

NEWSLETTER



YOUTH ON THEIR OWN

Educating homeless teens. Investing in Tucson's future.



SUCCESS STORY!

"I did it!", said Rachel Ramos, 1996 Marana High School graduate. "I struggled pretty much my whole life," she noted. Rachel clearly remembers the day when she declared, "I'm going to build my own family - one with normal people." At the time her father, in and out of prison over the years and a drug addict, was having a delusional episode precipitated from meth use. Rachel, a full-time staff accountant with Keegan, Linscott & Kenon, PC since January 2007, married

husband Joshua nine years ago and they have three children: Rosana (9), Joshua (4) and Alex (1). While creating a family was one goal she envisioned, the other was to graduate from high school and go on to college. And she "did" that too.

"I chose accounting as my college major because I wanted to be realistic and have a comfortable lifestyle." Blending her skills in technology, math and an affinity toward utilizing specialized software, Rachel assists the department's senior accountants by researching transactions and collecting the financial back-up for case analysis and presentation during litigation and for clients who may be filing for bankruptcy. Undergraduate studies began at Arizona State University, where she was awarded a two-year scholarship, and completed at the University of Phoenix where she could work and take courses in the evening. Rachel also received an MBA from the University of Phoenix in May 2008 and plans to pursue her CPA.

Today Rachel is thriving, especially when she reflects on the many frustrations and challenges she experienced during her youth. "I had to be an adult long before I should have been. No one really cared," she said. As a teen she had pent-up anger, no rules, and little opportunity to learn healthy life tools important to success. Born in New Mexico, Rachel never had a relationship with her mother. "She was addicted to drugs and a prostitute and died from an overdose when I was 12 years old," she stated. "My mother did not want to take care of me and left me with my dad." Her father, at 22, was unprepared to parent, and Rachel lived with her grandparents until she turned 15 years old.

When Rachel turned five years old, her grandfather lost his job and they moved from New Mexico to California. "I had a lot of problems in school in California. People picked on me and threw food at me during lunch because I made straight As, and we were poor." But Rachel was a fighter - figuratively and literally: she landed in juvenile detention for nine months because she fought with those who taunted her. "I learned breathing techniques and how to take ten seconds to think so I didn't blurt," she said. To start fresh, she moved to Tucson to live with her father's ex-wife and her current husband. "The first three or four months were OK," she remarked. And then the living situation

-continued on page 2

SAVE THE DATE!

Top of the Town '10
for the benefit of YOUTH ON THEIR OWN

Youth On Their Own's 15th Annual Fundraising Gala
Saturday, March 6, 2010
The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa

Upcoming Events

Arizona Roofing Contractors Association
"Raising the Roof for YOTO"
6th Annual Charity Bowling Tournament

Tournament Bowling, Silent Auction, Raffle & Prize Lanes
Saturday, July 11, 2009 • 11:00am - 4:00pm

Turn to page 2 for team registration and event details.

Communications: Fall 2009 Newsletter

- Student Program Statistics, Academic Year 2008-2009
- Metro Tucson Student Graduations
- Cash Donor Recognition, Jan 1 - June 30, 2009
- Grant Awards

INSIDE



- Top of the Town '09 In Review, pages 3-5
- Community Rallies with Support, pages 6-7

★ YOUTH ON THEIR OWN VISION:

- ★ to empower young people on their own to become positive and productive citizens of our community.



6TH ANNUAL
ARIZONA ROOFING CONTRACTORS
ASSOCIATION (ARCA)
CHARITY BOWLING TOURNAMENT

Saturday, July 11, 2009

**Golden Pin Lanes
1010 W. Miracle Mile**

**11:00 am Registration
Noon - 4:00 pm Tournament Play**

Silent Auction, Raffle & Prize Lanes

**100% of event proceeds benefit
YOTO students!**



ARCA Charity Bowling Tournament committee members began planning this fun, family-oriented bowling event last January. (L to R): Martin Headlee, Headlee Roofing; Frank Ortiz, Arizona Sun Roofing; Nora Archuleta, daughter of Harless Oscislowski; Joe Simms, JPS Product Development; Scott Ekstrom, Ralph Hayes Roofing; Harless Oscislowski, E-LAS-TEK; Ruben Morales, Rain-Tek; Caryn Bustos, Golden Pins Lanes; Sam Brush, RSG of Arizona.

To register a team, please call **520.882.5757** or **877.335.2722**. The team registration fee is \$300 (six bowlers per team). Participants receive three games of tournament bowling, shoe rental, lunch, registration bag with fun goodies, event T-shirt and door prizes! Drop-ins and non-bowlers are charged \$20, which includes registration bag and lunch.

This year's event theme is "Mardi Gras" and a prize will be awarded for the best team costume; judging the costume competition is YOTO's Mary Gruensfelder-Cox.

Event volunteers needed! Flexible times!

To volunteer during the day of the event, please contact Gina Babunovic at 520.293.1136 or gbabunovic@yoto.org.

TOUCH POINT CONNECTION - FYI GATHERINGS

Become a success coach to a teen girl or boy! In fulfilling YOTO's guidance portion of the mission, the agency partnered with Touch Point Connection (TPC) in August 2008 to provide students with the added support they need to be successful. TPC's mission is to coach teens and young adults to embrace their education and build successful futures through professionally supported relationships with trained Volunteer Coaches.

To learn more on becoming a Volunteer Coach, please attend one of the upcoming one-hour FYI Gatherings held at the Tucson Jewish Community Center located at 3800 E. River Road.

Wednesday, August 5 and Thursday, September 10
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Registration begins at 5:45 pm

To RSVP or for more information contact admin@TouchPointConnection.org or by calling **520.616.2960**. To visit the TPC website, please log onto www.TouchPointConnection.org.

Student Needs Alert

Current Mini-Mall Needs

Mac and Cheese
Pasta
Spaghetti sauce
Laundry Detergent (32 loads or less/container)
Dish Soap
Disposable Diapers (Sizes 3, 4, 5 & 6)
Pull-up Disposable Diapers (Sizes 2T/3T & 4T/5T)
Baby Wipes
Tampons (20/40 box count)

SUCCESS STORY! -continued from page 1

deteriorated: she felt like an outsider. Rachel, a straight A student, was on the verge of dropping out of high school. "I was stressed, burnt out." She worked two jobs, 30 to 40 hours per week, to pay rent and to make ends meet while she attended Marana High School full-time. She had a roof over her head but no support. When she missed school for one week, a teacher gave Rachel a call, and she was connected with the YOTO Liaison to receive the support she so desperately needed.

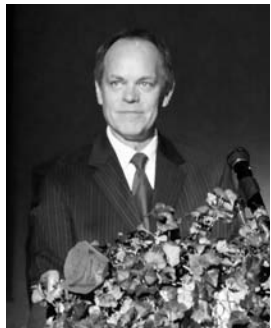
The \$100 (now \$125) monthly stipend assisted with living essentials and easy access to hygiene supplies freed up additional funds. "People don't realize how much it costs to be clean!" she said. The Liaison arranged regular group meetings for the YOTO students attending Marana High School. Rachel appreciated those visits as she could speak about the challenges of being homeless unaccompanied with peers who were in a similar situation. She went from "no one cares" to "several people cared", including those adults with whom she worked as part of the school work/study program.

Rachel is an example of "homeless" as applied to education and that is currently defined by law through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. She had a roof over her head but it was not permanent or stable. As well, she did not have a parent or long-term legal guardian involved in her life. Those conditions made Rachel more vulnerable to dropping out of high school. Instead of facing the cycle of poverty that characterizes the lives of most dropouts, Rachel's tenacity combined with YOTO's assistance made it possible for her to achieve her potential.



Top of the Town '09 for the benefit of YOUTH ON THEIR OWN IN REVIEW

The soaring Catalinas and Tucson's city lights set a dramatic, elegant stage for this year's 14th Annual Top of the Town '09 to benefit Youth On Their Own. The Gala was held Saturday, March 7, 2009 at The Westin La Paloma, where over 350 sponsors, guests and volunteers gathered to raise funds that support core services for homeless unaccompanied YOTO youth as they pursue their high school diplomas. Guests enjoyed bidding on silent and live auction items, playing the Heads and Tails game, dinner, and the live music of The Desert Cadillacs. The program highlight was the three YOTO student presentations, in which Archie White, Krista McCleery, and Giselle Moreno-Gutierrez shared their challenges and successes, despite difficult circumstances, in reaching their educational goals.



VIEW ALL THE EVENT PHOTOS BY
LOGGING ONTO WWW.YOTO.ORG

Photographs courtesy of
Robin Stancliff of
Robin Stancliff Photography.

Thank you, Robin, for your
artistry and continued
"snapshots" of YOTO history.



Community Generosity . . . In So Many Ways . . . Thank you Tucson!



Jeremy Harkin presents The Interfaith Coalition for the Homeless Director Lori Block with a check for one-half the proceeds of the special screening of his film entitled "Ockham's Razor."

FILM PREMIER BENEFITS HOMELESS YOUTH

On Thursday April 30, 2009, The Loft Theatre premiered 'Ockham's Razor' which essentially means, "the simplest answer is the best answer." This film was written by **Jeremy A. Harkin**, an English teacher at Saguro High School who was looking for a creative way to raise funds for homeless services in our community. The romantic comedy took a year to make and asked many of the questions that people might ask as they move through relationships. The evening began with a musical performance from local musician Johnny Ash.

The event was a huge success, packing the 500 seat theatre. Proceeds were split between The Loft and **The Interfaith Coalition for the Homeless** (who in turned shared them with Open Inn and Youth On Their Own) and given in honor of Juliana Redding and Maggie Stahl – two of Jeremy's former students who left this life long before their time.



YOTO was the fortunate recipient of the **Welcome Wagon Club Tucson Northeast's** philanthropic work from September 2008 through May 2009. Much gratitude to Service Projects Committee Chair Mary Lou Gunderson and members Donna Hostetler and Debbie Jensen, who coordinated monthly in-kind club member donations to the Mini-Mall. In May YOTO was presented with a \$6,000 check, which will provide the agency with a tremendous head-start to provide core services to YOTO students who are enrolling and re-enrolling for the 2009 – 2010 academic year.



Sun City Vistoso "Seniors for Kids" Bike Club stepped in to provide refurbished bikes with locks to YOTO students. Throughout this spring, Dick Swain (L), Dick Minch (R) and members delivered several truckloads of much appreciated "wheels", which allow students to live and to work off the bus line for greater freedom in living and work choice, as well as providing more flexibility in planning daily schedules. The majority of YOTO students rely on public transportation.



Tucson Corvettes Club President James Gibson took his red corvette for a spin to deliver a \$2,000 gift from members to assist YOTO students. Executive Director Mary Gruensfelder-Cox was on hand to extend our many thanks for their contribution and ongoing support.



★ **YOUTH ON THEIR OWN MISSION STATEMENT:** We are dedicated to support the high school graduation and continued success of homeless youth by providing financial assistance, basic human needs and guidance.



A non-profit 501 (c) (3) Organization

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yoto.org

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Gina Babunovic, Communications & Development Director
Angela Daniels-Valenzuela, Interim Program Manager
Ron Gilbert, Interim Operations Manager



YOTO VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Help Wanted: Front Desk Receptionists – We Really Need You!!

Help Youth On Their Own save money on administrative costs by volunteering in the office. This position entails meeting and greeting YOTO student clients and supporters, answering general questions and phone calls, and directing calls to the appropriate staff member. Flexible hours and days are available Monday – Friday.

Touch Point Connection

Become a Success Coach to a Teen Boy or Girl!

Turn to page 2 for details.

For volunteer inquires, please contact Ron Gilbert, YOTO Interim Operations Manager, at 293.1136 x 203 or rgilbert@yoto.org.

Editor's Corner

Please help us keep our contact records updated with your latest information!

Submit any new contact information to:

Gina Babunovic

Communications & Development Director

520.293.1136 x 208

gbabunovic@yoto.org

Thank you!