

S . P . Y

safe place for youth



# 2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Our mission is to inspire, nurture and empower the resilient human spirit of homeless youth by providing immediate and lasting solutions, *one young person at a time.*



## A COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Safe Place for Youth (SPY) was founded in 2011 by a group of dedicated volunteers and Founder/Executive Director Alison Hurst, offering food and clothing to homeless youth in Venice Beach from the trunks of their cars. Since those humble beginnings, we have been driven to give young people an opportunity to transform their lives by providing a caring connection and access to resources that are essential for exiting homelessness.

With incredible support from Board Members, donors, volunteers and partner agencies, SPY has grown from a 100% volunteer-led organization to a professional staff of fifteen, while still incorporating volunteers to maximize capacity. In April 2015, we opened the doors to our new Drop-In Center in Venice, and have since become the leading service provider for homeless transition-aged youth in West Los Angeles.

## THE PROBLEM

Los Angeles is in the midst of a homelessness crisis, with over 48,000 individuals sleeping on the streets every night. One of the fastest growing unhoused populations, transition-aged youth (TAY) are at-risk of becoming chronically homeless without sufficient resources and supportive services.

The young people we serve at SPY find themselves homeless or at-risk of homelessness through no fault of their own. Of the youth that we engaged with in 2016, **59%** reported being kicked out by a parent or caregiver or running away from unbearable home environments that includes physical and/or sexual abuse, homophobia, parental mental illness, or substance abuse. **23%** reported becoming homeless as a result of their previous involvement in the foster care system.

Youth experiencing homelessness deal with a complex set of issues related to disconnection from family and community, abuse and neglect, significant past trauma, grief and loss, mental illness, criminalization, a history of low family income, and exclusion from education. This translates into few prospects for education, employment, or social participation, and can manifest into psychological distress and trauma.



## OUR SOLUTION

In 2016, Safe Place for Youth provided life-saving support to **1,132** individual homeless and at-risk youth ages 12-25.

### ACCESS TO CRITICAL RESOURCES

The goal of our program is to provide critical resources and empower young people to take control of their lives, supported by trauma-informed care, harm reduction and positive youth development strategies in a safe, non-judgmental environment. Our robust continuum of care addresses the unique needs of this vulnerable population through street outreach, low-barrier drop-in services, health and wellness programming, case management, and education/employment support.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

At Safe Place for Youth, we believe that the solution to ending youth homelessness is community collaboration, and we incorporate this into every aspect of our programming. Working together with public and private service providers, county systems representatives, policymakers, researchers, funders, coalitions, community members, local businesses and volunteers, Safe Place for Youth is committed to sustaining and increasing our impact on the homeless youth of Los Angeles.

Thank you to the following partners who played a central role in the services we provided at Safe Place for Youth in 2016:

- Animal Wellness Center, Marina del Rey
- Exceptional Children's Foundation
- Five Keys Charter School
- Karma Rescue
- LA County Department of Mental Health
- LA TAY Collaborative
- Los Angeles LGBT Center
- Loyola Marymount University
- PATH
- Public Counsel
- St. Joseph Center
- Topanga Women's Circle
- UCLA Creative Minds Project
- USC
- Venice Family Clinic
- Westside Children's Center

Additionally, in 2016, the Youth Coordinated Entry System (CES) was established in Los Angeles to ensure that homeless youth have increased access to all available housing resources. SPY was awarded the role of the lead agency for Youth CES in Service Planning Areas 5 (SPA 5), which encompasses the whole of West Los Angeles.

### ADVOCACY

Safe Place for Youth participates as members of multiple advocacy groups across LA County to work on advancing public policy that is responsive to the needs of the young people we serve. This work includes raising awareness around issues such as affordable housing and advocating for appropriatvutions to end youth homelessness at conferences nationwide. In addition to participating in multiple committees and coalitions, in 2016, our Executive Director Alison Hurst became the tri-chair of the LA Coalition to End Youth Homelessness (LACEYH). We also launched a youth advocacy group "SPY Squad", giving young people an opportunity to gain leadership and public speaking experience by representing their peers in the community and at our Drop-In Center.



# OUR 2016 ANNUAL IMPACT



## OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Outreach is a key feature of Safe Place for Youth's services. Specifically focusing on the Westside of LA, SPY's trained outreach teams go out three or more times a week and establish a visible and reassuring presence where homeless youth sleep and congregate. In non-intrusive ways, the outreach team make themselves known, develop rapport with young people identifying their needs and potential risks, and work closely with them to access emergency shelter, health care and Safe Place for Youth's on-site programs. Our outreach team is also available to respond to issues reported by community members.

**1,328** Connections made by SPY outreach teams

**490** Individual youth engaged through street outreach





## DROP-IN SERVICES

Our Drop-In Center is located on Lincoln Blvd. in Venice, just blocks from the beach where a majority of West LA's homeless youth gather. Open five days a week, the Drop-In Center offers a comprehensive range of low-barrier services that are essential to exiting homelessness, including case management and housing assistance, education and employment support, health and wellness care, legal support, and basic survival needs of food, clothing and showers. Additional services including healing arts workshops, animal care, and access to computers, mail and phones are also available onsite at SPY.

**9,373** Visits made to SPY's Drop-In Center

**62** Average youth visits per day

**18,746** Meals provided and served by volunteers

**\$49,918** Dismissed citations through SPY's onsite Legal Clinic



## HEALTH & WELLNESS

Youth experiencing homelessness have statistically poorer health outcomes than the general public. Our partners from Venice Family Clinic provide weekly comprehensive health clinics, information, and referrals onsite at SPY. Dental care, HIV Testing, harm reduction interventions, and health education workshops are also available through this partnership. Additionally, in collaboration with the Exceptional Children's Foundation and LA County Department of Mental Health, mental health support is provided to young people through counseling, crisis interventions and low barrier relationship and trust building approaches.

**289** Medical visits

**203** Counseling sessions

**144** HIV tests provided

**71** Dental consultations





## HEALING ARTS

Creative arts, music groups and yoga are offered at SPY's Drop-In Center three days a week. Facilitated by our Arts & Healing Coordinator, and led by professional volunteers, workshops in creative writing, painting and drawing, mindfulness, yoga, music, and clay modeling are offered as a means to promote healing from trauma and empower youth with the skills necessary to create productive and healthy relationships. Participation in this program is often the bridge to engaging youth in our Case Management and Health & Wellness programs.

**282** Healing arts workshops  
**1,110** Total workshop participants



## CASE MANAGEMENT

Safe Place for Youth knows that for youth to exit the streets, achieve personal change and improve their future prospects they need ready access to harm reduction and trauma informed individualized case management. Our team of Case Managers works with each young person to develop a care plan that addresses short and long term goals towards greater stability. Services include housing assistance to enter emergency shelter, transitional or permanent supportive housing, applying for identification documents, access to physical and mental health services, parenting and prenatal care, family reunification and drug rehabilitation.

**106** Young people exited homelessness  
**182** Youth enrolled in Case Management  
**40** Youth reconnected to family  
**136** Youth received crisis intervention





## PREGNANT & PARENTING

In partnership with Westside Children's Center, SPY offers comprehensive support for our young people who are either expecting or currently parents. For young pregnant women, our Case Manager assists mothers-to-be with case plans in preparation for her baby. This includes prenatal/OBGYN and birthing referrals, educational classes facilitated by experts, and connections to mental health or substance abuse treatment. We also provide access to practical essential supplies such as diapers, clothes, formula, blankets and books. For young men and women who are parents, SPY offers parenting groups and classes, and works closely with our Education and Employment Specialist to support young families with job search and preparedness.

- 55** Parenting youth enrolled in Pregnant & Parenting Case Management
- 18** Children of youth parents received services



## EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

SPY's Education and Employment program provides job readiness and workforce training, life skills workshops, onsite internships, high school completion courses, and networking opportunities through a welcoming, non-judgmental approach. We also offer pre-employment exploration workshops in our Digital Arts Lab and Food for the Soul Garden for youth to learn new skills and build self-esteem. After a young person successfully obtains a job or acceptance into a school, our staff continues to support each individual throughout their education or employment journey. SPY's Youth Advisory Board ("SPY Squad") is a vital new component of this program, giving youth an opportunity to gain leadership and public speaking experience by representing their peers in the community and at our Drop-In Center.



- 33** Youth gained employment
- 227** Individuals received support through the Education & Employment program
- 68** Individual youth participated in Digital Arts Lab workshops including music production, graphic design, 3-D art, and coding sessions.
- 8** Youth completed HireLA and SPY Internship program



## BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION TO ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

The success of our work at Safe Place for Youth relies heavily on community involvement. We have several opportunities to get involved throughout the year that serve as a great way to learn, network, and most important, provide critical resources to homeless youth in our community.



### VOLUNTEER

Volunteers play a vital role in SPY's continuum of care, and our programs could not exist without their support. In 2016, over 7,300 hours were donated by dedicated volunteers.

#### *Drop-In Center Support*

Volunteers are an integral part of the operations at our Drop-In Center. Hours and dates are flexible, and opportunities include: managing the clothing closet, serving meals, monitoring the showers, and job readiness support. Volunteers with backgrounds in music, arts, and exercise classes are also needed to help lead youth workshops in our Healing Arts program.

#### *Street Outreach*

Volunteers are a key component of our Street Outreach program. Engage with street based youth out in the community alongside one of our Outreach and Engagement Case Managers, providing access to survival resources and SPY's onsite programs.

#### *Meals*

100% of the meals provided at SPY are donation-based and served to our youth by caring volunteers. Cook or purchase a meal for 75 and serve it at our Drop-In Center with your company or group!

#### *HOMIE! Mentorship Program*

Launched in 2016, the Housing Opportunity Mentor, In Effect! (HOMIE!) Program is a new, exciting mentorship program designed to connect our youth seeking housing with caring individuals who can support them through the process. This volunteer opportunity includes helping youth find and secure housing, mentoring on independent living life skills, and building a meaningful, supportive connection.

For other volunteer opportunities including group projects or administrative support, please contact [volunteer@safeplaceforyouth.org](mailto:volunteer@safeplaceforyouth.org)

### DONATE

In 2016, Safe Place for Youth was over 90% privately funded by foundations, corporations, local businesses and individual contributions. Every dollar you donate to SPY goes towards our youth programs, ensuring that your gift will directly impact the homeless youth that we serve. To make donation, visit our website at [www.safeplaceforyouth.org](http://www.safeplaceforyouth.org) or contact [rachels@safeplaceforyouth.org](mailto:rachels@safeplaceforyouth.org)

### IN-KIND DONATIONS

SPY relies on in-kind donations to keep our youth programs running. Some of the items we are always in need of are clothing, food, backpacks, sleeping bags, warm blankets, and hygiene items. You can organize a drive at your school or workplace, or drop-off individual contributions at our Drop-In Center. For more information, contact [info@safeplaceforyouth.org](mailto:info@safeplaceforyouth.org)

### EVENTS

Safe Place for Youth hosts a variety of annual events to engage in the community and raise funds for our youth programs. In 2016, we raised a total of \$275,000 from three main events: Carnival, 100 Pieces, and our first annual Gala. We also launched our "Family Connect Day" event series, offering an opportunity for families to come and volunteer their time with projects onsite at our Drop-In Center.



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