

# YMCA YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES



## LEADERSHIP UPDATE



### LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear YFS Friend & Partner,

I want to practice something I preach at work: **Radical transparency.**

The nonprofit social services sector is in an **existential crisis**. (And no, things weren't perfect before—but that's a conversation for another day.)

Here's the truth: **YFS does incredible work.** Our team is made up of fiercely compassionate, talented people who pour everything they have into building a more equitable and just community. We want to do this work—but right now, **our ability to deliver is under threat.**

You may have noticed the **large-scale dismantling of federal programs**—or maybe you've stepped back from the news (no judgment; we all need to protect our mental health). Either way, the reality is this: **Federal funding is one of our lifelines.** And when it falters, so do we.

There's a painful dichotomy in **government grant funding**:

- On one hand, it's a **privilege and responsibility** to steward these resources—stretching every dollar, ensuring compliance, and **maximizing impact** for those who deserve far more from the world.
- On the other, **grants do not cover the full scope of what's needed** to address the crises they're meant to solve, especially when it comes to **overhead expenses** (salaries, training, admin costs, etc.).

Yet these funds allow us to serve **the most vulnerable young people and families in our community**—children who've survived unspeakable abuse, families fighting for basics like food and stability, and youth abandoned by systems that were supposed to protect them.

Nonprofits talk a lot about **social good** and **return on investment**, but I need to say this plainly: **People have intrinsic worth, full stop.** We help because it's the **right thing to do**. No justification needed.

Thank you for letting me pull back the curtain. If you believe—as we do—that **helping people** is simply the right thing to do, please know: Every dollar you give **sustains this mission** for the next three years and beyond, and we are **deeply appreciative** to have you by our side in this critical work.

With gratitude,

Matt Smith, Youth & Family Services Executive Director



## Housing & Stability Programs 🏠

### Rapid Rehousing: Breaking Mental Health Barriers

One of the biggest challenges in sustaining housing for youth? The silent struggle of mental health—especially among young men who face stigma or fear judgment when asking for help.

While we're not crisis responders, we are connectors:

- **Providing time and space for youth to adjust to stable housing**
- **Offering non-judgmental support to reduce isolation**
- **Bridging gaps to culturally competent care**

The reality: Housing stability requires emotional stability. Through trust and patience, we help youth see that seeking help isn't weakness—it's the foundation for lasting independence.



### Peris Hill & Prior Crossing Apartments: Safe Homes, Stronger Futures

- **ADVOCACY IN ACTION:** When a Prior Crossing resident (hiding her pregnancy) faced eviction, our team secured a 60-day lease extension while searching for stable housing.
- **SUMMER CONNECTIONS:** Peris Hill Apartments is planning its 2nd Annual National Night Out Block Party and monthly foster youth outings to build community.

### Archdale & St. Barnabas: Where Housing Meets Hope

- **FROM CRISIS TO CONFIDENCE:** A resident who never passed inspections worked with staff to transform their apartment—acing the next review!
- **MENTAL HEALTH BREAKTHROUGHS:** New art therapy & discussion groups (with the Family Enhancement Center) are seeing unprecedented resident engagement.
- **A RESIDENT'S RISE:** Once homeless, a participant is now pursuing a career in fitness—and will share their story at an upcoming event!
- **Summer BBQs & Workshops:** Building on last year's record turnout, we're hosting community cookouts and expanding mental health workshops for staff and residents.

## Homelessness Prevention: Stopping Crises Before They Start 🛑

### Minor Connect & LHPA: Tools for Stability

- **EMPOWERMENT GROUP LAUNCH:** Youth are learning emotional intelligence, boundary-setting, and trauma coping skills in our new workshops.
- **32 FAMILIES KEPT HOUSED:** Our Critical Time Intervention-certified team helped prevent homelessness for 32 Hennepin County families in the last year.
- **BEYOND RENT ASSISTANCE:** Donor-funded flexible support covers transportation, documents, translation services, and emergency needs—key to true prevention.



## Youth Justice: Feeding Families, Fueling Change 🍏

### "Good in the Hood" Breaks Records

- March's pop-up food shelf served 120+ people—triple our usual monthly numbers! This surge highlights rising need and a chance to grow volunteer support.

## Enough Program: Pathways Out of Exploitation 🦊

### Jobs + Housing = Freedom

- **AMERICAN INDIAN OIC PARTNERSHIP:** We work together to provide culturally tailored career support for Indigenous youth, including virtual options to reduce barriers.
- **STEPS OF STRATEGY HOUSING:** We secured 10 transitional housing units with meals, laundry, and mental health care—a safer alternative to hotels for survivors.
- **ON-THE-GROUND SUPPORT:** Our staff are now available weekly at Steps of Strategy's drop-in center, building trust and connecting youth to resources faster.



## Why This All Matters

With federal funding uncertain, donor-backed flexible resources help us:

- ✓ **Prevent evictions** before they happen
- ✓ Offer not just housing, but **healing**
- ✓ Give survivors **real alternatives** to exploitation
- ✓ **Feed families** when costs are high

### **CONNECT WITH ME:**

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### **FIND OUT MORE:**

ymcanorth.org/impact

### **DONATE:**

ymcanorth.org/give/yfs

**TOGETHER, WE'RE NOT JUST HELPING—WE'RE REBUILDING FUTURES.**

