YOUTH MATTER
**Youth matter.** At Avenues for Youth (Avenues), we keep young people at the center of everything we do. Youth are the drivers of their journeys, and their experience guides our programs and practices. When we affirm a young person’s intrinsic value, it supports them in pursuing their dreams.

This last year, anti-trans legislation swept the country and attacked the core identity of many youth. ConneQT, our community-based host home program for LGBTQI+ youth, saw an influx of Trans youth coming to Minnesota to seek out refuge. With your support, we were able to show up for these young people in a way that demonstrates we are proud of who they are authentically. Young people in the ConneQT program found jobs, built community, and moved into their own apartments. For the third year in a row 100% of ConneQT youth exited the program to safe and stable housing!

**We know that Black lives matter.** This is not just a slogan for Avenues, but a statement of truth. Nearly 86% of the youth we partner with identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC). It matters that young people understand the inequitable conditions that create extra barriers for BIPOC youth. It’s important that we stand in solidarity with youth and are here to identify resources and opportunities as they journey to achieve their dreams.

**Our staff also matter.** They care deeply about the youth and walk alongside them on their journeys to housing. They are critical to the success of Avenues. This year we are proud to implement another pay-equity increase for all direct services staff as a demonstration of their value.

**And you matter.** Your financial support, your helping hands, your advocacy, your labor, and your deep care and compassion matter. You care about young people, and you care about your community. Without you, nothing we do is possible. We honor and appreciate your contributions.

As Avenues positions itself for growth in 2024 and beyond, **we are rooted in affirming that every young person is valuable.** We are honored to be on this journey with you as we endeavor to end youth homelessness one young person at a time.

Sincerely,

Katherine Meerse, Ph.D.
Executive Director

P.S. I’d love to show you around Avenues. If you’d like a tour, please send me an email at kmeerse@avenuesforyouth.org


**WHO WE ARE**

**AVENUES FOR YOUTH**
Avenues partners with youth experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. Whether youth need a place to stay for one night or a year and a half, we’re here for youth in this part of their journey. Avenues keeps youth at the center of our work by using a trauma-informed approach and emphasizing social justice.

- **Mission:** Avenues partners with youth experiencing homelessness to achieve their dreams.
- **Vision:** A community where all youth flourish.
- **Values:** Equity, community, respect and dignity, trust, liberation, and anti-oppression.

**YOUTH ARE RESILIENT, INSPIRING, AND DRIVERS OF THEIR OWN JOURNEY.**

**ALL YOUTH RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING SUPPORTS**

- Basic needs including housing, food, hygiene items, and more.
- Intensive, individualized, one-on-one support (also known as case management).
- Health and wellness support including on-site mental health therapy, as well as physician and nursing care.
- Youth empowerment and engagement activities.
## Our Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MINNEAPOLIS AVENUES</th>
<th>BROOKLYN AVENUES</th>
<th>CONNEQT</th>
<th>YOUNG FAMILIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td></td>
<td>Host Home</td>
<td>Rapid Rehousing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addresses immediate and crisis needs by providing a safe place to stay, nutritious meals, clothing, and more</td>
<td>Community-based, scattered site support in volunteer homes for youth who identify LGBTQI+</td>
<td>Scattered site housing in apartments for young parents and their children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners with youth to address long-term goals related to stable housing, career, education, and wellness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Stay</strong></td>
<td>Shelter up to 30 days</td>
<td>Up to a year and sometimes longer as needed.</td>
<td>Up to a year and sometimes longer as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing up to 18 months.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ages of Youth</strong></td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>16-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># of Youth Housed at a Time</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operating Since</strong></td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Our Proograms**

![Image of colorful backgrounds with people engaged in activities]
Each year, Avenues tracks youth exits to safe and stable housing across programs. In FY23, Avenues began measuring youth progress in three additional areas – skills, well-being, and connections. The results below show how youth are progressing in their journeys:

- **78%** of youth exited to Safe and Stable Housing
- **92%** of youth improved in Well-Being
- **92%** of youth gained Life Skills and Wellness Skills
- **91%** of youth improved Connections with Caring Adults and the Community
DEMOGRAPHICS

Avenues recognizes that certain young people are overrepresented among those facing homelessness due to systems of oppression that include racism, homophobia, and transphobia. Without addressing these systems, homelessness will persist. Of youth that Avenues supports, 86% identify as BIPOC, and 42%** identify as LGBTQI+. Avenues provided support, housing, and resources to youth from Hennepin County and the Twin Cities Metro Area.

*Children of young parents of the Young Families program.
**An estimated 42% of youth identified as LGBTQI+. It is not required that youth disclose this information.
OUR COMMUNITY MATTERS
Our community matters. It’s why we advocated alongside the Youth Services Network at the state capitol to secure record funding for the Homeless Youth Act. It’s why we take input and adapt our programs to meet young people’s ever-evolving needs. Last year, we made organizational improvements that reflect the value of youth, staff, and our community.

YOUNG FAMILIES IS GROWING
Each year in Minnesota, over 13,300 youth experience homelessness. It’s estimated that 35% of these youth are parents themselves. Avenues’ Young Families program uses apartment-based housing to provide safe, affordable, and supportive homes for young parents, ages 18 to 24, and their children. With our support, young families transition out of homelessness, achieve housing stability, and stay united with their children.

Because the need is still increasing, we are growing the Young Families program’s capacity from 12 to 24 families at a time!

AGE CHANGE AT MINNEAPOLIS AVENUES
In 2022, we changed the age range at the Minneapolis Avenues location from 16 to 21, to 18 to 24 due to the lack of shelter specifically designed for young adults. On any given night in Hennepin County, there are at least 80 people between the ages of 18 to 24 who are staying in adult shelters. Adult shelters are an important part of our overall homeless response system, but they are not the best option for youth. Adult shelters are often overnight only, leaving youth on the streets during the day, and can be dangerous for youth.

In changing the age range at Minneapolis Avenues, we recognize the specific needs of youth in their early years of adulthood and provide the space and resources needed to meet their goals for their future.
**PAY EQUITY INCREASE**

Over the past three years, Avenues has focused on wage equity. Last year, we implemented another pay increase to reflect this value. Our three-year plan for wage increases honors Avenues’ core value of equity and helps us to stay competitive in a tight labor market. As increased wages contribute to staff retention, we’re seeing greater stability within programs, providing greater stability for youth.

**NEW STRATEGIC PLAN**

Avenues for Youth has launched a new strategic plan that was created by Avenues’ leadership, managers, and the Board of Directors. Knowing there remains a significant unmet need in our community, Avenues for Youth will focus on sustainable growth, while keeping social justice at the center of our work. Our strategic goals are:

- Grow and support programs grounded in youth voice and data.
- Focus on staff well-being and development to advance equity and support youth.
- Foster, design, and construct people-centered spaces that are trauma-informed and energy efficient.
- Increase resources and capacity to meet the needs of youth.
- Intentionally incorporate values - equity, community, respect + dignity, trust, liberation, anti-oppression- into daily work and processes.
Solar energy decreases our carbon footprint, offers climate education for the community, supports green jobs, provides reliable, clean energy, and lessens climate injustices. Because of going solar, we’re also saving on our monthly utility bills, which will be reinvested in advancing our mission and supporting the community. We are grateful to Hammond Climate Solutions Foundation’s Solar Moonshot program, The Midwest Renewable Energy Association, TruNorth Solar, Xcel Energy Minnesota, and Avenues’ advocate Ted Redmond for helping to make our solar dream a reality.
“I’m motivated now, now I am on grind mode. I only see myself trying to elevate and be a better person for myself.”
—DAVIANA, YOUNG PARENT AND FORMER YOUTH OF THE YOUNG FAMILIES PROGRAM

“I never thought I’d be in this place. But I wake up every day and realize, okay, I’m closer to what I want. I have ten little siblings to look after. I have to be a leader for them. I got to show them that there’s a brighter meaning.”
—MESSIAH, FORMER YOUTH OF BROOKLYN AVENUES

“Today I have an appointment with a therapist. I’m probably going to get a therapist and eventually a psychiatrist. [My Youth Advocate has] been helping me get doctor’s appointment, and housing.”
—RAVEN, FORMER YOUTH OF BROOKLYN AVENUES
“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.”

—ALEXIS, YOUNG PARENT AND FORMER YOUTH OF THE YOUNG FAMILIES PROGRAM

DREAM MAKER SOCIETY
Avenues for Youth partners with youth experiencing homelessness to achieve their dreams. Our Dream Maker Society provides a lasting impact on the lives of youth and lays a financial foundation that ensures our work with youth continues. Dream Makers are a group of individuals who commit to give $2,000 or more over two years, or just $84 a month.
COMMUNITY
PARTNERS
MATTER
COMMUNITY PARTNERS MATTER
Avenues for Youth relies on volunteers and community support to keep the houses looking great, stock the closets with hygiene products and welcome baskets, and spread awareness of our work. Over the last year, Avenues was fortunate enough to receive support from many companies, congregations, and civic organizations.

15 Community Partners, 454 total volunteers, and 1670 total hours of volunteer service.

All support is deeply appreciated, and we would like to spotlight a few of many notable partner activities:

BOKSER HOME - because comfort matters
Bokser Home has become an annual partner to Avenues for Youth, providing all programs with bedding needs. Started and located right in Minneapolis, this premium bedding company centers itself on quality, value, and responsible sourcing. It is a company that cares about its community and is deeply invested in making sure every youth at Avenues sleeps warmly and soundly.

Each quarter, Bokser supplies the houses with all of our bedding needs. The duvets, covers, sheets, pillows, and towels are top quality. All youth exiting Avenues get to take these items with them to ensure they rest comfortably.

L’OREAL- because dignity matters
This famous beauty brand is a new supporter that brought volunteers and organizational style to Avenues’ storage closets. Over the course of several hours the twenty-six volunteers cleaned, inventoried, re-organized and re-stocked the health and hygiene closets. L’Oreal created a dignified space for youth to access any needed resources. Additionally, L’Oreal made a significant gift to help with the general operations of the organization.
PAR SYSTEMS- because Pride matters
This local company is another first-time supporter within a family of companies (the Pohlad Companies) that have long supported Avenues. During June’s Pride month, PAR Systems generously hosted Avenues on their campus for a day of activities and festivities. Their team created hundreds of Pride “goody-bags” that Avenues distributed to youth during the Twin Cities Pride festival. Also, ConneQT Program Manager, Ryan Berg, led a company-wide conversation about LGBTQI+ youth experiencing homelessness.

TARGET- because a warm welcome matters
Again, this year, Target teams supported Avenues in a variety of ways. Target of North St. Paul organized a significant donation drive that collected health and hygiene items, while the Target Volunteer Council hosted an on-campus event with over 50 volunteers who built welcome baskets for youth entering Avenues programs. Target also made a generous contribution to Avenues through Target Circle!

HOLY NATIVITY AND PRINCE OF PEACE - because celebration matters
Local congregations sponsored birthday celebrations for all youth of the shelter and transitional living programs. Since January 2023, Avenues has been able to provide cakes, decorations, birthday cards, and gifts to ensure that every young person is celebrated on their special day!
“I’ve been working with staff about getting jobs, finding housing, and trying to move forward from this situation that I’m in... My dream job though is to travel to different hotel resorts around the world and give them reviews. I would love that.”

—TIA, FORMER YOUTH OF AVENUES
In 2023 we celebrated the 10th anniversary of Building on Dreams at Glass House, engaging over 300 people. The event brought together local leaders, community partners, board members, volunteers, and donors to celebrate and raise critical funds for Avenues for Youth. Thank you to our emcee, Shayla Reaves, our keynote speaker, Princess Titus, and Known MPLS for making the day extra special!

THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 BUILDING ON DREAMS SPONSORS

PRESENTING
Luther Brookdale Mazda
Luther Brookdale Mitsibushi

SUPPORTER
Alerus

ADVOCATE
Allina Health

PARTNERS
Anderson Realty
Bokser Home
Comcast Corporation
Connexus Credit Union
EY
Faegre Drinker
Main Street America Insurance
Right at Home
Sunrise Banks
Timberland Partners

FRIENDS
Giant Flowers by Di Mahoney, Ulrich, Christiansen & Russ
Metro Sales Inc.
Mytech Partners
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Reax Results No Place Like Home
Riverbridge
Schatz Real Estate Group
Topline Financial Credit Union

2023 HOST COMMITTEE
Sam Blackwell
Corey Falls
Rachelle Haroldson
Molly Leutz
Missi Odden
Vicki Roscoe Erickson
Faith Ross
Donna Williams
Chuck Tombarge
LEADERSHIP

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Jenna Shermoen
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Zayed Ahmed, PhD, LPCC, LICSW – Director of Research, Evaluation, and Education
Melissa Cuff – Director of Development & Communications
Beth Haney, Ph. D. – Director of Finance & Operations
Rachel Hatch – Director of Programs
Thank you to our staff who create safe and affirming spaces for youth each and every day so that youth can achieve their dreams.

Staff Retreat - The Avenues team had a fun-filled day at Charlson Meadows this summer. It’s so important to have this time to connect and strengthen relationships.

Ice Cream Social - Staff gathered at Brooklyn Avenues for an ice cream social and much laughter ensued.
### Financials

For the 2023 fiscal year, July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. View our latest 990 and audited financial statements online at avenuesforyouth.org/financials. Thank you to the generous donors, volunteers, and supporters who contributed during the fiscal year 2023!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REVENUE</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>$1,588,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Grants</td>
<td>$1,314,308</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Income</td>
<td>$245,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Kind Contributions</td>
<td>$588,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avenues Events (net of cost)</td>
<td>$112,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>$35,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Income</td>
<td>$1,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,885,502</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENSES</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>$2,476,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$506,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management &amp; General</td>
<td>$386,846</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,369,811</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NET ASSETS</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Net Assets</td>
<td>$4,025,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending Net Assets</td>
<td>$4,541,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$515,691</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROGRAM EXPENSES
SHOWING % OF TOTAL
PROGRAM EXPENSE BUDGET

- SHELTER AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS: 73%
- CONNEQT HOST HOME PROGRAM: 14%
- YOUNG FAMILIES RAPID REHOUSING PROGRAM: 13%

Platinum Transparency 2023
Candid.