Henry, Executive Director of Covenant House New York and a Founder of the Covenant House Rights of Passage Program. "During the past 20 years, thousands of youths at Covenant House sites throughout the U.S. and Canada have graduated from ROP and entered the world as self-sufficient adults. Their individual stories of struggle and ultimate achievement are the reason Covenant House means so much to all of us."

While some young people only went to a Covenant House site for short-term crisis care—such as a hot meal, a bed and new clothes—others worked with counselors and eventually enrolled in the Rights of Passage program.

Covenant House has ROP programs in Alaska, California, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Texas, Toronto, Vancouver and Washington, D.C.

Approximately 85 percent of the funding for Covenant House programs comes from private donors. Their continued financial support is crucial. In addition, volunteers are needed to serve as mentors to young people in the ROP program.

To learn more, visit www.covenanthouse.org.