



Fall UP

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**Real Life.
Real Change.**

UP TO DATE

an urban peak newsletter

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL HOMELESS AND RUNAWAY YOUTH AWARENESS MONTH

For the third year, organizations which provide services for the homeless and runaway youth throughout Colorado are gathering together for this year's National Homeless and Runaway Youth Awareness Month (NHRyam) in November. Last year, Colorado agencies won the National Runaway Prevention Month Community Contest for their awareness efforts.

The goals of NHRyam is to increase awareness of the issues facing homeless and runaway youth and to educate the public about the solutions and the role they can play in preventing and ending youth homelessness.

The month will begin with several kick-off events held simultaneously across the state on November 2, from 4pm to 6pm. Denver's kick off event will be held at St. Cajetan's Center on the Auraria Campus and feature food, entertainment, guest speakers and information on the many Metro-area agencies which provide services for homeless and runaway youth, including Urban Peak. The public is invited to attend these events.

Other events happening in the month will include The Green Light Project, a statewide summit on mentoring our most vulnerable homeless youth, a Youth Creative Project - featuring experiences of youth homelessness in art form, Proclamations by local and state government, PSA and media campaigns, the Homeless and Runaway Youth Provider Summit, and a myriad of other local events. The month also falls in conjunction with the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Conference taking place in Denver in mid-November. To find out more, visit www.urbanpeak.org.

Street Outreach Program: Establishing a Foundation of Trust

"Everyone on the Street Outreach team brings something special to the program," says Anne Shulga, Outreach Supervisor at Urban Peak. "Whether it's a passion for helping youth with substance abuse issues or single moms, we play off each others' strength. But our number one asset is our ability to build relationships with the young people we see on the streets every day."

The Urban Peak Street Outreach Team consists of eight staff members and one Urban Servant Corps volunteer. Team members go out each day to connect young people on the streets with the services and support they need to improve their situation. From a pair of socks or hygiene products, to HIV/AIDS testing or information on Urban Peak services, the team understands that a small gesture can make a big difference in the life of a homeless youth. Currently, they are making 300-400 unduplicated contacts per month.

"Most of these youth don't have anybody," continues Shulga. "They don't have a family or any other support system. Many are also dealing with mental health or substance abuse challenges, often both. So it can take months, even years to gain their trust."

Shulga, who has been helping at-risk and homeless youth for nearly a decade and with Urban Peak for six years, explains that for many youth living on the streets, seeing an outreach worker on a consistent basis may be the only stable part of their lives. "Establishing trust helps us get youth into services," she says. "Once they begin participating in services, they begin to buy into their own ability to succeed."

Six days a week, the Outreach team connects with youth who come from many different places. Many have aged out of the foster care system, or have been in youth corrections. Many come from abusive living situations. Some are part of a family unit that is experiencing economic hardships. The current economy also has produced more 21-24 year olds who are not eligible for the Urban Peak youth shelter, yet find it difficult to stay in an adult shelter. The team often sees young parents with small children and through a partnership with the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless makes every effort to provide appropriate wrap around services including family housing.

Moreover, as the Urban Peak Street Outreach Program moves forward, the need to provide even
Continued on next page...



Anne Shulga, Urban Peak Outreach Supervisor (r), connects with a youth during UP Street Outreach.

Save the Date!
November is

**National
Homeless and
Runaway Youth
Awareness Month**

Join the Kick off Event on
Monday, Nov 2 from 4pm to 6pm
at St. Cajetan's Center on the Auraria Campus
Details at urbanpeak.org!

Want to receive your UP news via email?

Urban Peak wants to keep you **UP To Date** with our newsletter online!

If you are interested in receiving updates and other Urban Peak information via email, please contact:
jason.newcomer@urbanpeak.org

For more UP information on events, programs and opportunities, you can also visit urbanpeak.org or contact Robert Ham at 303.974.2947.

WORKING TOGETHER

Street Outreach Continued:

more case management services and more resources such as housing for youth coming right off the street will increase, as will the need to explore more options throughout the community such as in-patient mental health and substance abuse treatment.

When asked what she's learned in her time helping homeless youth, Shulga says, "I've built many meaningful relationships with young people. I've come to realize that the decision is in the hands of the youth, it's up to them, and we are here to support. I've learned to listen more and ask 'What do you want?' Then we can help guide the youth to success on their terms."



UP Outreach team members Andrew McClure (l) and Sara Miller (r) serve dinner during drop-in hours at Street Outreach.

SERVICES OFFERED THROUGH OUR STREET OUTREACH PROGRAM

Case Management	ART FROM ASHES Poetry Class
Drop-in Services	Basketball Team
ID/Documentation Assistancess	Breakfast (5 days/week)
Basic Needs Supplies - Hygiene Products, Clothing, Food	Weekly Barbeque
Basic Medical Services (including nursing students on outreach)	Friday Fun Day
Safe Sex Kits	Resource Fairs
Bleach Kits	Referrals to Partner Resources
HIV Rapid Testing	HIKE - Health Intervention Knowledge Education Program
STD Testing	Medical/Mental Health Services
Crisis Intervention	Substance Abuse Treatment
	Access to all other UP Programs

A Youth Story - Jeff

For as long as he can remember, Jeff has not had a family. When he was very young his mother left him at a group home and he went into the foster care system. From the time he was an infant until he was 18 years old, he lived in 33 different foster care placements. He explains, "I was an angry child. I didn't care what I did. My mom left me, I had no family. I was a very angry child." So, Jeff would get into trouble or run away and the state would move him from one group home or foster care home to another. Since he was always moving, John had to also switch schools and so he didn't do very well and never graduated. Around the age of 13, he began to develop a drug problem.

When Jeff turned 18 he became homeless. He would sometimes stay at random people's houses, in the park or just on the streets. He lived this way for three years and describes his time on the streets as "absolute horror and hell." During this time, John's addiction had become so severe that he would even resort to violence and prostitution to get drugs.

One day Jeff met an Urban Peak Outreach worker, who approached him with a bleach kit to clean his

TIRI'S GARDEN



Urban Peak youth Aubreona and Kevin from the Education & Employment department help harvest with staff, volunteers and other youth at Tiri's Garden in Downtown Denver.



Urban Peak youth are reaping what they sow as the summer draws to an end and harvest is gathered from Tiri's Garden. Opened in April of this year and located at 15th and California in Denver, Tiri's Garden is an urban sanctuary developed through a partnership which included Concert for Kids, Denver Urban Gardens (DUG), Europa Landscaping, Shames-Moakovsky Realty, and many others. The garden is maintained by DUG, volunteers, and Urban Peak youth and staff, with the produce going to the youth and programs of Urban Peak.

Urban Peak youth have harvested and received a bounty of squash, peppers, eggplant, cucumbers, melons, strawberries, beans, tomatoes, carrots, kale, lettuce and much, much more. The garden has additional benefits for UP youth in helping them learn about the many aspects that go into growing your own food, including horticulture, composting, creating sustainable product, cooking, and science.

On Wednesdays from 9am to 2pm there is a farmers' market, proceeds from which help benefit the Denver Public School Foundation. The Hyatt Hotel also utilized herbs grown in the garden in their "cool summer menu," proceeds from which benefited Concert for Kids.

needles. He also offered Jeff some essential supplies and told him that they had free food at Outreach if he was ever hungry. Jeff says that the worker slowly built trust with him until finally Jeff came down to Outreach for breakfast.

After working with Outreach, Jeff decided to go to the shelter and to get off the streets. He didn't stay very long and relapsed several times, but each time he would come back to Urban Peak for help. Life really changed for him when he got into his own apartment through UP using a Family Unification Program voucher. After he got his apartment, Jeff worked with Urban Peak to get into an intensive outpatient drug treatment program for six months. We are happy to report that Jeff has been sober for a full year!

Along with getting his own apartment and staying sober, Jeff has recently completed Job Readiness Training (JRT) and the Business Academy. He is also working on getting his high school diploma which he is very excited to finally accomplish. He is working with UP to get a job through the JRT program and hopes to be able to buy a car and someday his own home. After he gets his high school diploma from Emily Griffith then he plans to go on to college. Jeff would really like to get a degree in order to become a substance abuse counselor and envisions himself starting his own nonprofit to help other young people with substance abuse problems.

When asked what he is most proud of, Jeff laughs and says, "All of it! I'm looking back on myself like, I did it, that's cool!" he says. Among the lessons that he has learned, Jeff says that, "if you truly want something you just have to work for it and you need to remember that things take time." He says that Urban Peak helped him in many ways, but most importantly the staff showed care and understanding for him. "People truly wanted to help me."



BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Sold Out Cirque!

Thanks to an incredible team effort and outstanding community support, all 700 tickets were sold to our *Cirque du Soleil*® fundraiser! It was our largest Cirque event ever and we are so grateful to all those who purchased their tickets through Urban Peak. THANK YOU!

We are especially thankful to *Cirque du Soleil*, who generously donated the tickets, with 100% of the proceeds benefiting our youth and programs. *Cirque du Soleil* also donated dress rehearsal tickets to us and 100 of our youth and staff were able to see the show.

And if that wasn't enough, on September 16 members of the *Cirque du Soleil* KOOZA cast will host a workshop for 24 of our youth to learn some of the backstage magic that goes into their amazing performances.

Since their inception, the *Cirque du Soleil* has been committed to helping at-risk youth. This is the fifth time the company has donated tickets to our organization.



More than 400 guests joined the preshow party at the Urban Peak Fundraiser. Posing above are (l to r) UP Board Chair Elect Brooke Brown, UP Past Chair Joanne Reilly, UP Development Director Anne Harris, and (front) Nancy Snyder of CoBiz Financial. Photo courtesy of Billie Rommes/Blacktie Colorado.

You are invited to our annual

COMMUNITY BREAKFAST
Wednesday, Sept 23
730a to 830a
Mile High Station
2027 West Lower Colfax Ave



With Keynote Speaker
Chet Sisk
Author/Inspirational Teacher

Special Guests
Mayor John Hickenlooper



and
Rosemary Rodriguez
State Director for
Senator Michael Bennet

For more information, contact scott.vandaele@urbanpeak.org

This is a free event and space is limited,
RSVP to 303.974.2979

THESE TIMES ARE TOUGHER FOR SOME OF US.



Please consider supporting Urban Peak. Each dollar you give could help change the life of a young person living on the streets. Thank you for your generosity and kindness!

Use the enclosed envelope or
donate online at www.urbanpeak.org

Volunteer with Urban Peak!

Find out more at www.urbanpeak.org

FLUID COFFEE Partners with Urban Peak

What is a Fluid Community Partner? A local nonprofit which strives to have a positive environmental, social and/or economic impact on the world. Fluid Community Partners are selected each quarter and are beneficiaries of the Fluid Coffee Bar Sustainability Menu. **Fluid Coffee Bar donates 5 cents for every item selected off the Fluid Coffee Bar Sustainability Menu to Urban Peak and other community partners.**

What is the Fluid Coffee Bar Sustainability Menu? The FCB Sustainability Menu is a menu of items (5) that when selected have a positive environmental, social and/or economic impact on the business and community. Results are calculated on a quarterly basis.

Current Fluid Coffee Bar Sustainability Menu Items

- 1) Use "In House Mug"
- 2) Use Travel Mug
- 3) Reuse Whole Bean Bag
- 4) Recycle Bottled Beverage
- 5) Reuse/Recycle Eco Grip Cup Sleeve



19th & Pearl in Denver

Summer-Fall 2009



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**SPECIAL THANKS TO THE OUTSTANDING
FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATIONS THAT
HAVE SO GENEROUSLY GIVEN TO OUR
ORGANIZATION IN RECENT MONTHS:**

Estate of Jane Turner

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...and many many more!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO DONATE TO
URBAN PEAK, VISIT www.urbanpeak.org**



URBAN PEAK

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Youth Awareness

and much, much more!