



# AVENUES

F O R Y O U T H

**2021 Report to Community**





Avenues' Team Building Event  
In August 2021

## WHO WE ARE

Avenues for Youth provides housing, emergency shelter, and holistic supports to youth experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. Whether a youth needs a place to stay for one night or one year and a half, we're here for youth 24/7 during this part of their journey. In all of our work, Avenues centers trauma-informed care and social justice.

### Mission

Avenues partners with youth experiencing homelessness to achieve their dreams.

### Vision

A community where all youth flourish.

### Values

Equity, Anti-oppression, Respect + Dignity, Community, Trust, and Liberation

### Our Programs



**Minneapolis Avenues** provides transitional housing and shelter to 21 youth at a time.

**Brooklyn Avenues** provides transitional housing and shelter to 12 youth at a time.



**ConneQT** provides housing to LGBTQI+ youth in host homes.

**Abule** provides collective housing to BIPOC youth in community members homes.



**Young Families, Our Future** provides apartment housing to youth-led families and their children.

*"I wanna open a hair shop and with some of the money I wanna give back."*

*- a dream of a youth at Avenues*



## ADAPT, OVERCOME, THRIVE

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Dear Friends,

A common question at Avenues is, "What about youth inspires you?"

**Often that answer is resiliency.** This year two youth received full-time college scholarships, and many others graduated, attended classes, and achieved their GEDs. Other youth completed parenting classes, worked on their credit scores, and found new jobs. Youth at Avenues made progress on their goals and continued to work toward their dreams.

Youth did this despite the vast and tremendous barriers they face. In a normal year, these achievements are inspiring. In a year like this one, inspiring doesn't quite cover it. I am truly in awe of the staff and youth at Avenues. Their ability to **adapt, overcome, and thrive** despite the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest in our communities is beyond inspiring.

Everything was more difficult this year. As the public health emergency continued, so did our safety measures that distanced us and made the day-to-day work of running a housing program harder. Things that youth work so hard towards, like attending school and maintaining a job, were nearly impossible with our communities shutting down. It also heightened young people's anxiety, and made the disparities in our health care system alarmingly visible. Our community endured another traumatic and devastating murder of a Black community member. As youth and staff peacefully protested, stories of police brutality emerged. Trauma on top of trauma.

Our work had to adapt to overcome the barriers that this year brought us. Thanks to community and dedicated staff, we were able to make sure youth had what they needed to thrive. I'm proud to say that, during these painful times, 91% of youth at Avenues reported that they had the resources they needed.

With your help, we'll continue to show up for youth in whatever way they tell us they need it. Thank you for showing up for youth and being a vital part of Avenues' community.

Sincerely,

Katherine Meerse, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

# ADAPTING HEALTH AND SAFETY

When the pandemic started last spring, staff sprang into action to alter our programs to protect the health and safety of youth and staff. While these protocols have altered the number of youth Avenues usually supports annually, they have ensured that our doors stay open 24/7 to youth. To protect youth, we:



Reduced three person bedrooms to two person rooms at Minneapolis Avenues to allow for social distancing. Emergency beds were also re-purposed to quarantine space for sick or COVID testing youth.



Required masks in all common spaces and reduced the amount of traffic in our spaces. While volunteer opportunities were limited this year, we welcomed back volunteers for groundskeeping.



Moved to online when in-person wasn't possible or unsafe. This includes moving our ConneQT host home training online, as well as virtual visits with hosts instead of in-person.

*"Going into it, I was anticipating having a really long period of trust building with youth. But so far, youth have been wanting to talk. It's felt really positive. The partnership between me and Jeannie (Avenues Nurse) and the case managers has felt really solid so far."*

– Dr. Rhamy Magid, Avenues On-Site Physician

This past year has shown us the life-threatening effects of systemic racism in healthcare. COVID-19 disproportionately impacted communities of color and 83% of the youth Avenues supported this year identified as BIPOC. **These disparities, and the increasing health needs of youth experiencing homelessness, led Avenues to add Dr. Rhamy Magid, a registered pediatric physician, to our integrative health and wellness team.** He works in collaboration with Avenues Nurse, Mental Health Team, and Youth Advocate and Engagement Specialists to provide wrap-around holistic and culturally representative healthcare support.

In addition to supporting youth at Avenues, Dr. Magid works at Hennepin Healthcare as a Pediatric Generalist and heads the Pediatric Gender and Sexual Health Clinic, which serves the health care needs of youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, gender-questioning, and gender-nonconforming. As part of Rhamy's work at Avenues, he'll connect youth with trusted healthcare professionals that they can continue a relationship with beyond Avenues.





*"Avenues gave me the chance to focus on myself. I got the chance to grow and become the adult I want to be. They gave me food, a warm bed, a place to stay, but most of all people who love and support me!"*

*- Judy, a youth at Avenues*

## WHO WE SUPPORT

Across the state last year, youth providers received fewer referrals from outside agencies. While many factors play a part in this, we found that the pandemic caused some youth to stay in or return to potentially unstable situation. The eviction moratorium temporarily prevented homelessness for other youth and families. Schools, whose teachers and social workers normally refer many youth to Avenues, were mainly remote last year, causing fewer referrals. As schools return to in-person and the eviction moratorium ends, we anticipate an influx of need for housing and supportive services.

*"My dream is to be happy. I hope more programs supporting youth come about."*

*- a dream of a youth at Avenues*



**254**

young people found  
housing and support at  
Avenues



**91%**

of youth were 18-24  
years old.  
9% were 16-17.



**82%**

of youth identify as Black,  
Indigenous, and youth of  
color (BIPOC).

**61%**  
female

**34%**  
male

**4%**  
transgender

**2%**  
gender non-  
conforming

## OUR IMPACT

Avenues for Youth's doors were open to youth 24/7 last year. Avenues housed or sheltered 141 youth and children, and supported an additional 113 youth with one on one guidance. Across our programs we supported:



**61**

youth in transitional housing



**63**

youth in shelter



**6**

youth in host homes



**11**

youth-led families in apartments

*"My dream is to be a great mother to my two children, have my dream job of a nurse, get my credit at a good score, and have a savings account for me. Also, that my two children live life."*

*"I really recommend young families to join Avenues. They really treat you with love, care, and also help you get your life on track. They teach you how to get ready for the real world."*

– Alexis, a mom in Avenues Young Families Program

**4.5 / 5**  
staff  
helpfulness

**4.7 / 5**  
staff re-  
spectfulness

Youth rate Avenue on a scale of 1 (worst) to 5 (best). Check out the results among those who took the exit survey.

**4.5 / 5**  
Likelihood  
to refer a  
friend

**91% of youth said  
they received the  
supports they  
needed.**





After surveying youth on what they really wanted and needed during the pandemic, Target donated gym equipment, books, journals, and art supplies to youth, including a custom made meditation coloring book.

This winter, the Slininger-Christianson Family purchased over 50 books written by BIPOC and LGBTQI+ authors to refresh Avenues' libraries! Youth got new books and they were purchased from Black Garnet Books, a Black-owned book store.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

As Avenues adapted to the new COVID-19 normal, our partners rose up to make sure youth could thrive during a difficult time. To ensure youth had entertainment during lock down, our partners donated art supplies, books, journals and board games. To keep youth mentally and physically strong, our partners amped up our on-site gyms with treadmills, yoga mats, and weight sets. And to continue supporting Avenues, our community created online and distanced fundraisers, and attended Avenues first ever virtual Building on Dreams event.

*"With radical love at the center, we can create the new policies, new procedures, and the new practices that center community. We create home."*

*– Commissioner Rebecca Lucero, 2020 Building on Dreams Keynote Speaker*

In June 2020, Avenues' friend, Mark Schneider, organized a virtual 6K event to support the 6,000 youth who experience homelessness in Minnesota. The event raised over \$10,000. Pictured in the top right photo are 6K runners.

This year, more than 400 guests attended our 8th annual Building on Dreams event, raising \$103,000 for youth experiencing homelessness. The Poetic Diaspora, pictured bottom right, kick-started the event by performing "Dream Big." Thank you to all who attended, and our presenting sponsor, Alerus Mortgage!



**141**  
volunteers gave  
600 volunteer  
hours this year



# FINANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The financials below are for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021. View our latest audited financial statements and Form 990 at [avenuesforyouth.org/financials](https://avenuesforyouth.org/financials).

Revenue	
Contributions	\$1,388,864
Government Grants	\$1,101,330
PPP Loan Forgiveness	\$366,400
Program Services	\$241,651
In-Kind Contributions	\$102,603
Special Event Revenue	\$95,300
Investment Income	\$2,174
Other Income	\$1,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$3,299,322</b>
Expenses	
Programs	\$2,182,874
Fundraising	\$393,872
Management & General	\$360,355
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,937,101</b>
Net Assets	
Beginning Net Assets	\$3,767,333
Ending Net Assets	\$4,129,554
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$362,221</b>

## OUR LEADERSHIP

Katherine Meerse, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

Zayed Ahmed, Ph.D.  
Director of Programs

Beth Haney  
Director of Operations

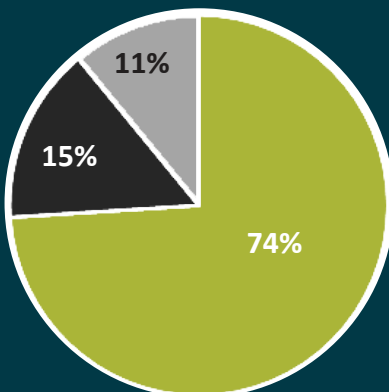
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Director of Development and Communications

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## PROGRAM EXPENSES



- Shelter & Transitional Living
- Community-based Housing
- Rapid-rehousing





*"As a teacher, I am constantly inspired by many young people's drive for fixing the problems of the world. If they see something wrong, they'll throw everything they've got at making it better."*

*-Chad Kuyper, a Dream Maker Society Member*



## IT TAKES COMMUNITY

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It takes a community to support one youth, let alone hundreds of youth. Without the support of our community, Avenues wouldn't be able to provide a home and life-changing supports to young people experiencing homelessness. Every contribution, from \$5 to \$50,000 helps us ensure that we're available to youth 24/7. Thank you for your support.

### Institutional Giving

Includes civic, corporate, faith, and foundation giving. Anonymous gifts not reflected.

3M  
3M Foundation  
3M Pride  
Abbott Laboratories - EGC  
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Cord Sets  
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Avenues adapted our holiday program to ensure youth had a special holiday season during the pandemic. Thanks to generous donors, every youth received a holiday bag full of gifts.



Douglas and Carol Skanse  
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TopLine Federal Credit Union hosted a two, month long donation drives. Thanks to their efforts, 55 bedding sets were put together for youth in Avenues' programs.



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Upper Room volunteers spent a day at Minneapolis Avenues to help with yard work. Volunteers willing to get their hands dirty make a huge difference at Avenues and help keep our houses feeling like home.



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Every year, Avenues serves over 30,000 meals, plus snacks, to youth living at Brooklyn Avenues and Minneapolis Avenues. O’Nika’s Angels food donation helped stock our shelves and give food out at our drop in hours.



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MTO Shahmaghsoudi School donated face masks and hand sanitizers for youth during the surge of cases this year. Thank you for helping keep youth safe during the COVID-19 pandemic!



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Carlson for Change at the University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management volunteered their time at Avenues. They helped us get ready for winter last fall by doing yard work.



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**Great care has been taken to acknowledge all of Avenues' supporters in FY21. We apologize for any inadvertent errors and omissions. Please contact us with any corrections. Thank you.**

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