



# YOUTH ON THEIR OWN™



Dear YOTO Family Member,

My name is **Alfred Swen**, and I'm a 2019 high school graduate, an alumnus of Youth On Their Own, and a current YOTO Ambassador.

Before I write anything else, I want to **thank you**. As a YOTO Ambassador, I've really enjoyed meeting other YOTO Family Members like you. Being an Ambassador makes me feel connected, and I've really missed that connection in the last couple years. However, now schools are opening, events are happening, and **I'm looking forward to being able to see some of you again soon!**

The last two years really made me think about all that I'm thankful for. Some of the things we had before are gone now - experiences, loved ones, social skills. (For example, it feels like my college classmates have gone mute or maybe feral!) Sometimes, I feel like I'm not the same person I was two years ago. I'm more grateful to be here. You never know what's going to happen, and **I'm not taking anything for granted anymore - like this opportunity to share my gratitude for my YOTO Family.**

I first joined the YOTO program in 2016. Before YOTO, I had very little faith that I was going to be able to complete high school. Coming from an unstable home, I had to ask for help from outside sources a lot. Asking for help really bothered me because it made me feel like a burden. Then, I found Youth On Their Own. **YOTO showed me that it was possible to graduate high school, even with the circumstances I was facing.** While on my own, expenses were a big issue. YOTO gave me the opportunity to participate in school activities and motivated me with the monthly stipend. **Whenever I needed help, YOTO was there.**

Now, as an Ambassador, I've been able to meet some of the people who support YOTO youth. **It amazes me to know that there are people who, even though they've never met me, believe in me. It makes me feel important, not like a burden.** I can't really think of another organization that makes it so easy to get help, and makes it feel okay to ask. While I'm incredibly thankful that YOTO has always been here for me, **there are so many other young people who need that motivation and support.** And we can't take it for granted that someone else will help them. **We all have to step up.**

**That's why I'm inviting you to help YOTO youth by donating to the "Spread the Warmth" Holiday Challenge.** Your support can help a young person like me stay in school by providing them with the resources to make a rent payment, buy groceries, or even keep the heat on! Also, this year we have an extraordinarily generous and special opportunity from two of our favorite YOTO Family Members - Larry "Buzz" Petersen and Robbie Willingham.

**If you make your gift towards the Spread the Warmth Challenge,  
Buzz & Robbie will match it dollar-for dollar up to \$50,000!**

It's mind-blowing to me there are folks out there as generous as Buzz and Robbie, and I hope our YOTO Family will rise to the challenge and take advantage of this awesome opportunity!

Since graduating from high school, I've been both working and attending classes at Pima Community College. This year, after three years of saving, I was finally able to buy my first car! In addition to getting from work to school, I really enjoy being able to drive to places nearby and take photographs. **No matter what, I know that I want to see and experience as much as I can. I'm really thankful for all my YOTO Family has done to help me get this far.**

To everyone who supports YOTO, thank you so much for all you do. You really do make an impact! I'm positive that if we all work together, we can help young people on their own take advantage of all life has to offer them, too. I hope to see you someday soon at an event, but until then, **thank for all you've done and continue to do for YOTO!**

Sincerely,



Alfred Swen  
YOTO Ambassador

**PS:** Don't forget that your donation qualifies for the **Arizona Charitable Tax Credit!** For more information, visit YOTO's website: [yoto.org](http://yoto.org).

**PPS:** Enclosed with this letter, you'll find YOTO's **Holiday Gift Guide**. If you're looking for a way to support YOTO and get your holiday shopping done, consider getting your loved ones something from the YOTO Shop. I am **DEFINITELY** getting myself a YOTO hoodie!