



YOUTH OPPORTUNITY CENTER | 2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT



LOOKING
FORWARD

“Through the activities and programs at the YOC, the youth are able to finally focus on something in **their future**. They love **looking forward** and thinking about **what can be** and someone letting them know **it's possible**.

- YOC Staff Member



What does Looking Forward mean at the YOC?

In the past year, we allowed ourselves a little time to celebrate our 25th Anniversary and reflect on the significant milestones achieved since our founding in 1992. Thanks to the generosity of so many, we successfully concluded the first capital campaign in the history of the YOC which will fund innovative treatment programs, staff development initiatives, infrastructure improvement, and long-term sustainability. Our programs were nationally recognized for innovation and effectiveness and our services were reaccredited once again. There are many reasons to celebrate, but we are not a “stop and smell the roses” type of organization. We are always Looking Forward!

In terms of treatment and education, Looking Forward means we continue to respond to the ever-increasing need to serve the emerging populations of troubled youth. We have developed a systematic approach to evaluating new program offerings to ensure each opportunity is consistent with our mission of serving kids, we are passionate about it, we can be excellent at it, and it can be sustainable. This model has led to the introduction of specialized new programs.

Looking Forward means investing in the staff of the YOC through focused leadership training, use of technology and enhanced mentoring. Our goal is to be more effective in working with children and to become a destination of choice for individuals who have a passion for helping kids.

Looking Forward means advocating for kids and the future of care for children in the state of Indiana. We have done this through the personal investment of time by our senior leadership and board members.

As you review the information and stories in this report, we trust you will see a bright future full of hope and possibility for the YOC and the children and families we serve. We invite you to join us as we look forward!

Rick Roway, CEO



REACHING FOR THE STARS

Every parent wants their child to be happy, healthy, and prepared for adulthood. That same goal is true for every child at the Youth Opportunity Center. Each day YOC staff work together with children to see and achieve their full potential. We want each child to be exposed to countless opportunities to be the best individual, child and student they can be.

Establishing goals and evaluating benchmarks are key steps for achieving success, and this is especially true for the children in the STARS (Skills Training for Adolescents in Residential Services) program. One unique characteristic of the STARS program is the collection and evaluation of skills and behavior data by its staff. Staff target identified areas of need and implement intervention strategies to help children develop new skills and minimize or replace problem behaviors, which is referred to as using applied behavior analysis techniques. Utilizing this data helps staff to objectively evaluate progress and the youth's personal achievements. The program has witnessed children achieve and exceed their goals, making small but consistent progress.

The YOC's STARS program opened two years ago to meet the growing need to treat males with developmental and intellectual disabilities across Indiana. Today, the program is home to ten males between the ages of 10 and 18 who need intensive behavioral interventions to help prepare them to live productively in the future.



“I know that we are making a difference with these young men and preparing them for the next step in their future.”

“I appreciate the small changes I see from the kids each day,” stated Laura Yacko, Qualified Developmental Disabilities Professional and Psychological Services Doctoral Resident. “The little things, the small changes, are what enable our residents to be successful in life, at home and in the community. Day-by-day we see small incremental changes that for some people may seem trivial, but for our kids they are life-changing. We have kids who are volunteering in the community, and kids who have transitioned to public school off-campus; many have achieved more than expected. It takes consistency, perseverance and patience...but we get there with our kids.”

Lyndall Gabbert, cottage manager, loves working in the STARS program. “I have 15-years of experience working with children; however, the STARS program feels like home. The young men I get the opportunity to work with can be impulsive and explosive, but they don’t know how to properly express their feelings. Residents with developmental and intellectual disabilities struggle to express themselves, but their intent is not malicious. It is our role to teach them how to be kind to others, help them develop friendships and develop the necessary skills so they can have normalcy in their lives. I know that we are making a difference with these young men and preparing them for the next step in their future.”

Small changes and growth happen every day in the STARS program. We are helping children, step-by-step, to achieve their goals that many thought might not be possible.



Laura Yacko (L)
Lyndall Gabbert (R)

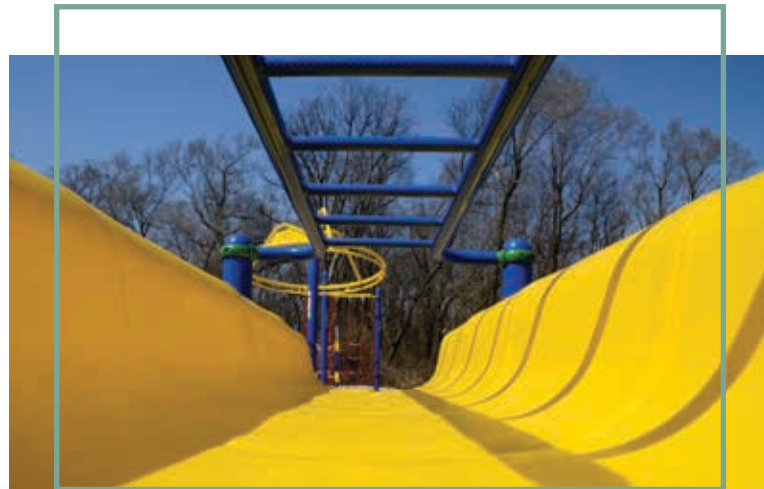
TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

2016-2017 left a lasting impression on the Youth Opportunity Center, its board and staff. The YOC successfully completed its first capital campaign and as a result, the transformation of children and treatment facilities are taking place across the campus as a result of the generosity of so many individuals, corporations and foundations.

TRANSFORMING TOGETHER *the next chapter*

The capital campaign has enabled the YOC to strategically address the short-and long-term treatment needs and facility enhancements needed to ensure sustainability of the YOC's mission. Rick Rowray, CEO stated, "We are honored by the investment of so many individuals to help children in our community. We are in the initial stages of implementing key priorities across campus as a result of the campaign. This campaign has enabled the YOC to renovate some existing residential cottages, implement state-of-the-art treatment modalities by our therapists, execute new training initiatives and strategically plan for other key organizational initiatives that will improve outcomes for children. We are grateful and appreciative of this opportunity to alter the course for thousands of children."

One aspect of the campaign was investment in infrastructure and capital programs. The YOC has implemented capital improvement projects across campus to address the treatment needs of youth with more complex psychological and behavioral challenges. Touring campus you will see a new playground for youth with sensory needs, a new kitchen and living space for independent living programs, and remodeled living spaces and bedrooms in residential cottages to improve overall safety and security. Additionally, the YOC invested resources in the renovation of a former youth facility in New Castle to treat female victims of sex and human trafficking which will open late spring.





However, not all aspects of the campaign are easy to see or measure. New training classes for staff have been implemented, more than 40 frontline supervisors have completed leadership training, credentialed clinicians are implementing evidence-based counseling techniques with youth, focused efforts to recruit and retain quality personnel is underway, and new technology systems have been implemented. Ultimately, the “behind the scenes” impact of the campaign is just as important as the physical renovations made across campus. All of these investments will improve the overall safety and security of children and improve outcomes for kids.

“The kids we serve today exhibit more high-risk behaviors than the kids we served 25 years ago. The investment in cottage renovations, training resources and staff development will enhance the experiences our kids have and improve outcomes. We are very thankful for all who have supported the YOC through the capital campaign,” stated Lynn Doppler, Chief Operations Officer.

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY

What is a good student and high school cheerleader doing at the Youth Opportunity Center? In Jessica Italiano's case, she needed structure and discipline.

Growing up in a single-parent household in Muncie, Jessica's mother worked six days a week to provide for Jessica and her siblings. Her mother was not always available to enforce the rules as she grew up. Jessica's response was to act out by skipping school and by the beginning of her junior year she was habitually truant and expelled from school. At age 17, she was court ordered to a six-month program at the YOC.

Most residents would view this situation as the lowest point in their life, but Jessica saw it as a great opportunity. "If I had to go back and change any part of my life, I wouldn't change that [her time at the YOC] at all," stated Jessica. "I liked the safe feeling and the structure and the schedule. Knowing the staff that worked with me in my program would be there every single day. I liked being held accountable."

While at the YOC, Jessica held a job and completed her high school equivalency exam. After leaving the YOC, Jessica took a job outside of Indiana before returning to the YOC seven years later as a staff member. Now, more than two decades since her time as a resident at the YOC, Jessica is uniquely equipped to relate to the children she works with each day.



In her nearly ten years working at the YOC, Jessica has learned that “I don’t work with bad kids. These are kids who have had disadvantages and made poor decisions. I say to the kids I work with every day, the only difference between them and me is I have had twenty-five years longer to figure things out”.

Jessica’s story at the YOC continues as she is looking forward to transitioning into a new role as Team Leader for the YOC’s newest program, TRU Harbor. Along with a team of dedicated staff, Jessica will provide comprehensive treatment and services to commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) and juvenile sex trafficking survivors. Jessica is excited about the possibilities and noted the amazing team that has been assembled to serve this unique population of children and the amazing community that has come behind them.

“It’s really interesting and exciting to think we have a lot of people rooting for us and for the girls.”



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 Jaime O. Lemna
 Jake Parsons
 James A. Messmer
 James Stiener
 Jessica N. Miller
 John and Stacey Dragoo
 Judy Smoll
 Kathryn Drumm
 Katrina S. Mallory
 Kelly and Donna Stanley
 Kendi Zvokel
 Kevin and Annette Mandrell
 Kevin Miller
 Kimberlie Hall
 Kirk's Bike Shop

Laura Groves
 Leland C. Wilhoite, DDS
 Lindsay M. Price
 Lowery's Candies
 Lucy Couture Boutique
 Main Street Apparel
 Mancino's Sweet Shop
 Mark Green
 Meijer Store #136
 Meineke Car Care Center
 Minnetrista Gathering Place
 Muncie Children's Museum, Inc.
 Muncie Civic Theatre
 Muncie Downtown Dev Partnership
 Murray's Jewelers
 Nova Gilliatte, Jr.
 Outback Steakhouse Store #1522
 Pacers Sports & Entertainment
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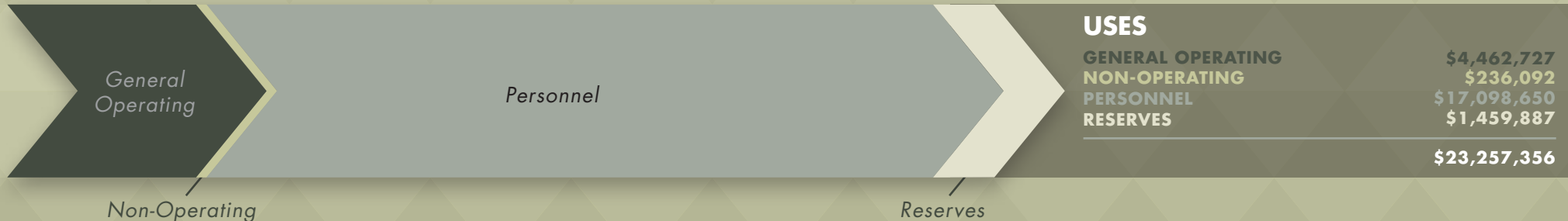
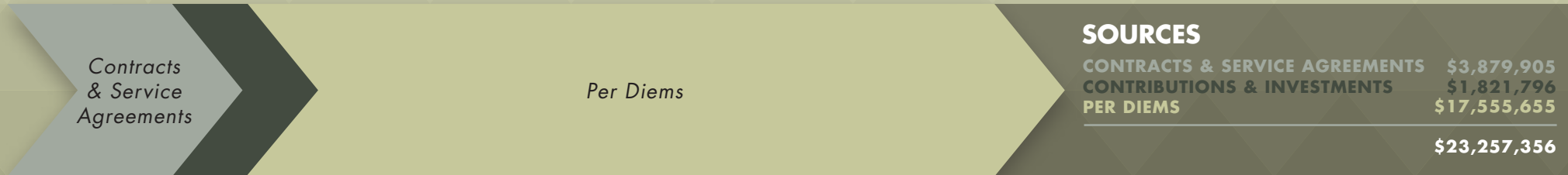
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VISION

**If we can help save a child,
then why couldn't that child
save the family,
the neighborhood,
the community, the world?**

MISSION STATEMENT

**We help catch children who have fallen...
fallen on hard times, fallen between the cracks,
fallen from grace.**

**We pick them up. We stand up for them. We teach
them to stand on their own. Then we watch them
give back to their families, their neighborhoods,
their communities, their world.**

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