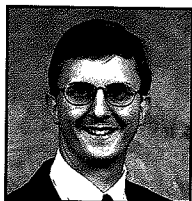


Lighthouse Youth Services Keeps Kids Off Streets



By Richard Porotsky

"Do you have any extra sandwiches in there?" That's what the hungry teenager asked as he approached the big

white van marked "Lighthouse Youth Services," as it was parked downtown at the Hamilton County Justice Center. That teen knew what many other local youth have come to know about Lighthouse Youth Services (LYS). LYS exists to help youths and young adults who are in crisis and may be facing the prospect of life on the street. Here are some of the ways it helps.

Youth Crisis Center

Located at 3330 Jefferson Avenue in Clifton, the Lighthouse Youth Crisis Center is a 22-bed facility where runaway and homeless youths, age 10-17, can turn for help. All they need to do is knock at the door, or even call for transportation, for a temporary safe place to stay. It served more than 1,000 youth in 2008. It is the only center of its type in the city.

Upon entering the Crisis Center, the youth's immediate needs are addressed with food, clothing, and shelter. The typical length of stay is approximately seven days, but can be as little as overnight or as long as 21 days. While at the Crisis Center, youth are provided with a structured and supportive environment. They are expected to attend their own school every day, and are given bus tokens for transportation. For those not enrolled in school, there is a teacher on staff at the Crisis Center to direct their learning during school hours.

During the evenings and on weekends, the youth are directed to participate in supervised activities, including art, music and athletics onsite. Two staff members are always present to supervise them. The goal is to help stabilize their lives, while skilled staff members seek a safe placement for them and encourage reconciliation and reunification within families.

Anthony House

LYS also operates Anthony House, a drop-in center for homeless young adults, age 18 - 24. This center is located at 2728 Glendora in Corryville. Open five days a week, it is a place for homeless or troubled young adults to receive a hot meal, take a shower and wash clothing. On-site, they can seek medical attention from the registered nurse, as well as address longer term needs by planning for job interviews and/or enrolling in social service programs. The goal is to help these young adults get on their feet and become self-sufficient.

Roving Outreach Van

One of the more visible aspects of Lighthouse Youth Services in Cincinnati is its roving outreach van. Marked with the Lighthouse logo, the van travels through the city with LYS staff seeking out youths and young adults who are in crisis. The staff visits street corners, the river bank, the library, the railroad tracks, and other areas frequented by youths in crisis. From the van, the staff offers food, water and clothing. The staff hopes to build trust with these youth, to be able to serve them better and help to get them off the streets. The hope is that the youths and young adults see LYS, and its programs, as the proper place for them to turn to in times of crisis.

Other Programs

Infants through young adults are served through a continuum of services, provided by Lighthouse. Included are independent living opportunities and life skills for teens who have aged out of foster care; group homes for boys and girls with severe behavior disorders; in-home intervention and counseling to at-risk families; and a juvenile corrections facility with twice the success rate as traditional institutions. These are just some of LYS's programs. Since 1969, Lighthouse Youth Services has been providing effective, innovative services to the youth and families of our community, making their lives brighter.

The Cincinnati Bar Association Community Service Committee recently visited the LYS Youth Crisis Center in Clifton. The visit was part of the committee's regular efforts to learn about and assist valuable community service organizations serving our city.

For more information, and for volunteer opportunities related to LYS, contact Lindsay Schoeni at 487-7151 or lschoeni@lys.org.

For more information about the CBA Community Service Committee, or to become a member, contact LaDonna Wallace Smith at the CBA at 699-1392 or lwsmith@cincybar.org.

Porotsky is a partner at Dinsmore & Shohl LLP, practicing in its commercial litigation department. He was named as the CBA Community Service Chair in April 2009. He can be contacted via email at richard.porotsky@dinslaw.com.

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