

FINAL Report: Submitted February 17, 2012

HOUSING OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS IN TRANSITION PROGRAM (HOST)

A cooperative program funded through grants from the Gates Foundation Partnership on Family Homelessness/Rotary District 5020 (\$10,000), Shelton Skookum Rotary Club Presidents' Funds & Shelton Skookum Rotary Club Foundation (\$10,000), Shelton Rotary Club (\$5,000), and Mason County Program for the Homeless (\$5,000).

Submitted by: Rhonda Stone

Shelton Skookum Rotary Club Representative to the HOST Program Advisory Committee

RSSStone74@aol.com

360.486.4483

The Opportunity:

Collaborate to create a program serving homeless young adults 18-21 via a Rotary District 5020/Gates Foundation for the Homeless Partnership Matching Grant plus other funding sources

Informal Start: December 2010 ([Time and resources volunteered; emergency housing process tested](#))

Formal Start: March 1, 2011 ([Paid staff on board; application process begins; disbursement to students begins](#))

For specific details on how the Mason County HOST Program has been modified to better serve students, please see the mid-year report.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

1.Homeless Young Adults: A Complicated Group

In our mid-year report, we reported that homeless young adults ages 18-21 are a difficult group to serve. Family dysfunction, adolescent dysfunction, maladaptive self-sufficiency and more tend to complicate how this group interacts with main-stream community culture. At year-end, what we have learned is that the greatest challenge to serving this group may be the diversity of their needs. Indeed, while some students may struggle with maladaptive self-sufficiency, others struggle from simply falling through the cracks of social services.

Two such examples:

A pregnant teen seeking to remain in school applied to the HOST Program mid-summer. Her pregnancy was a condition that the HOST Program Advisory Group had not previously considered in the context of the revised HOST Program format (providing stipends directly to teens and to the families the students found to host them under the provisions of the "natural match" program condition). Rather than turn

away the teen, HOST staff listened to her circumstances and brought her needs to the HOST Program Advisory Board. One of the vital lessons learned by the Advisory Board during our pilot year was the importance of listening, learning, adapting and being flexible. Using these characteristics, the Advisory Board learned that the teen, due to her pregnancy, could qualify for public housing rather than a HOST family placement. However, moving her into no-cost and low-cost public housing *required* a deposit of about \$300—an interesting condition for those with no income. Through proactive listening, the Advisory Board also learned that the teen-age father of the child was willing to work and take care of his girlfriend and child. He, too, however, was homeless. At the direction of the HOST Program Advisory Board, HOST Program Staff investigated how the HOST program might redirect a family stipend to the public housing authority to cover the required deposit, thereby creating conditions that would allow the couple to be placed in public housing before the arrival of the child. An arrangement was worked out with the public housing authority whereby, for three successive months, the \$100 HOST family stipend was assigned directly to the housing authority. With this condition in place to meet the deposit requirement, the couple was able to move into public housing just before the baby arrived. After the child's arrival, there was a point at which the student felt stressed by motherhood and considered taking some time off from school. Her HOST Program commitment, however, required that she continue her education program. The requirement subsequently kept her in school through the first difficult days of adjusting to motherhood, and her adjustment is now complete. The program helped her remain on track to graduate from high school.

In another case of a young adult falling through the cracks, a young woman from Guatemala who fled to the United States at age 17 received the voluntary assistance of an attorney to acquire long-term residency status in the United States. Now 19, she is determined to finish her high school education. However, her school of choice was the Shelton School District in Mason County, where there is a relatively large Spanish-speaking English as a second language population. Unfortunately, the student, with no family in the region, is struggling to find long-term housing. Her situation was called to the attention of the HOST Program by school personnel, who noticed that the young woman was very faithful to her school program. To help her, multiple individuals are presently working together to see that she has temporary housing, but the HOST Program as yet has not located a long-term emergency housing option for her. On one hand, the inability to immediately find long-term housing for her might be considered a program failure. On the other hand, it is an excellent example of the diverse needs that the program faces. On both hands, it is a perfect example of the diverse needs of young adults who end up homeless in communities and yet remain committed to completing their high school educations.

Finally, in another recent case, a homeless young adult located his own temporary housing and applied for the HOST Program. Just as the application was being completed, the individuals who agreed to take in the student were struggling to make the current month's rent. The tiny stipend provided to the host student (\$50 for the month) and the host family (\$100) ultimately helped all three individual remain secure in their present housing. A little bit really can go a long way.

2. The Greatest Barrier to Success of the HOST Program: Fear

This condition has not changed from our mid-year report. Our observation is that the best way to house homeless young adults in our communities, in the absence of shelter programs, is through “natural matches”—modest financial support for those known to the student who agree to take them in, as long as they remain committed to complete their education. It has not been easy to locate emergency HOST homes for homeless young adults. Lack of trust and fear are barriers.

3. Homeless Young Adults: Afraid of Us

On the other side of that coin, homeless young adults are anxious about, if not fearful of, accepting housing from strangers. HOST Program Staff reached out to help two different young adults still in school, but struggling with permanent housing. Neither student accepted the offer for emergency placement.

4. Interest in the HOST Program & How It Serves Homeless Young Adults

Interest has been expressed from a variety of sources. For that reason, the remainder of this report will be devoted to interest expressed and the steps required to replicate the HOST Program in other communities.

Since the program officially began nearly 12 months ago, it has served 14 students. One of those 14 students has been placed with emergency housing; three are being served as natural matches; two are being served in public housing; and the remainder (eight) are receiving student stipends with no required housing support. This means that the students have found their own housing and, for a variety of reasons, their housing providers are not choosing to apply for housing stipends. A common reason for lack of application is the natural match’s inability to meet or disinterest in meeting the requirements of the HOST program. One such requirement is that all applicants maintain adequate insurance (renter’s insurance or homeowner’s insurance). Another requirement that deters some potential HOST family applicants is the application process itself—the completion of multiple forms, background checks, and a program orientation are required.

The status of the 14 enrolled students follows:

- Three have graduated from high school
- Two have successfully completed their GED programs, with one of the two enrolled in a college or trade school
- Seven are still enrolled in school and GED programs
- One has dropped out of all programs and his whereabouts are unknown
- One is contemplating a return to high school or a GED program and enrolled in the program because he is working to support his girlfriend and baby. HOST Program staff are working with him on a temporary basis in the hope of getting him back in school.

The last of the 14 student status reports also reflects the flexibility that the Advisory Board has come to embrace. That flexibility is reflected in the instructions for starting a duplicate Housing Options for Students in Transition Program that follow.

The Mason County HOST Program has undergone a transition since the 2011 pilot. Skookum Rotary Club agree to be the catalyst for starting the program, serving as the Fiscal Agent during its first year. However, a condition of this activity was that the program would seek a new Fiscal Agent for the second year, in order to transition the program out of the “incubator” relationship provided by Skookum Rotary and to a local community program better equipped to serve the needs of Mason County’s homeless population. This transition was successfully completed in the first two months of 2012. St. David’s, which provides the local shelter for homeless adults, agreed to take on the HOST Program as Fiscal Agent for its second year. To provide program continuity, Skookum Rotarians are remaining on the HOST Program Advisory Committee for a second year. [A matrix outlining the transition from Skookum Rotary to St. David’s accompanies this report.](#)

DUPLICATING THE MASON COUNTY HOUSING OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS IN TRANSITION (HOST) PROGRAM

STEP 1: START-UP

- A. Identify community partners with the potential to support the program; form committee and prepare for grant-seeking**
 - a. Local school-based education programs and services
 - b. Regional and state education programs and services (administered through Educational Service Districts in Washington State)
 - c. County programs and services for homeless young adults
 - d. City programs and services for homeless young adults
 - e. Juvenile justice programs and services
 - f. Community-based programs and services (Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, Lions Clubs, etc.)
 - g. Regional charitable programs (e.g., the District 5020/Gates Partnership for Family Homelessness Grant Program)

- B. As partnerships form, work together to determine potential funding partners.** For 2012, the HOST Program has already identified potential sources of funding for 100% of its program. Just under 50% of the funding is already pledged.

- C. From the list of potential partners, identify a fiscal agent to handle funds and establish a HOST Program Advisory Board.** For this project, the initial fiscal agent was the Skookum Rotary Club and Advisory Board Members represented Skookum Rotary, the Shelton School District, Educational Service District #113, Mason County Homeless Programs, and private citizens, including a successful businessman who had been homeless as a teen and a teen whose family

had been providing housing to homeless young adults. The fiscal agent must maintain sufficient liability insurance to provide coverage in the event of legal action.

- D. **Draft a Memorandum of Understanding for all of the partnering agencies and sign annually in order to obtain a long-term (year-long) commitment to the partnership.** The HOST Program MOU is available upon request.
- E. **Set up the infrastructure for and develop an annual contract for a program administrator to administer the program.** The Program Administrator operates at the discretion of the HOST Program Advisory Board and the fiscal agent. The program administrator must maintain sufficient liability insurance to provide coverage in the event of legal action.
- F. **Develop the application procedures, forms, and requirements for all students enrolling in the HOST program and all families applies for housing stipends as natural or emergency matches.** All forms used as part of the HOST Program application process are available upon request.
- G. **Develop a Participant Summary and Checklist to be used to track completion of application and program requirements. [The Excel spreadsheet used by the HOST Program accompanies this application and is submitted as part of the year-end report.](#)**

STEP 2: PROGRAM MAINTENANCE

- H. **The Host Program Advisory Board must meet regularly (quarterly), as well as intermittently, depending upon the emerging needs of the program.** Advisory Board members must be available to meet as needed to review and approve all student placements. The Program Administrator conducts the work necessary to verify that students and host families are an appropriate fit for the program. The Advisory Board actively works to ensure the safety of all students and host families by affirming the application and reviewing all application procedures executed by the Program Administrator.
- I. **The Advisory Board chair calls all meetings and is supported in this task by the Program Administrator.**
- J. **The Program Administrator coordinates the recruitment and application of students and emergency HOST families and works to inform the community at-large of the HOST program.**
- K. **The Program Administrator disburses funds to students and HOST families and submits monthly receipts and activity reports to the fiscal agent.**

- L. **The Fiscal Agent issues the initial program start-up fund disbursement and, thereafter, issues monthly reimbursement and program payments to the Program Administrator.**
- M. **The Program Administrator and Fiscal Agent participate in all program audits requested by the HOST Program Partners.** Such an audit was requested by Mason County for the 2011 program year and completed by the HOST Program Administrator and Fiscal Agent. The report satisfied the information needs of Mason County officials.
- N. **A representative of the Advisory Board creates the mid-year and end-of-year reports required by grantors.** An Advisory Board member takes on this task to ensure a fair and balanced reporting.
- O. **The Fiscal Agent creates the quarterly and year-end financial reports for the HOST Program.** [The Fiscal Agent's most recent report accompanies this report.](#)

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS

The following student progress reports were compiled in November 2011 to document the circumstances that brought students to the program and the benefit that the program provided to students. Student identity is confidential, therefore, non-associated initials are used to identify students.

PROGRESS REPORT: C.X.

Submitted by: HOST Program Staff

C.X. was the original test case for the Housing Options for Students in Transition (HOST) Program. C.X.'s emergency match was necessitated when he became estranged from his divorced parents for a variety of reasons. At the time that he was accepted as the test case, the mobile home in a mountain lake community within the Shelton School District where he was allowed to live by his father was at risk of seizure due to non-payment of taxes. Other than this property, his father (a long-haul truck driver) had no permanent residence.

C.X. completed paperwork for the HOST program and underwent a background check. The background check revealed one prior conviction (non-violent burglary), which was investigated by the HOST program staff. Due to his demonstrated commitment and determination to continue with school and full disclosure of his conviction to the HOST family, the two parties agreed to the match.

At first, C.X. appeared to thrive in his new housing situation. School personnel were satisfied with his academic progress. His HOST family found C.X. to be helpful and easy to work with. Two events seemed to change C.X.'s attitude. C.X.'s father was scheduled to spend Thanksgiving with C.X. and his HOST family. When he backed out at the last minute, the HOST family reported that C.X. became quiet and withdrawn. C.X.'s father promised to spend Christmas with C.X. and his spirits lifted. The HOST family offered an extra bedroom so that the father could stay over on Christmas Eve and be with C.X. on

Christmas Day. On Dec. 24th, C.X.'s father cancelled again and C.X. became quiet and withdrawn. He started spending more and more time away from his HOST family and with street friends.

In mid-January, C.X. was suspended from Shelton High School for possession of a drug pipe. His termination from school ended his eligibility for the HOST program. His HOST parents met with him privately and discussed the circumstances (suspension from school and possession of drug paraphernalia, both violations of the HOST Program Student Agreement). C.X. acknowledged that he had violated the terms of the HOST program agreement and acknowledged the consequences (immediate termination from the program). He stated that he could temporarily move in with his uncle, also a resident of Shelton. C.X. respected the HOST program housing agreement and moved out immediately.

C.X. left the program and made several failed attempts to continue with school. His whereabouts are presently unknown.

PROGRESS REPORT: R.F.

Information provided by: Michael Diamond

R.F. was one of the first students enrolled in the Student Stipend program. A student at CHOICE Alternative High School, she was homeless before discussions began with HOST program coordinators. She sought their help in the spring of her senior year for assistance with housing, encouragement, and support. The stipend program provided her with \$50 a month that she could put toward temporary housing while she finished school. R.F. graduated from high school in June and located resources to enroll at Olympic Community College in the fall.

PROGRESS REPORT: K.F.

Submitted by: Dan Ryder

K.F. is an 18 year old born in an Eastern European country. Both of her parents had died by the time she was 6 years old. With no available extended family, K.F. was placed in an orphanage. At age 10, she was adopted by an American couple. As K.F. began the teenager's journey to emancipation, she found her values diverging from those of her adoptive parents. The relationship between adopted child and adoptive parents was increasingly strained. She moved in with friends at age 17 and enrolled in the HOST program at age 18. She had not yet finished High School. She will not have enough credits to graduate this year, but plans to graduate next year, go to college, and get a nursing degree.

Recently, K.F. was asked by a HOST partner (the Readiness to Learn Program) to participate with 8 other young people in a workshop for Readiness to Learn Program Managers from across the state. K.F. demonstrated passion and interest for the tasks, taking a lead role facilitating a training exercise and supporting the younger children. She is an articulate and confident young woman who is taking the support she is receiving from the HOST program seriously. She is putting it to good use by setting education goals and working toward them.

PROGRESS REPORT: K.X.

Submitted by: Dan Ryder

K.X. did not need long-term support, but the support the HOST program provided was essential to help him complete his education. Shortly after turning 18, K.X. was a High School student who was asked by a parent to leave his home. He quickly found a family that would allow him to stay, but it was a short-term solution. He heard about the HOST Program at the High School and started the application process. A short time later the family K.X. was staying with encouraged him to find other, more permanent housing. K.X. found permanent housing with a teen-age friend, whose mother was a single parent. Housing K.X. was possible for her, but a financial burden. The HOST program provided just enough financial assistance to make the pairing possible. K.X. remained with the family until he graduated from High School (last summer) and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps.

There were several things about this match that worked very well. The single mom of the household handled both her own son's and K.X.'s transition into manhood with a calm demeanor and clear expectations. She appreciated the financial support for both the family and the student. K.X. and his friend completed school and joined the Marines after a mid-year graduation. They made arrangements with their recruiter to be able to enlist and go to boot camp together.

PROGRESS REPORT: S.F.

Submitted by: Miles Nowlin

S.F. has been homeless for most of her High School career. Her mother and 2 younger sisters have been regularly hopping from friend's house to friend's house for the past 3 years. Last year, S.F. moved out of state with her mother to work and help her family. She returned to Shelton this school year homeless and pregnant with her first child, but also determined to finish High School. S.F. enrolled in an online "Home Partnership" program in Shelton to continue her education, while she and the baby's father struggled to find housing before the arrival of the child. Due to S.F.'s school status, she was eligible to enroll in the HOST program. Her status as a pregnant teenage young adult, however, did not qualify her for assignment to a natural or emergency HOST family.

The HOST Student/Host Family approval team met to discuss S.F.'s circumstances. The team directed HOST program staff members to investigate whether other social services could help the young family. HOST program staff learned that subsidized housing was available, but S.F. and the baby's father lacked the savings necessary to pay the deposit and first-month's rent that would immediately place them in an apartment. The HOST program approval team determined that, due to S.F.'s status as an enrolled HOST program student, the monthly stipend usually allotted to HOST families could be assigned directly to the subsidized housing program landlord over a period of three months to meet the requirements of the deposit and first month's rent. The landlord accepted this plan and S.F. and her partner moved into permanent housing just as the baby arrived.

S.F. is now living in her first apartment with the baby and the baby's father, as a family unit. She missed only a few days of school when her baby arrived and has worked out a reasonable school schedule with

her Home Partnership teacher. She has agreed to commit to this agreed schedule, and to progress in her school performance as a requirement of the HOST program. HOST program staff members also have encouraged S.F.'s partner to continue with school. His first priority, however, is providing for his new family. With continuing encouragement from the HOST program and a little time to settle into his new responsibilities, it is possible that he could return to school.

PROGRESS REPORT: I.X.

Submitted by: Miles Nowlin

I.X. is a homeless youth enrolled at CHOICE Alternative School. I.X. grew up in a crowded trailer with his mother. He was placed in foster care for more than a year at a young age due to his physically abusive father. Home has traditionally been engulfed in verbal abuse and sub-standard living conditions. I.X. was enrolled in the HOST program in June of 2011 when he was unexpectedly kicked out of his mother's house. During the preceding month after being kicked out, I.X. missed 7 days of school. He moved in with his girlfriend's mother who had also been homeless on and off for the three years prior. She and her daughters have been living hand to mouth since starting a transitional housing program.

The HOST program provided I.X. with resource support and minimal funds sufficient to support a natural HOST housing arrangement. The program provided him with greater incentive to continue in school. I.X. was inspired to do a Fire Fighter Training as his job shadow requirement, where he learned hose training and cursory emergency medical techniques. He also went beyond his requirements and attended a 3-week long State Patrol Academy over the summer. As part of his HOST program requirements, I.X. also volunteers twice a month at the school district clothing bank. In August, I.X.'s host family became eligible for the family stipend, which has helped pay rent, utilities and gas money to transport I.X. Thus far in the 2011-2012 school-year, I.X. has missed very little school (and only for illness). In the new school year, I.X.'s teachers see him as a more confident and independent student. He is passing all his classes with a 2.8 GPA and on track to graduate in February 2012. I.X. is interested in public safety and has declared his intent to apply to 2-year and 4-year schools this year.

WHAT IS TO COME?

Publicity:

The Shelton-Mason County Journal presently is working on a three-part series on homeless in the area. The series includes extensive interviews with HOST program staff and credit to all of the organizations partnering to provide funding.

Serve More Students:

Our goal to serve 14 homeless young adults seeking to complete their education was met during the first year of the program.

Continuing Discussion:

New coalitions have been formed to address new ways to reduce homeless and new ways to serve younger students (under 18) also in need of services.