

“To empower people in our community to use their voice and stand up for themselves.”



- A dream of an Avenues' youth

## August 2016 AveNEWS

### To the Avenues Community

Dear Friends -

I am pleased to share some data with you for Avenues' fiscal year 2016, which just closed June 30.

With our recent program capacity expansions, Avenues supported 319 young people during FY16. Of those youth, 152 lived in one of Avenues' residential programs for an average of four months. We provided all basic needs and comprehensive support services to help the youth move from surviving the streets to thriving young adults. We are happy to report that 76% of youth moved into stable living arrangements when they moved out of one of our programs!

Another 167 young people accessed one of Avenues two overnight emergency shelter beds for at least one night. The e-beds (one each at Brooklyn Avenues and Minneapolis Avenues) are used by youth who need a place to crash for a couple days while they resolve problems or wait for shelter or housing.

How does this compare to a year ago? Well, the numbers are up because Brooklyn Avenues is meeting a big community need in the northwestern suburbs. That program opened in February 2015.

#### Fiscal Year 2015

209 Total Youth Supported

135 Youth Lived in Programs

74 Youth Used E-Beds

#### Fiscal Year 2016

319 Total Youth Supported

152 Youth Lived in Programs

167 Youth Used E-Beds

65% Moved to Stable Housing

76% Moved to Stable Housing

You've heard me say this before -- we couldn't do this without your support. We will have final financial information for you when our FY16 audit is complete, but I can tell you right now that Avenues finished FY16 with a modest surplus - for the 8th year in a row.

Thank you so much for your support of our work and our continual efforts to expand capacity. Most importantly, thank you for supporting the young people of Avenues.

*Deb*

Deborah Loon  
Executive Director

**DONATE NOW**

When they arrive at Avenues, most youth are disconnected from school, work and family. It is particularly rewarding to watch our young people begin to heal and trust, develop education plans, re-engage with school, participate in group activities and life skills training, build their resumes, go to interviews and so much more!

## A Special Thanks to Our Corporate Donors

Thank you to our corporate donors, who have generously donated \$20,000 or more in support of Avenues during the 2016 fiscal year. We greatly appreciate your aid in supporting homeless youth. **Thank you Alerus Mortgage, ECMC, General Mills, Target and Walmart.**

## ConneQT Host Home Program Needs Your Help

Avenues has recently expanded to serve more homeless youth with the launch of the ConneQT Host Home Program. It is a partner in the ConneQT Collaborative, a full-circle program for LGBTQ youth in need of emergency shelter, long-term housing, and mental health services. This program, the first of its kind in the nation, unites Avenues for Homeless Youth, RECLAIM, and The Link.

Avenues role in the collaborative is to provide emergency shelter for these youth - but we need the community's help. Our goal is to have 10 ConneQT Host Homes by October of this year, providing youth with an open heart and open room. This program is great for hosts that can't commit to long term housing of a youth. ConneQT provides emergency housing for one week to up to three months. For more information on hosting, click [here](#).



If you can't host a youth but would like to help us reach our ConneQT goals, please donate and note that you want to support the ConneQT Host Home Program.

To learn more, contact: Ryan Berg, Program Manager  
612.844.2014 or [rberg@avenuesforyouth.org](mailto:rberg@avenuesforyouth.org)



## International Visitors Come to Avenues

Human rights activists and organizers from eight countries visited Avenues as part of the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. Staff and guests shared information, rainbow-colored donuts inspired by Pride, and lots of fun. Our guests traveled from all over the world, including Ghana, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Rwanda, Taiwan and Uganda. Staff that met with the international activists were Craig Freeman, Zayed Ahmed, Ryan Berg, Rocki Simoes, Kelly Brazil and JP Arcani.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Dale Nielsen & Laurel Meyer



This year, Brooklyn Avenues has a green addition to its location - a thriving vegetable garden in the backyard. Thanks to the hard work and vision of several volunteers, Brooklyn Avenues is now collecting fresh produce for meals, including green beans, zucchini, peppers, lettuce and more. Brooklyn Avenues youth have also been involved with the project. Youth picked out the vegetables they wanted for the garden and can occasionally be found in the garden.

"Sometimes I'll see youth outside watering it. Not so much weeding it," laughed Dale Nielsen, a Brooklyn Avenues volunteer.

While the garden's success derives from all of the volunteers who participated, Dale Nielsen's dedication to Avenues has been essential to the project. Dale and Laurel Meyers, a couple who first heard about Avenues in a local newspaper, have been volunteering at Brooklyn Avenues for a little over a year.

"We didn't feel it was good enough to complain about the way things were going," Dale explained on why the couple wanted to volunteer. "We needed to do more."

Now the couple volunteers at Brooklyn Avenues every Monday evening and an occasional weekend day to work on the garden, cook dinner, clean the house and many other things. From grunt work to the gardening, Dale and Laurel have volunteered over 250 hours, making a huge impact on their community and the Brooklyn Avenues youth.

"It's a two way street," Dale said about volunteering at Avenues. "We get back as much as we're giving."

\*A special thanks to all of the volunteers who helped make Brooklyn Avenues garden a success. Our youth, and tummies, enjoy the tasty vegetables you made happen!

## Avenues Celebrating Pride

Late last June, Avenues celebrated Pride and raised awareness of LGBTQ youth homelessness through multiple events. Avenues had a booth at Twin Cities Pride and participated in United Way's Arise Project event, a project that seeks to unite communities to improve the lives of LGBTQ homeless youth. Additionally, in the wake of the Orlando Pulse Night Club shooting, Joe Campbell and Kristy Wilke hosted a Pride Ride event at Surge Cycling. Proceeds benefited Avenues' GLBT Host Home Program. Check out the full story covered by WCCO [here](#).



## Welcome, Welcome Back, and Congratulations!

### Craig Freeman

#### Community Engagement Manager

Craig Freeman joined Avenues in June 2016. Craig coordinates relations with faith and community organizations and oversees Avenues' volunteer program. Before joining Avenues, Craig was a practicing commercial litigation attorney and served on several non-profit boards. Craig has a B.A. in history and a J.D. from the University of Iowa and is a proud Hawkeye.



### Zachary Tift

#### Program Manager, Minneapolis Avenues

Zachary Tift joined Avenues in July of 2016. He has supported individuals and families through his work at social service nonprofit organizations in the Twin Cities for nearly 20 years. He started college as a teen father and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Human Services Administration after 13 years of grit and perseverance. He and his wife Twila have nine children and believe in walking with people over the long run to help them get to where they want to go. Prior to joining Avenues, Zachary held positions with Way to Grow, FATHER Project, St. Paul Urban League, MELD for Hmong Parent & Young Dads Program, YouthLink/St. Barnabas, African American Family Services, YMCA 24/Seven, and the Catholic Charities Young Fathers Program. Zachary and his family are dedicated to helping build the only respite and hospice home for children in the Midwest.



### Rachel Blair

#### Marketing and Communications Specialist

Rachel joined Avenues in July of 2016. She coordinates Avenues' external communications, including the nonprofit's social media, website and newsletter, and works with all programs to achieve Avenues' advancement goals. Before joining Avenues, Rachel interned as a Communications Specialist for Ramsey County's Public Health Department, promoting business recycling in Ramsey and Washington Counties. She also worked at Washburn Center for Children, where her interest in nonprofit work and youth mental health began. Rachel is a recent graduate of the University of Minnesota with a B.A. in journalism and mass communication - Go Gophers!



## Michael Lee

### Youth Advocate & Engagement Specialist

Michael Lee rejoined Avenues in July of 2016. He is a Norwegian-American writer, performer and previously a Youth Counselor with Minneapolis Avenues from 2010 - 2015. As a writer he has received grants and scholarships from the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, the Minnesota State Arts Board, the LOFT Literary Center, and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council. After completing his Ed.M at Harvard University (with a focus on arts education, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory) he is excited to return



to Avenues as the Youth Advocate and Engagement Specialist. Michael believes in the power of narrative and the importance of youth crafting and owning their own stories. In his spare time you can find him reading or writing. He is currently working on his first book of poems.

## Elaine Woods

### Program Manager, Avenues for Young Families

Elaine has been named the new Program Manager of the Avenues for Young Families Program. Her responsibility will be to help young families move from homelessness to a thriving future. The program will provide young families with housing and intensive services such as independent living skills, building healthy relationships, parenting services, continued education and employment services. Elaine joined Avenues in December 2011. She has over 20 years of experience working in domestic violence, housing, case management, family advocacy, immigration, leasing, property management, and youth. She attended Metro State University and Normandale Community College, studying Community Development and Property Management.



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## Employment Opportunities at Avenues

Check out our [website](#) for complete descriptions of the following positions at Avenues for Homeless Youth:

- Youth Counselor
- Education and Employment Specialist

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## Wish Lists with Amazon, Walmart and Target

Did you know that Avenues has wish lists on Amazon, Walmart and Target? Our wish lists are updated with all of our current needs, including socks, underwear, pajamas, lounge clothing, umbrellas and backpacks. We especially need sizes medium through XL. Through Walmart, Target and Amazon, our wish list items are shipped directly to us, making it easier for you to donate. **Check out our wish lists: [Amazon](#) [Walmart](#) [Target](#)**

You can also support Avenues through AmazonSmile. With eligible AmazonSmile purchases, Amazon will donate .5% of the the purchase to a nonprofit of your choice with no additional cost or hassle to you. For more information on AmazonSmile, [click here](#).

To learn how you can donate, contact Hailey Alexander at 612-844-1217  
or [halexander@avenuesforyouth.org](mailto:halexander@avenuesforyouth.org).

[Click here to read our entire wishlist of current needs.](#)

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Avenues for Homeless Youth | 612.844.2001 | [www.avenuesforyouth.org](http://www.avenuesforyouth.org)

