

## Avenues Board Holds Annual Elections

The Avenues Board of Directors held its annual elections in October. We are incredibly fortunate to draw the individuals we do to serve on our Board. We consider them giants in community leadership, both individually and collectively. We welcome their careful guidance, fiduciary oversight and advocacy for Avenues in its role as a youth-serving organization in the community.

### Elected as Officers for 2015-16:

- President -- Godson Sowah, Advisory Consultant, Ernst & Young
- Vice President -- Doris Pagelkopf, Nonprofit Consultant
- Treasurer -- Kojo Baafi, Director of Risk Consulting, KPMG LLP
- Secretary -- Erin Campbell, Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Administration



Godson Sowah

### New Directors Elected For Two-Year Terms:

- Julio Acosta, Global Consumer Insights, Hispanic Market, General Mills & Owner, Soupanadas
- Eric Anderson, Stewardship Director, Minneapolis Foundation
- Brian Gilligan (returning to the board), Director of Credit Account Management, Bluestem Brands
- Alexis Kantor, Director, Product Development, Target
- Dr. Rhamy Magid, Pediatrician, Hennepin County Medical Center
- Claire Wilson, Executive Director, Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs

### Continuing Directors:

- Robert Brandt, Ombudsperson / Vice Provost, Walden University
- Shawn Gensch, Chief Marketing Officer, Sprouts Farmers Market
- Jenny Javitch, MSW, LGSW, Director of Education and Enrichment, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Twin Cities
- Natalie Johnson Lee, Director, Girls in Action and Principal Consultant, Power of People Leadership Institute
- Kate Nilan Uding, Attorney, Gray Plant Mooty
- Chuck Tombarge, Chief Public Relations Officer & Deputy Chief of Staff, University of Minnesota

We are grateful to these gifted and dedicated individuals for their service to Avenues and the youth we support. And we look forward to a very productive year!

## Remembrance of Eric Gilseth, Avenues Board Member and Champion

Avenues and the community lost a dear friend and hero when Eric Gilseth passed away on August 4. He died unexpectedly after winning a 4-year battle against Hodgkin's Lymphoma that included two bone marrow transplants. We deeply miss Eric's energy, dedication, creativity, optimism and smarts.



Eric Gilseth

Eric Gilseth joined the Avenues Board of Directors in September 2008 at the young age of 24, having sought us out, and immediately started making his impact. Eric led a re-branding of Avenues through his marketing agency. He helped create our annual bowling fundraiser -- IncrediBowl -- then always assembled at least 20 friends to bowl. His team always showed up late, but in costume...and always won the team spirit award. They weren't really in it for the bowling. They were there to support homeless youth and have a great time doing it.

Eric was friends with everyone. He had an infectious spirit that is missed literally by thousands of friends.

**IncrediBowl will be held January 31, 2016 in Eric's memory.** Please mark your calendars and plan to join us.



## Dear Avenues Community:

Every one of the homeless youth we support at Avenues is on a unique and very personal journey. All have faced (and will continue to face) huge barriers and challenges that would bring most adults to their knees.

Our role at Avenues is to provide these young people appropriate and supportive spaces -- literally and figuratively -- so they can feel safe and stable enough to visualize a different future for themselves. Their work to overcome barriers and move ahead is very hard. We can't do it for them, nor should we. After all, it's their journey, not ours.

We strive to help youth identify what they want for themselves, then help them go for it. We do that by offering a safe place to live, addressing crisis and basic needs, and bringing together caring people and programs to support them on their journey.

In this newsletter, we introduce you to a few people and organizations that have elected to support homeless youth at a critical juncture on their journeys. These are just a few examples...we could write about hundreds more.

With the opening of Brooklyn Avenues, we are now able to help 250 homeless youth every year. We are proud of our growth and very grateful to you for supporting it.

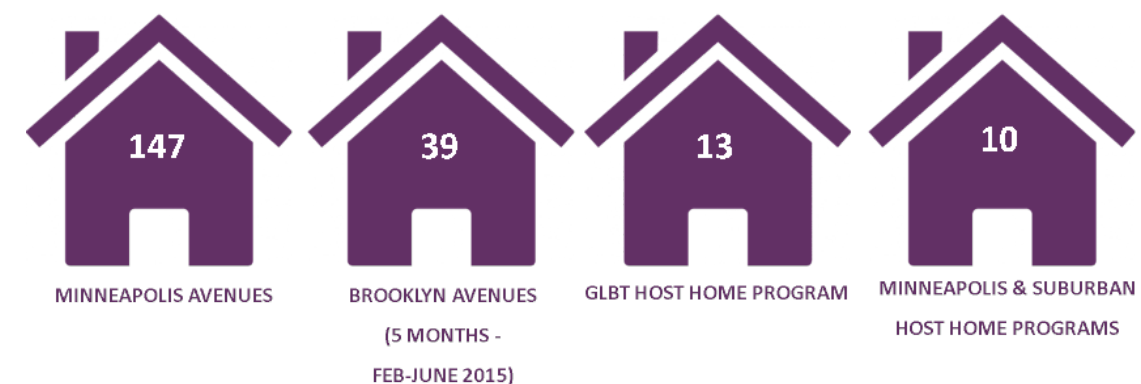
But thousands of kids are still homeless every night, so we can't stop yet. Working with our public and private partners, Avenues is planning two new programs to support youth experiencing homelessness -- a new short-term host home program for LGBTQ youth (see page 3) and a housing program for homeless young families (more on that later).

As always, we will look to you -- our community of supporters and advocates -- to help sustain our existing programs and bring these new programs to reality. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Deborah Loon  
Executive Director

### YOUTH SUPPORTED IN THE 12 MONTHS ENDING JUNE 30, 2015



## Youth Story

She arrived at Avenues afraid to even leave her room. The traumas of her young life and overwhelming fears made even having a meal with staff and other youth extremely difficult.

In time, with support from Avenues staff and feeling some stability, Jasmine developed a plan. She started by going for short walks in the neighborhood with staff. That progressed to walking to the nearby pharmacy, first with staff and then alone, to get medications filled and do some shopping. Next was a visit to a local store to apply for a job. She didn't get the job, but she later heard about a program called Job Corps. In the computer lab, she did some research, then asked staff to help her apply.

Today, Jasmine is a member of Job Corps, pursuing her educational goals and gaining work experience.

## Avenues Promotes Dr. Zayed Ahmed to Program Director

We are pleased to announce the promotion of Zayed Lamu Ahmed, PhD, LPCC, LICSW to Avenues' position of Program Director. Zayed joined Avenues team two years ago as a part-time mental health therapist and clinical consultant. In that role, she saw youth in individual and group therapy sessions, supervised mental health interns and led weekly clinical case consultation meetings with our team of case managers.



Dr. Zayed Ahmed

Zayed received her Doctorate of Philosophy in Psychology from the Sofia University in Palo Alto, CA. She holds the licensures of Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) and Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW). Along with her strong individuality and enthusiasm for working with youth, she brings with her experiences working in various counseling capacities at The Emily Program, Face to Face, Kente Circle, Amicus, and Family and Children's Services.

## Partner Profile: Brooklyn Bridge Alliance

During the summer of 2015, five youth from Brooklyn Avenues participated in the BrookLynk summer internship program, coordinated by the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance. All had great experiences while contributing to their workplace. One youth was even hired as an employee after the internship ended.



Rebecca Gilgen

The Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth connects youth ages 10-19 with developing life-skills after-school and during the summer. Through paid internships and other opportunities, the Alliance seeks to match youth with employers so that youth will experience the connection between employment and education. The Alliance also coordinates action-based teams with staff from schools, cities, county and community colleges to change policies, develop new action and work together to build resources.

We recently sat down with the Executive Director of the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance, Rebecca Gilgen, to talk about her organization and its partnership with Avenues.

**Tell me how Brooklyn Bridge Alliance became connected with Brooklyn Avenues?** We connected through organizing by Brooklyn Park Mayor Jeff Lunde to build resources and community investment in Avenues.

**What has your experience been with the partnership?** Very good! We share a commitment and passion for partnering with young people to get to a safe, supportive and promising next step in their lives. We have formally partnered to connect Avenues youth to BrookLynk – our paid summer internship program. The impact of this inaugural summer was tremendous. Five of the 29 youth participants in 2015 came to the program from Avenues.

It is my hope that we can expand youth internship opportunities and improve youth pathways to college or career. I would also like to see our organizations partner to better understand what happens to young people when they experience violence, and how our community can support them.

## United Way Arise Project Funds GLBT Host Home Case Manager

*"Having in-house case management provided by a seasoned youth worker who can meet youth where they are at (physically and otherwise) is truly a blessing." -- Rocki Simões, GLBT Host Home Program Manager*

That blessing? Kelly Brazil. On any day, Kelly supports 10 LGBTQ youth living with hosts in the GLBT Host Home Program and another 10-12 youth who are homeless or in aftercare.



Kelly Brazil

While Kelly has a desk at Minneapolis Avenues, she's usually out and about, meeting with youth at coffee shops, libraries, and community rooms. Brazil prefers to be accessible to the young people supported by the GLBT Host Home Program. Kelly says, "I check up with them about their goal plans, help them make a goal plan, introduce them to new resources. They need me to help them navigate a system like getting an ID, going to court, getting a home, helping them get to appointments... the list goes on and on and on. Sometimes they just want to have a cup of coffee and talk about life."

The United Way Arise Project funds the vital work Kelly Brazil does for the youth of the GLBT Host Home Program. We spoke with the Arise Project's Leadership Giving Manager, **Christina Woodlee**, about the project's relationship with our host home program.



**How did the Arise Project and the GLBT Host Home Program initially connect?** As we were exploring potential focus areas, we connected with

Rocki at Avenues. Her candid feedback (combined with that from some of the other agencies) helped us to narrow our focus to LGBTQ homeless youth. Once the focus was identified, we then invited Avenues to apply for funding... and the rest is history.

**What are your hopes for the future of the Arise Project?** We've only just begun! The energy, passion and commitment of Arise members and donors is incredible – and continues to grow! Our commitment to *Homeless Youth No More* remains; leveraging funding and volunteer leadership and engagement together we'll continue to make sure that youth have safe, stable places to go in their time of need.

## Avenues and Partners to Launch Pilot Project for LGBTQ Youth

Up to 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer). But there are very few culturally-specific programs to support them. We're pleased to give you – our loyal supporters – a sneak preview of a new project launching soon to support more LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

Avenues is working with partners to design a new continuum of services to add capacity and demonstrate how to end LGBTQ youth homelessness. The collaborative pilot will launch in early 2016. Through it:

1. Avenues will create a new program to provide respite housing through short-term host homes and case management support for youth experiencing homelessness
2. Reclaim! will provide individual and family counseling to address mental health needs and strengthen families with a goal of family reunification when possible
3. The Link will provide rapid rehousing in apartments with rent subsidies and supportive services for youth who cannot be reunified with family
4. Point Source Youth will provide overall coordination and lead a comprehensive evaluation.

Fundraising is underway for this new program. Staff and host home recruitment will start soon. To learn more, contact Deb Loon at 612-844-2002 or Ryan Berg at 612-844-2014.