A drop-in center for homeless youth, Columbus, Ohio

The OSU Star House is a drop-in center for homeless youth aged 14-24 that has been operating since 2006. We are proud to be a contributing member of the community, and are fortunate to be working with a traditionally underserved population.

Achieving Our Goals

The Star House opened in October 2006 as part of a federally funded research study examining strategies to engage, treat, and reintegrate substance-abusing homeless youth to the mainstream. As we continued to operate the house after the study ended, it became clear that one of the services youth needed most was a safe place to stay during the nighttime hours. We decided to set our sights on providing such a place, and guess what?

We finally made it! At the start of a winter that seemed like it would never end, we officially reached our goal of opening the house 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Thankfully, it was just in time to provide a safe and warm space during the polar vortex, and throughout an exceptionally brutal winter season. Our plan going forward is to continue to be open at all times of day and night, and to be able to provide a safe, welcoming, warm (or sometimes cool) environment for all of our youth.

We are so proud of our student monitors and full time staff for quickly making the adjustment to being open around the clock, as well as on all university holidays for the first time in our history. There were no issues finding coverage for holidays due to the dedication and sacrifice of our employees.

A special thank you must also go out to our amazing volunteers, who really stepped up with donations and direct service hours to provide the best possible service for our youth. We have seen more groups than ever before providing meals and coming in to spend quality time with the youth.

The youth have expressed a lot of appreciation for our new ability to provide a safe and welcoming environment during the nighttime. “A friend told me there was a place to go,” said one Star House youth, aged 22. “To be honest, I don’t know what I’d have done without it.”

One of our youth watching television during our nighttime hours

INSIDE THIS ISSUE…

2 New Staff and New Goals
3 Volunteers and Events
4 Volunteers and Current Needs

About Us

The OSU Star House is a drop-in center for homeless youth aged 14-24 that has been operating since 2006. We are proud to be a contributing member of the community, and are fortunate to be working with a traditionally underserved population.
New Members of the Star House Family

Our New Therapist

Shauna Harrison, LISW-S, joined the Star House as our second full time therapist in December 2013. Shauna is a two-time graduate of OSU and has previously worked as the clinical director of Access Ohio, a community mental health center, as well as a full time therapist. “This program is unique in that it serves a population that has historically been overlooked and underserved, and it is very rewarding to be able to make a difference in the lives of our youth.”

Shauna says that at first it was challenging to be accepted by some of the youth, who may have had negative experiences with service providers in the past. “I spent the first few weeks hanging back and letting the youth approach me when they felt comfortable, rather than jumping in head first.”

New Overnight Staff

It didn’t take long for her to become a trusted member of the Star House staff, and she now feels that Star House guests know she is here for them in a nonjudgmental and supportive way. “Once they got to know me, they opened up about their lives, sometimes sharing some pretty traumatic stories about what they’ve been through. When they get to talk about these things in a safe space, they figure out that their future can be different than their past. It’s like a light goes on for them and they turn a corner. That is why the Star House is so important.”

Still Looking Forward

Achieving one of our loftiest goals of providing 24/7 access to the youth has made it clear that the need for the Star House’s services is growing. Since the beginning of 24-hour operations, we have seen an enormous spike in the amount of youth coming in on a daily basis. Forty to sixty youth a day have been accessing the Star House for the last few months, and the numbers are climbing. While we are elated to be serving a larger portion of the community, the growing population has spotlighted our need to move to a bigger and more adequate facility. We have identified several options and are working to select a new building as soon as possible, and are forging ahead with our capital campaign in order to finance our efforts.
Some Standout Volunteer Efforts

As mentioned earlier, we have had more support from the community than ever before in the areas of meal preparation and direct service hours. We have always said that without supporters from the community such as yourselves, we wouldn’t be able to meet all of the needs of our youth. It is hard to imagine we could have been so successful in our recent undertakings without your generous contributions.

We would love to specifically thank Tom Standish and Danny Sanfillipo for taking time all winter long to re-paint the kitchen (those grease stains are tougher than they look), and the upstairs hallway. Tom and Danny have also acted as our de facto handymen, making repairs to the house and furniture as needed, as well as assisting us in the construction of our outdoor storage area. “It’s important to me to be able to help out around here,” said Standish. “Homeless youth are so often an invisible population.”

On Saturday April 12, Vineyard Church organized a service day that included cleaning up our yard and house, and hosting a cookout for the youth. An army of supporters showed up for the day, and they did an amazing job! The yard looks beautiful, as does the house. There were so many volunteers that they were even able to fix up some of our neighbors yards as well.

OSU Students Give Back

A special acknowledgement is due to Brian Meyerson, who was the first person to volunteer for and commit to coming in regularly during our evening hours. The evenings are possibly the busiest time here at the house, and it has been an enormous help having him around at that time.

We have also had many service groups also volunteer their time and resources these last months. Rachel Podell of Phi Sigma Pi and Sarah Arnold of Alpha Kappa Delta organized their honor fraternities to volunteer with us on weekends for the entire semester. Andy Hall, Kimberlin Trauthwein, and Ian Adams all reached out to us and organized Mack and Canfield Halls to cook for and spend time with the youth. Victoria Williams and her residents have also gone above and beyond, scheduling time to help us in the evenings two nights per week throughout the entire month of April!
Additional Support from the Community

We have seen so much continued support that one page just isn’t enough! Don McCoy and his wife Barbara of Epworth United Methodist Church, one of our longest standing supporters, have continued their weekly donation of bread products and desserts. On the last Wednesday of the month, we have Columbus-based Besa bringing Mikey’s Late Night Slice while really engaging with the youth. Volunteers from the Alkire Road Church of Christ have also committed to bring in a meal on the first Monday of every month. Upper Arlington High School senior Alex Tepley built and installed a bicycle rack in the side yard. Last, but certainly not least, Michelle Gehrt, the Director of Outreach for Crossroads.TV has organized the collection of a plethora of professional clothing to assist our youth in their goals for employment.

Making a Special Request

Due to Star House’s increase in hours and the number of youth being served, we are looking to add more volunteer lunches and dinners throughout the week so that our food budget can stretch to meet the needs of the house. Volunteer meals provide a great opportunity to serve and interact with the youth, and really adds to the homey atmosphere we strive for. It also acts as a reminder to our youth that their community has not forgotten them, and that they, too, are valued members of society. If you or your friends and family would be interested in preparing lunch or dinner for the youth, please contact Sam Masters at masters.104@osu.edu

Our Current Needs

- Men’s boxers (sizes M, L, & XL)
- Women’s underwear (all sizes)
- Disposable razors (double-blade preferred)
- Deodorant
- Shoes and sandals in all sizes
- Flip-Flops
- Book bags or Drawstring Backpacks
- Sunscreen
- Water Bottles
- Gift cards (McDonald’s, Wendy’s, Kroger, etc) in $5 increments
- Spring appropriate clothing
- Easy to carry snacks, such as granola bars
- Over the counter medications such as ibuprofen and non-drowsy cough syrup
- Pregnancy safe medications—Acetaminophen and Chlorpheniramine

*If you would like to be removed from this listserv, or know of someone who would like to be added, please contact Sam Masters at masters.104@osu.edu

OSU Star House

1621 North 4th Street
Columbus, Ohio 43201
Phone: 1-614-299-2101
Toll Free: 1-888-879-3128
www.osustarhouse.com