



NUY Safe Homes Update for Northfield HRA

August 2018

Introduction and Review: This is an update regarding Northfield Union of Youth's (NUY) progress and use of Northfield HRA funds in working to alleviate the overwhelming burden and complexities of homelessness on Northfield's most at-risk youth. NUY began this work in July of 2017 when it received an initial grant from the state of MN to launch a creative approach to addressing youth homelessness. Northfield HRA generously helped fund the shortfall of the grant with an initial investment of \$25,639 and an original proposal to access \$9,000 through CDBG funds in 2018 – since denied but generously and recently funded by the Northfield HRA.

Progress and Milestones:

- **First host families trained – February 2018**
NUY recruited two host families to pilot the program, inform NUY's training, and commit to working with NUY youth leadership on how the program could be more youth-centric, safe, comfortable, and accessible.
- **First minor youth housed – March 2018**
In collaboration with *Northfield Schools*, *Northfield PD*, and staff from *The Key*, NUY successfully hosted a minor youth and prevented them from sleeping outside. NUY staff worked with the youth and their family with a successful long-term outcome of family reunification.
- **Collaborative vision and funding from WINGS – May 2018**
NUY gathered leadership from *TORCH* and the *ALC* to strategically strengthen the safety net for Northfield's most at-risk youth. The result was a *WINGS Dare to Dream Bigger* funded grant of an additional \$25,000 over two years to increase NUY's staffing model to better address the needs of youth across programs, sites, and organizations. Northfield HRA's initial investment helped secure this grant.
- **2 F.T.E staff hired by NUY – June 2018**
 - Youth Center Coordinator** – NUY hired a licensed teacher that provides ongoing, site-based support at *The Key* youth center with targeted supports for youth experiencing and at-risk of experiencing homelessness. This includes a partnership with *Northfield Schools* where students can earn credits toward high school graduation through structured engagement at *The Key*.
 - Housing Coordinator** – NUY hired a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT) to focus on case management services for homeless youth with a specific focus on family reunification and conflict resolution. NUY's housing coordinator will work across sites at the *ALC*, *TORCH*, *The Key*, and throughout the community.
- **Case Management Successes – Summer 2018**
NUY has gotten creative in helping alleviate the effects of poverty and has received gracious amounts of collaborative support from other community organizations. A few examples:



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- *Northfield YMCA* – has provided free memberships for homeless youth needing a clean and respectable place to shower and access healthy recreational activities.
 - *Northfield Police Dept* – has exemplified the meaning of “community policing” working on a case by case basis with NUY and homeless youth. This includes advocating with families and working collaboratively with NUY staff to provide space for family counseling during runaway youth situations.
 - *St John’s Church* – has provided access to their entire kitchen and a host of volunteers to make breakfasts for homeless youth to help get them ready for school at the *ALC*.
 - *Northfield Rotary Club* – has provided home-cooked meals once a month at *The Key*, providing meals, mentorship, and a welcoming community to a diverse group of youth, including youth experiencing homelessness.
 - *Community Action Center of Northfield (CAC)* – has provided referral services when NUY needed more formal supports for youth over the age of 18.
 - *Omada Behavioral Health and Center for Healing and Resilience* – have provided collaborative consultation and client services for youth with mental or chemical health needs.
 - *HealthFinders Collaborative* – has provided free services for youth including MNSure Navigation for uninsured youth and other health related services.
 - *Carleton College* – has provided daily food through their student-led *Food Recovery Network (FRN)* as well as emergency supplies (backpacks, clothes, etc) through the *Lighten Up Garage Sale*.
- **Homelessness Youth Board solidified – July 2018**
NUY has formally elevated and empowered a group of young people ages 16-20 who have or are experiencing homelessness to take a formal leadership role in developing NUY’s homelessness prevention programming.

Challenges: The challenges to resolving the complex labyrinth of youth homelessness have been endless. Best practices for youth development include relational and low-barrier services, however state funding demands in-take assessments and outcome evaluations. NUY has struggled finding the right staff who can provide both relational and formal supportive services, losing nearly three months of progress during a difficult staffing transition. Lastly, many youth struggling with homelessness are justifiably struggling with employment, academics, physical health, mental health, chemical health, food, and often a sense of belonging and community connectedness. Yet, in the face of this myriad of need, NUY is still collaboratively well-poised to address these needs through innovative, community-based, and relational supports.

Future: In Fall of 2018 NUY’s Housing Coordinator will be providing in-school support at the *ALC* nearly ½ day every school day and the youth board will be launching a host family recruitment campaign. Additionally, larger projects like *South Bridge II* have tagged units to be used by NUY in their efforts to house homeless youth. New collaborations with *HCI* have opened up doors for NUY staff to partner with *Workforce Development* to offer employment services to youth in need. Lastly, NUY is looking at closer collaborative work related to housing with the *CAC* as NUY’s Executive Director moves to the *CAC*.

Northfield Union of Youth

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**Providing power and
voice to Northfield youth**

Numbers: NUY has interacted with 35 youth experiencing homelessness in the past 12 months and has engaged 27 of these youth in trauma-informed, relational, case management services, including 5 youth hosted by volunteer host families. However, the reality is that tonight 4 youth will be sleeping outside, and 10 youth will be staying on a couch or floor that isn't their own.

In the past year, NUY has served about 4,000 meals to youth, including about 1,500 to homeless youth. NUY staff have conducted approximately 600 interventions or one-on-one meetings with 150 youth (case management or other). Last year, a record 11,000 visits to *The Key* youth center were recorded, averaging 30 youth per day.

Conclusion: No one said this was going to be easy. It's been extremely complicated and messy, but incredibly worth it. From all the youth leadership at NUY, THANK YOU for your support, your trust, and your patience. Thank you for helping launch this off the ground and thank you for helping institutionalize the idea that this community can creatively support youth from cradle to career.