A PLACE TO CALL HOME

OUR STRATEGY FOR SOLVING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Every year, more than 5,000 youth and young adults experience homelessness in King County. For these young people, school is difficult, life is dangerous, and success feels like a far reach. But there’s hope. This is a solvable problem.

The Raikes Foundation is joining forces with leaders and organizations from across the region to surround these young people with what they need to thrive—from stable housing to employment support. If we’re successful, youth homelessness will become a rare occurrence. And if a young person does become homeless, it will be a brief and one-time experience.
Since 2011, preventing and ending youth homelessness in King County has been one of the Raikes Foundation’s three core grantmaking strategies. We see our role as a catalyst. We support the people and organizations driving improvements, and we invest in efforts to create a more coordinated regional system that effectively responds to our young people’s needs.

**OUR APPROACH**

**BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER**
We believe collaboration is essential to lasting change. Solving a complicated problem like youth homelessness requires a coordinated response from a wide range of players, including the education and employment sectors, social service providers, funders, and youth. We help bring people, organizations, and the community together to:
- Spread knowledge about the issue and share lessons learned
- Find common ground and dissolve siloes
- Spur creative problem solving that results in new ways of doing things
- Coordinate strategies, investments, and on-the-ground work

**INVESTING IN SYSTEMIC CHANGE**
We support efforts that will transform and improve the systems and services that touch our youth. We take a holistic view that includes prevention and early intervention, better coordination of services and housing, and improved data collection that helps us identify what different groups of young people need to quickly and permanently exit homelessness. We are investing in:
- The people and organizations driving systemic change
- Activities that empower stakeholders to reimagine how they work individually and collectively
- Processes and infrastructure—not just programs
- Solutions that dramatically and sustainably improve outcomes

**HELPING TO RAISE AWARENESS**
We help to shine a light on the issue of youth and young adult homelessness. When all of us have a shared understanding of the issue, we can speak strongly and clearly and build momentum toward finding solutions. To focus attention on youth and young adult homelessness, particularly among community leaders, funders, and policymakers, we support efforts to:
- Clearly define the challenges and needs of homeless youth and young adults in King County
- Illuminate gaps in assistance and determine necessary systemic changes
- Identify collaboration opportunities and the most effective interventions
- Measure progress toward making youth homelessness rare or, when it occurs, a brief and one-time experience

**SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS LEARNING**
We are constantly seeking to understand the best methods to prevent and end youth homelessness. We support efforts that help stakeholders learn from existing data and from other regional and national initiatives. We specifically fund data collection and analysis to:
- Empower current and former homeless youth to advocate for themselves and their peers
- Tell stories that humanize the youth and young adults experiencing homelessness
- Create messaging and tools for all stakeholders to speak with a unified voice
- Use our own voice and relationships to raise awareness of the issue and to increase support for regional solutions

**OUR PROGRESS**
Much has been accomplished in a short time in King County. The Raikes Foundation is proud to be a contributor to these community-led efforts. With other funders, community partners, and young people, we are on our way to making youth and young adult homelessness rare or, when it occurs, a brief and one-time experience.

**THERE ARE MORE ALIGNED FUNDERS AT THE TABLE.**
- We brought together private and public funders—known as the Youth Funders Group—to collaborate on strategies to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness.
- Almost $5 million in new public and private funds have been dedicated to prevention, data collection, and coordination since 2011.

**THERE IS A REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO PREVENT AND END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN KING COUNTY.**
- We helped bring together a diverse group of more than 100 stakeholders, including homeless youth, to develop a robust roadmap to address youth homelessness.
- We funded a full-time staff position in King County to lead the regional work, including implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

**THERE IS GREATER AWARENESS AND YOUTH VOICE.**
- We sponsored a yearlong series in Crosscut, a local online news service, to lift up the stories of young people experiencing homelessness and highlight the public and private efforts serving them.
- We supported Mockingbird Society’s Youth Advocates for Ending Homelessness program, which trains current and former homeless youth to speak publicly about the needs of homeless youth.

**THERE IS INCREASED CAPACITY AND EFFORTS TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE.**
- We funded a learning lab that encourages organizations to share best practices and improve the effectiveness of their outreach.
- We supported efforts for regional youth and young adult homelessness leaders to learn and apply the latest improvement science, helping kids more quickly get off the street and into safe housing.

**THERE IS GREATER COORDINATION AND WE’RE USING DATA TO MAKE SMARTER DECISIONS.**
- Thanks to the new Community Sign In process, every youth seeking services is asked a common set of questions and their responses are entered into a countywide system for analysis.
- Through the assessment process we are learning about the unique needs and vulnerabilities of young people, and we are finding better ways to coordinate and serve homeless youth.
ABOUT THE RAIKES FOUNDATION

The mission of the Raikes Foundation is to empower young people to transform their lives. Founded in 2002 by Jeff and Tricia Raikes, the foundation is deeply committed to helping young people access the knowledge, skills, and support they need to become thriving adults. The foundation invests in three areas: preventing and ending youth homelessness in King County, Washington; improving the quality of out-of-school time programs in Washington state; and nationally promoting academic mindsets and learning strategies that help students succeed in and out of school.

www.raikesfoundation.org
206.801.9500
@raikesfdn