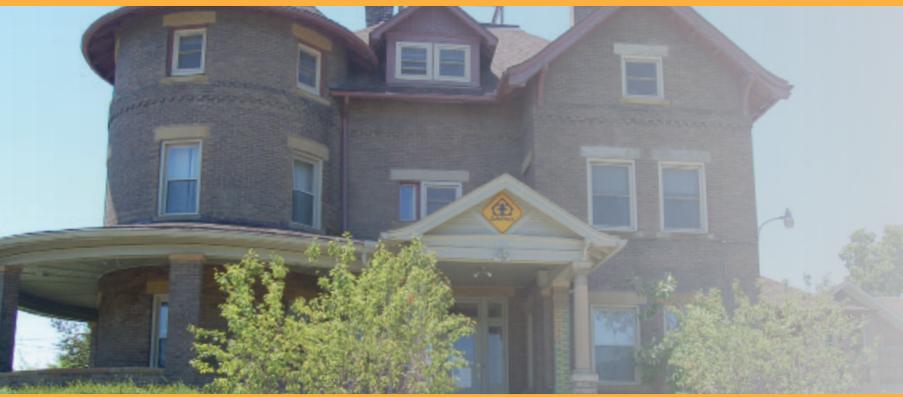




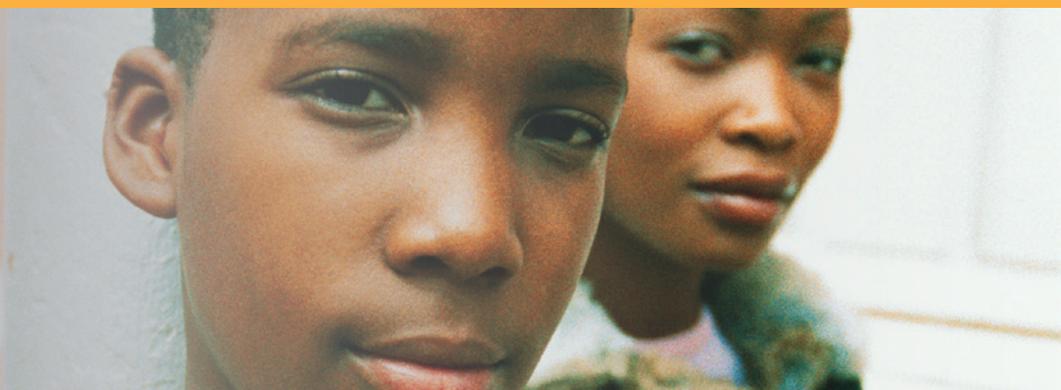
**HUCKLEBERRY HOUSE
2014 ANNUAL REPORT**



A HOUSE WITH A VIEW



**A POWERFUL
PERSPECTIVE ON
OUR COMMUNITY'S
TROUBLED TEENS**



**We see troubled teens differently.
And that makes all the difference.**

When society sees a teen who has run away from home, dropped out of school, become pregnant, or who has had a brush or two with the law, it often thinks, “bad kid.” No more questions asked.

But as Franklin County’s primary provider of shelter and services to runaway and homeless youth, it’s our job at Huckleberry House to look beneath the surface.

And all too often, what we see isn’t pretty.

We discover years of abuse. Violence. Neglect. Drug addiction. Poverty. And homelessness. Serious and often devastating issues that make it difficult, if not impossible, for these young people to measure up to society’s standards for success.

Yet, despite these traumatic circumstances, the **Crisis Shelter**, the **Transitional Living Program**, the **Family Support Program**, and the **Youth Outreach Program** at Huckleberry House are not overflowing with youth who have given up, or who expect the world to make exceptions for them.

Quite the opposite, the young people who come through our doors are fighters and survivors. They each have unique strengths they can leverage to improve their situations. And while they are realistic about their current circumstances, they have a genuine desire for a different future.

We see in these youth a willingness to accept responsibility for their



choices and behavior, along with a fierce determination to overcome the obstacles they face. In turn, we help these young people see that their past does not need to define their future.

Thanks to the many individuals and organizations in our community who see things the way we do, and who believe that troubled teens deserve a second look—and a second chance—Huck House is able to help our community's at-risk and in-crisis teens see a clear path to a better future.

And we are able to give them the support and guidance they need to take the first steps toward the healthier, happier lives they want and deserve.

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Crisis Program

Our view:

When severe family problems heat up, **teens need a safe place to cool down.**

From Huck House's perspective, the best place for a young person is at home with a family that's committed to working through its problems together. But the reality is, teens and families aren't perfect. And some families contend with significant problems, like abuse, neglect, drugs, violence, and poverty that make it difficult or unsafe for teens to stay at home.

When disruptive or dangerous situations escalate at home, teens may have no other safe choice but to remove themselves from the situation. When they do, the Huckleberry House Crisis Shelter offers a safe alternative to the streets, along with the support teens and families need to address their problems and put their families back together.

Crisis Program Snapshot

- The 24/7 Crisis line and 24/7/365 Crisis Shelter provide around-the-clock support for youth ages 12-17 who are experiencing a crisis or who have run away from home.
- The Crisis Shelter provides a safe place to think things over while giving young people hot meals, a warm bed, and access to other necessities like clothing and hygiene items.
- The ultimate goal of the Crisis Program is family reunification. The average length of stay in the shelter is 4-5 days and teens contact their parents/guardian within 24 hours of coming to the shelter.

- Crisis counselors work with teens and their families to address and resolve the problems that bring teens to our door. Services include one-on-one counseling, family counseling, and teen group counseling aimed at strengthening family relationships and reuniting runaway and displaced youth with their families.

Adina's Story

Fitting in and growing up can be difficult for any teenager. But for Adina, who was born in Somalia and came to our country when she was a young teen, the challenges were anything but typical. As a young child, Adina suffered tremendous trauma. She was abused then abandoned by her mother, and

left with her father who was equally abusive and later incarcerated. Adina spent her childhood simply trying to survive while caring for her younger brother.

Fortunately, both Adina and her brother were adopted by a local family and brought to the States a few years ago. However, coping with her traumatic past while trying to adjust to a new family, a new country, and a new culture led to significant conflict with her adoptive parents. With guidance from the adoption agency, Adina's parents brought her to the Crisis Program at Huckleberry House.

A Closer Look

The Huck House Crisis Program counselors and staff recognized in Adina a sincere desire to improve her behavior. However, because of her past, Adina had no other choice but to become fiercely independent and self-supportive at a young age. It was difficult for her to give up some of this autonomy and accept the boundaries of her new family.

In addition, Adina was contending with some mental health issues that were making it difficult for her to control her behavior. She also took much of the blame for the family's problems and harbored considerable guilt over her actions.

How the Crisis Program Helped

When Adina entered the Crisis Program, she set a goal to forgive herself for her contributions to the family's problems and to learn to better cope with her emotions. Through one-on-one sessions and group participation, the Crisis Program staff worked with Adina on building healthy relationships and being aware of her feelings. During her five-day stay at the shelter, Adina worked toward letting go of her guilt and moving toward a better relationship with her adoptive family. Adina and her parents also participated in a family session where they discussed strategies for better understanding each others' feelings and actions and for improving life at home.

Adina Today

Adina returned home with a new perspective on the family's issues and a greater appreciation for her parents. The family now has new tools for addressing conflict and negative behaviors and for sharing and managing their feelings.

2014 Crisis Program Focuses

Independent Living Skills

To address the increase in youth ages 15-17 coming to the Crisis Shelter, the Crisis Program adjusted its daily programming to incorporate more independent living skills activities, including housing plans, resume writing, jobs skills training, safety planning, and discussions about money. These activities are designed to prepare youth for making the eventual transition from living with a parent/guardian to living on their own.

Longer-Term Stays

Because the length of stay for some teens coming to the shelter has increased, the Crisis Program adapted its services to better meet the needs

of these youth by providing additional goal-setting and counseling services to the youth and their families. Teens who stay longer also receive additional 'homework' assignments to address their unique issues.

Emergency Shelter Care

Huckleberry House serves Emergency Shelter Care youth through a contract with Franklin County Children Services. These youth reside at Huck House for approximately 30-60 days. This year, Crisis Program staff focused on developing a new program track to better serve these young people. The new track includes a reward system and works to engage youth in serving as mentors and playing an active role in administering the programming to newcomers.

2014 Crisis Program Successes

545 youth crisis episodes addressed

2,514 nights of emergency shelter provided

70% of Crisis Program teens returned to living with family, another relative, or a friend

94 Safe Place Partners—Kroger Stores, White Castle Restaurants, and Columbus Fire Stations—provided a place for teens to go for help contacting Huck House



Transitional Living Program

Our view:

Homeless teens need more than a place to live.

They need skills to live successfully on their own.

The way Huck House sees it, it's hard enough to grow up when you have all the right support. But for some teens, severe family problems—such as neglect, abuse, poverty, or drug addiction—rob them of these critical support systems. These young people not only lack nurturing and guidance; some don't even have a safe place to live.

When going home isn't an option, the Transitional Living Program helps transitional age youth find ways to make it on their own by providing a safe place to live, counseling and support to address challenges and achieve educational and employment goals, and guidance needed to develop essential independent living skills.

Transitional Living Program Snapshot

- The 18-month program is designed to support up to 28 homeless transitional-age youth ages 17-21.
- TLP provides safe, furnished apartments where youth can live independently while attending school and/or working.
- Counselors and mentors work closely with youth to:
 - Develop independent living skills including budgeting, cooking, and health and safety knowledge.
 - Address educational, employment, and parenting goals (for youth with children of their own).
 - Assist with mental and emotional challenges.
- Youth receive assistance in securing permanent housing upon graduating from the program.

Noah's Story

For Noah, it seemed every time his mom found a new boyfriend, Noah needed to find a new place to live. Noah's mother had a track record of unhealthy and even abusive relationships. And if Noah voiced his concerns or took a stand, he found himself out of the house, time and again.

After being repeatedly put out, and running out of friends' couches to sleep on, it became more and more difficult for Noah to make it to school and keep up with his school work. A previously good student, Noah's teachers took notice of his frequent absences and

slipping grades. The school referred Noah to the Transitional Living Program at Huckleberry House.

A Closer Look

Huck House saw in Noah incredible determination to finish high school, earn his degree, and go on to pursue higher education. Despite his family troubles and unstable living conditions, Noah maintained contact with his school guidance counselors and tried to keep up with his assignments, even when he physically couldn't be in the classroom. When Noah faced setbacks and obstacles, he refused to be defeated. Noah never lost motivation to keep

pushing forward toward his goals. When other people let him down, Noah simply renewed his commitment to himself and his vision for his future.

How TLP Helped

The Transitional Living Program provided Noah with a much-needed safe, and stable place to live, allowing him to concentrate on his school work and address the challenges in his life.

His Independent Living Mentors and counselors worked closely with him to develop strategies for dealing with family conflict and to set realistic expectations for his relationships. At the same time, Noah's mentors helped him pursue his educational goals. Noah graduated from high school, applied to

and was accepted at a New York state college, and even earned a scholarship to help with tuition.

The TLP program also played a key role in helping Noah transition to life at his new college. When family members backed out of their promises to take Noah for a college visit, and then to help him move in to his new school, Huck House stepped in on both occasions to ensure Noah had support and transportation to make it to campus.

TLP staff also worked closely with the Student Affairs Office at Noah's new school to identify programs to help him adjust to college life. Noah's mentors assisted in developing a list of school necessities, and Huck House

even provided gift cards so Noah could purchase what he needed during the college's annual freshman shopping night at a local retailer.

Noah Today

A homeless teen less than two years ago, Noah is now a college sophomore, working hard to secure the productive and successful future he deserves.

2014 Transitional Living Program Focuses

Parenting

In FY 2014, TLP hired a full-time parenting mentor to work with teen parents on essential parenting skills. Teen parents in the program learned how to care for and enjoy their babies.

Education

TLP staff helped teens set and achieve educational goals. More youth in the program pursued higher education opportunities in FY 2014 than ever before.

Employment

Youth in the program received assistance with resume building and translating life experiences and core strengths into marketable talents. A greater number of youth in the program sought and obtained jobs this year.

Support Services

Due to consolidation from two locations to one location last year, youth in the program enjoyed greater access to support services and crisis intervention this year, allowing teens to make greater strides toward their goals.

2014 Transitional Living Program Successes

59 youth received services

- **8,986** nights of shelter provided in TLP apartments
- **2,564** hours of community support and mental health interventions—up 14% from FY 2013
- **130** hours of group counseling

27 youth graduated from the program
100% of program graduates secured permanent housing

10 TLP teens landed new jobs (*37% of program graduates*)

11 youth obtained a high school diploma or GED (*41% of program graduates*)

4 out of **11** youth who graduated from high school went on to enter college



Family Support Program

Our view:

Family problems can be solved.

But it doesn't happen overnight.

Successfully navigating a family's crisis situation is critical. But once the storm has passed, many teens and families need ongoing support to make long-term changes and avoid another crisis situation. In other cases, families seek help with their issues to prevent a crisis from occurring in the first place.

However teens and families come to the Family Support Program, when our counselors look at family problems, we try to see not only what's wrong with the situation, but also what's right. This perspective allows us to leverage an individual's or family's strengths to effectively solve problems and help young people and their families overcome even the most difficult adversities.

Family Support Program Snapshot

- The program provides ongoing individual and family counseling to help teens and their families deal with crisis, trauma, school problems, substance abuse, housing issues, mental health issues, coming out problems, and immigration and assimilation difficulties.
- Counselors help teens and families identify strengths, develop coping skills, and change negative behaviors that can tear families apart.
- The program provides ongoing support to teens exiting the Crisis Program, teens in the Transitional Living Program, and other families and teens in the Central Ohio area.
- Counseling is available at Huck House as well as in clients' homes. Appointments are scheduled during the day, in the evenings, and on weekends to meet teens and families needs.

Jasmine's Story

Almost every teenager fights with her parents at one time or another. But in Jasmine's case, the fights were so frequent and so severe that her father would kick her out of the house on a regular basis. Jasmine would find a friend or relative to stay with, come back home after things cooled down, and then the whole ugly cycle would start again, ultimately ending up with Jasmine back on the streets.

Realizing that Jasmine needed a more permanent place to stay, along with help to address the root of her family problems, Jasmine's aunt referred her to Huckleberry House.

A Closer Look

Jasmine's childhood was marked with instability. Her parents couldn't hold jobs or keep a home. One parent was struggling with mental health issues, and the other was in and out of jail on drug charges. Brought up in the midst of conflict and trauma, Jasmine told her Family Support Program counselor that she couldn't control her anger.

Not only was this issue causing trouble at home, Jasmine said it was also seriously affecting her relationships with her peers, as well as her performance at work. She felt irritable and angry nearly every day, for no specific reason. And her mood would change rapidly.

Jasmine's counselors immediately recognized her insight into her situation. They saw in Jasmine a sincere willingness to manage her anger, improve her relationships, and achieve her personal and family goals.

How the Family Support Program Helped

A Family Support counselor met with Jasmine weekly to help her explore the causes of her anger and address healthy approaches for handling it. With the support of her counselor, Jasmine willingly practiced coping skills to manage her mood along with multiple anger management techniques until she found the strategies and skills that worked best for her.

After four months of counseling, Jasmine was accepted into the Huckleberry House Transitional Living Program. Her counseling sessions continued while in TLP until she graduated from high school and obtained a job.

Jasmine Today

After high school, Jasmine went on to obtain a nursing degree and currently works in a healthcare facility. She's living independently in her own apartment. She says she doesn't feel angry anymore, and she's able to successfully spend time with her family without it ending in an argument.

2014 Family Support Program Focuses

Staff Expansion

To meet the greater demand for services in our community, the Family Support Program added two part-time therapists to the staff in FY 2014. The therapists offer evening and weekend hours as well as home-based visits. The Family Support Program has plans to hire another full-time therapist, which will allow the program to expand its case load by 33%.

School Partnerships

The Family Support Program partnered with The Graham School, a charter school catering to urban students, to provide counseling services to teens dealing with difficult family problems. Huck House is looking at forming additional partnerships with other city schools.

2014 Family Support Program Successes

115 families received ongoing counseling

1,619 hours of counseling provided

119 diagnostic assessments completed

39% of clients reported improvement in family functioning

54% of clients reported a decrease in family problems



Youth Outreach Program

Our view:

Teens with problems don't always know where to find help.

That's why Huck House makes every effort to find them.

The Youth Outreach Program actively seeks out teens in difficult situations who are unwilling or unable to connect with the help they need. The work is never easy—most of these young people distrust the system and want to avoid notice by the police and Children Services. And it always takes patience and persistence. Youth Outreach workers consistently show up at locations where teens hang out, including schools, community centers, playgrounds, shopping centers, and on the streets.

They work hard to establish trust, build relationships, and spread the word about the services Huck House offers.

The goal of the program is to notice the 'unnoticeable' and to ultimately connect disconnected youth with the services and support they need to address problems with family, housing, school, and employment.

Youth Outreach Program Snapshot

- YOP is the only local program to bring counseling services and support to teens on their own turf.
- YOP targets at-risk youth ages 12-22.
- Program workers offer one-on-one, street-based counseling primarily focused on helping youth set and reach employment, housing, and educational goals.
- Program workers host and participate in unique community events designed to engage youth as well as adults who have connections to young people.

- YOP focuses on connecting youth with community resources that meet their needs and provide ongoing support.

Kim's Story

The thing about life's unexpected curveballs is you never know when one is going to come your way. For Kim, things were going pretty well. She had graduated from high school and went on to college where she played softball on the school's team. Then Kim got pregnant. She dropped out of school and moved back in with her mom. A few months later, her mother announced that she was moving into a one-bedroom apartment. And Kim found herself with an infant to care for, and no place to live.

Fortunately, Kim remembered meeting a Youth Outreach worker at a local hangout when she was still in high school. With no other options for support, she contacted Huckleberry House for help.

A Closer Look

Kim was scared and unsure of what to do. She knew she needed to find a job and a safe place to live, but these challenges were complicated by the fact that she had a baby to care for and no transportation. Kim was also just a year too old to qualify for youth services, so she had to work with the more complicated adult system.

Despite the obstacles Kim faced, Huckleberry House saw in Kim a willingness to accept responsibility for her situation and a fierce determination to do whatever it took to provide for herself and her child.

How the Youth Outreach Program Helped

Youth Outreach workers helped Kim enroll at a YWCA family shelter. Per the rules of the shelter, Kim had just 21 days to find a job and a shelter-approved apartment that would accept rent vouchers for the first three months. While Kim secured a position working at a downtown restaurant, she was having trouble

finding an approved apartment that was on the bus line and that she felt would provide a safe and suitable environment for her son. In addition, Kim's working hours meant she couldn't make the shelter's curfew, which created conflict with the shelter's staff.

Youth Outreach staff intervened on Kim's behalf to address the curfew issue at the shelter. The staff also helped Kim work out a budget and locate a safe apartment that she could afford on her new income without the rent vouchers. Staff met with the apartment's landlord to advocate for Kim and to ensure her application was approved.

Kim Today

With the help of the Youth Outreach Program, Kim was able to get her life on the right track. She and her son are happy and healthy in their new home, and Kim is excelling at her job where she is regularly named Employee of the Month.

2014 Youth Outreach Program Focuses

Refocusing Limited Resources

Despite funding cuts that reduced the Youth Outreach Program staff by half, YOP workers continued to visit neighborhood hangouts; respond to referrals; host events; distribute information on community resources; distribute health and hygiene packets, food and drink items, and sexual assault brochures; and connect with at-risk youth throughout the entire city of Columbus.

Building Relationships with Community Services

Through networking, YOP staff strengthened relationships with

community organizations and agencies that provide resources and services to youth and young adults. Staff focused specifically on working with organizations that serve adults in order to create greater awareness of the unique needs of young people aged 18-22 and to improve the experiences of this age group in the adult system.

Advocating for Transitional Age Youth

YOP staff worked as advocates for young people among local landlords and employers in order to generate more housing and job opportunities for transitional age youth who lack rental and employment histories.

2014 Youth Outreach Program Successes

Made **4,583** youth contacts

Conducted **555** hours of youth outreach

Opened **52** new individual cases

Linked **66%** of individual cases to support services

Logged **459** hours of street-based individual case management

Delivered **43** in-school presentations

Supported and participated in **21** community events to increase awareness of Huck House services



Huckleberry House Scholarship Program

Our view:

When a young person has the drive and desire to succeed, **a lack of money shouldn't stand in the way.**

Every year, Huckleberry House administers scholarship funds to youth in our programs who have committed to pursuing their higher education goals. The funds are generously provided by Huckleberry House supporters who share our point of view: all youth deserve the opportunity to work toward a bright, successful, and rewarding future.

2014 Scholarship Recipients

William R. McNamara Scholarship

Ciara Edwards—\$2,500

Kaddara Franks—\$2,500

Aprecia Williams—\$2,500

Soltis-Homer Scholarship

Shantavia Taylor—\$1,000

Jamilah Shepherd—\$1,000

Donor List

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Whit's Frozen Yogurt
Whole Foods
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Financial Information

Revenue 2014

Grants	\$	1,469,791
United Way		138,750
Medicaid		467,471
Purchase of Services and Discretionary Funding		166,887
Contributions		382,204
Interest and Dividend Income		61,371
Net Gain on Marketable Securities		110,893

Total revenue \$ **2,797,367**

Expense

Transitional Living Program	\$	1,059,699
Crisis/Shelter Program		960,034
Family Support		129,821
Youth Outreach Program		232,861
Scholarship		11,945
Fundraising		75,052
Administration		284,163

Total expense \$ **2,753,575**

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HUCKLEBERRY HOUSE
2014 ANNUAL REPORT

Huckleberry House, Inc.
1421 Hamlet Street
Columbus, Ohio 43201

Administration: (614) 294-8097
Fax: (614) 294-6109

24 Hour Crisis Hotline: (614) 294-5553