



URBAN PEAK

IN THIS ISSUE...

Maverick Thinkers
Partnership for Our Youth

PLUS...

Let's Catch UP!: What's been happening at Urban Peak

Upcoming Events

National Homeless Youth Awareness

**Real Life.
Real Change.**

UP TO DATE

an urban peak newsletter

MAVERICK THINKERS 2009: COMMUNITY STARS

This year's Maverick Thinker event was our most successful ever! We welcomed more than 600 guests, many new to Urban Peak, and raised more than \$250,000!!

We were proud to honor Walter Isenberg, president and CEO of Sage Hospitality as well as our Youth Maverick Thinker ShehilaRae Stephens. Molly Hughes of CBS4 was a fantastic guest emcee. Our co-chairs Evan and Evi Makovsky helped to raise much-needed funds by bringing in many wonderful sponsors and friends. Thank you to guests and all who made this great event possible!

Clockwise: 2009 Maverick Thinker Honoree Walter Isenberg and UP Board Chair Stefan Stein; 2009 Youth Maverick Thinker ShehilaRae Stephens; Event marque for the largest Maverick Thinkers ever; Guest Emcee Molly Hughes.



UP staff and Governor Bill Ritter kick off Homeless Youth Awareness Month in November. The Governor and Mayor Hickenlooper read proclamations at the event. Many youth, community leaders and service providers from the city and state joined the celebration held at Urban Peak.

Photos by Brian Gadbery. Find more at urbanpeak.org!

COME VISIT US!

If you're interested in learning more about Urban Peak and meeting youth and staff, you are welcome to attend our

COMMUNITY BREAKFAST AT THE SHELTER

EVERY THURSDAY
from 8:30 to 9:30am
1630 S. Acoma Street

(One block west of Broadway at Iowa Street)

To schedule a visit, contact
Anne Harris @ 303.974.2949

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www.urbanpeak.org

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WORKING TOGETHER

Urban Peak Collaborates with The Mile High Council to help youth "Beat the Street"

Urban Peak greatly values its partnerships with the many individuals and organizations that help us provide the best possible service for our young people.

In January, Urban Peak teamed up with The Mile High Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (The Council) to assist homeless youth in accessing mental health and substance abuse services. The partnership is a result of grant monies received from the US Department of Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The purpose of the project, called "Beat the Street," is the development of comprehensive drug/alcohol and mental health treatment systems for persons who are homeless. During the project's first year, Beat the Street will provide intensive or weekly outpatient treatment, strengths-based case management and supportive housing to 30 clients. In each subsequent year, these services will be provided to 50 homeless or runaway youth.

"It gives me great pleasure to partner with an organization that dedicates its mission to those youth struggling with drugs, mental health, and other challenging situations," says Robert "Bob" Dorshimer, Executive Director of The Council. "The purpose of this grant is to reduce young adults and those aging out of the child welfare system from the possibility of becoming chronically homeless. Catching the problem early and connecting the young people into substance abuse and mental health treatment as well as providing stable housing is key to reducing this problem. Given the shortage of treatment dollars available, Denver and the State of Colorado have been given a tremendous opportunity to address this vulnerable population. With added support staff and a new location dedicated to the 'Beat the Street' we are prepared to accept the challenges of this new program."

The dynamic and often volatile intersection of mental illness and substance abuse has become an increasing dilemma in this country in the past few decades. Youth with mental health problems are more likely than those in the general population to use alcohol or drugs. Almost 43% of youth who receive mental health services in the United States have been diagnosed with a co-occurring substance use disorder.

Substance use problems are a complicating factor for many persons who experience mental illness. Dually-diagnosed youth are at greater risk for homelessness because they tend to have more severe mental symptoms, to deny both their mental illness and their substance use problems, to refuse treatment and medication, and to abuse multiple substances. Untreated, they may be antisocial, aggressive, and sometimes violent, and have high rates of suicidal behavior and ideation. Once homeless, people with co-occurring disorders have more problems, are often unable to benefit from services, and are more likely to remain homeless than other groups of people. They are more likely to be homeless longer and living in harsher conditions, and to suffer greater distress, demoralization, and alienation from their families.

Homeless youth and young adults present challenges to homeless service providers, in part due to their mental, social and physical developmental issues, which are very different from older adults. Homelessness introduces



these young people to a street economy and culture that includes drug use, survival sex and other forms of exploitation — all of which contribute to a culture of mistrust. At the same time, mental health and substance abuse concerns and other developmental challenges further complicate their lives. As a result, homeless and runaway youth are traditionally reluctant to access services through the shelter or social services systems. In addition, most do not have access to health insurance coverage. Free or low cost benefit programs, such as Medicaid, require applicants to document their residence or mailing address, and few homeless young people are able to secure employment that provides health coverage. This combination of reluctance to seek services and lack of insurance coverage makes it difficult to document their health concerns and problems, often resulting in health emergencies.

While Denver's social service landscape is fortunate to have a number of providers who serve homeless persons with co-occurring disorders, only Urban Peak and The Council have significant experience addressing the unique and challenging needs of the young adult age group between 17 and 24 years old. Along with Urban Peak's 20 years experience working with homeless and runaway youth, The Council brings more than 45 years of substance abuse experience to this project.

In the partnership arrangement, The Council shall serve as the fiscal agent for the Beat the Street project, and Urban Peak Denver will refer youth to The Council for substance abuse, mental health, or co-occurring treatment. Urban Peak will also provide street outreach and case management to youth on the streets of Denver and identify those with substance abuse and/or mental health disorders and conduct psycho-social and mental health assessments to homeless young people who are appropriate candidates for the Beat the Street program.

The team will collaborate at different community events and coordinate services to serve the Beat the Street clients.

"This is a great opportunity to expand our collaboration," says Kendall Rames, Deputy Director/Director of Programs for Urban Peak, "and provide more extensive mental health services, in addition to the substance abuse services that are already available to our young people through The Council."

Next year, Urban Peak will also collaborate with The Council and Mental Health Centers of Denver to provide intervention and treatment for those young people of color who have HIV or are at risk of HIV. This program is also possible because of a grant from SAMHSA and will be conducted through Urban Peak's Street Outreach Program.

COMING IN AUGUST 2009



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WATCH FOR DETAILS SOON AT
urbanpeak.org



Winter-Spring 2009

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BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Since our last newsletter in the Fall of 2008, let's play catch up. Here are images of just some of the many incredible events and activities that have taken place at Urban Peak over the last several months.



CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES! In January, family and friends gathered as graduates of the Urban Peak GED Class of 2008 received their diplomas during a ceremony held at Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Theatre. (Clockwise below) Youth graduate speaker Tasha Garcia; Keynote speaker Judge Addison "Spike" Adams; Our GED instructors Mark McVay and Amber Hill hand out diplomas as our Education & Employment Coordinator Jeff Romero reads the many names.



Urban Peak Celebrates National Homeless Youth Awareness Month (NHYAM)

In 2007, the United States Congress declared the month of November as National Homeless Youth Awareness Month. This year, Governor Ritter and Mayor Hickenlooper of Denver signed a proclamation to honor our youth during a celebration held at Urban Peak. A similar proclamation was made at Urban Peak Colorado Springs by Mayor Lionel Rivera.

Global product and service company Virgin Mobile, who was instrumental in establishing NHYAM, also launched HYTV: Homeless Youth Television. With the rising popularity of reality shows, this national online campaign helps take a look at what "reality" really is by taking the premise from some of the most popular reality shows of the day, and turning them into a look at how life is on the streets.



For National Homeless Youth Awareness Month, Virgin Mobile launched HYTV, in part benefiting Urban Peak.

One of the shows in the campaign, when sponsored, directed the visitors to Urban Peak. "Meal or No Meal" (based on the hit game show) focuses on what it is like to be on the streets and not know where your next meal is coming from.

This campaign was a unique step forward in getting the word out about the issue of homeless youth, and also had links to sponsor shows, as well as other ways to donate. This new campaign drew modest donations, but invaluable exposure. We look forward to working with Virgin Mobile again next year. For more on Virgin Mobile's efforts, visit their site at www.HomelessYouthAmongUs.com



A UNIQUE GATHERING OF VOLUNTEERS including DNC Delegates from Illinois, The Virgin Islands, and Wisconsin along with employees of printer specialists Printelogy and youth and staff of UP showed their graffiti talents by decorating copiers for Urban Peak. The copiers were later destroyed and recycled at the first annual COPIER BASH sponsored by Printelogy.

CELEBRATING THANKSGIVING
In mid-November, volunteers from Enterprise Rent-A-Car served a traditional Thanksgiving dinner to more than 100 Urban Peak youth at The Spot. Volunteers and UP board members also provided brunch for youth at our Shelter on Thanksgiving Day.



Holme Roberts & Owen LLP
Attorneys at Law

In October, more than 150 volunteers from Holmes, Roberts, & Owen lent their services in the second annual Jim Bye Day, which honors one of Urban Peak's most generous supporters. Volunteers did landscaping, cleaning, special projects and even held a festival for UP youth!



As UP youth Amanda looks on, Board Chair Stefan Stein and CEO Kay Ramachandran cut the ribbon to celebrate the expansion of the Shelter. 1300 square feet was added including larger GED facilities and dining and recreational areas.



Please Join Us for a
Wine Tasting
Benefitting Urban Peak
March 25 - 5 to 6:30pm
Z Cuisine A Côté
Parisian Wine Bar
2239 W 30th Ave - Denver

Voted Best Wine Bar - Westword Best of Denver 2008
visit urbanpeak.org for more information



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...and many many more!

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INSIDE

**MAVERICK
THINKERS 2009**

"BEAT THE STREET"

GED GRADUATION

UPCOMING EVENTS

and much, much more!