



Dear YOTO Family,

It's that time again! Youth across our community are getting ready to pack their bags and return to school. For some young people, however, preparing for school can be a stressful time of year. Backpacks, supplies, books - all these things come at a cost that many youth, particularly youth living on their own, cannot afford.

In fact, I remember going through that situation myself. **My name is Rashel. I'm a former YOTO youth, a 2023 University of Arizona graduate, and now a proud staff member at Youth On Their Own (YOTO).** When I was in high school, it was difficult for me to get many of the items I needed to be successful. Luckily, during my sophomore year, my school social worker introduced me to YOTO. By participating in the YOTO program, I received free food, hygiene products, school supplies, and so much more! More importantly, at YOTO I found a family in every staff member who cheered me on.



After graduating, I had the privilege of sharing my story with some of the many local organizations and individuals who support YOTO's work. Through meeting these folks, I learned that the YOTO Family is not just the staff, the students, or the volunteers who support our organization, but also the many wonderful individuals who, each in their own way, care for and uplift youth experiencing homelessness in our community. For me, it was incredibly inspiring to know that so many people, even people I'd never met before, cared that I graduated and pursued my dreams.

One such person is **Sue Ann Obremski**. I met Sue Ann a few years ago at an event in Green Valley. Her warmth, care, and support were palpable immediately. Over the years, Sue Ann has remained an incredible advocate for YOTO. She hosts an annual fashion show, packages small bags of spices for youth to take from our Mini Mall, makes cards for graduating youth, and visits our campus at least once a month to drop off donations she has collected from her neighbors in Green Valley. Now that I work at YOTO, it brings me immense joy to greet Sue Ann with a warm hug whenever she stops by, particularly because I know the feeling is mutual! When I asked her why she so adamantly supports YOTO youth and YOTO's Back to School Challenge, Sue Ann replied:



*“There’s no better way for our community to come together and feel fulfilled than by supporting the youth of YOTO! The students’ gratitude is incredibly heartwarming and motivates me to keep giving. I’m not alone in this; many generous individuals contribute and nurture these young lives. Being part of YOTO makes me feel good and inspires me to do even more!”*

Soon, YOTO's Mini Mall will be bustling with newly-enrolled youth eager to start the school year. **However, to make sure every single YOTO youth gets what they need to succeed, we need YOUR help!** We're asking you to accept the challenge and rise to the example Sue Ann sets for us by making a donation in support of YOTO youth today. This school year, Youth On Their Own **anticipates serving over 1,800 youth**, each of whom needs the financial, material, and motivational support of our YOTO Family during this crucial time in their lives.

Also, I want to address something rather directly. YOTO has grown a lot since I was in high school, and I have heard some folks say that we have plenty of support. Nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, **YOTO has grown, but the need has grown with us**. That's why I'd like to ask you for one more thing. One of the reasons Sue Ann has made such an impact on the lives of so many youth is that she not only gives of her own resources, but she inspires others in her community to do so as well. **Today, I'm asking you not only for your donation, but for your advocacy.** I've seen firsthand what a generous and collaborative community Pima County can be. Today, I'm asking you to get excited about YOTO's work not just in your own heart, but in your own community. Here are a few suggestions:

- Host a donation drive to collect items for our Mini Mall.
- Make a financial or in-kind gift, and challenge a friend to do so as well.
- Invite YOTO to come speak to your workplace, club, friends, or place of worship.
- Reach out to schedule a tour of our new campus or drop by during one of our four upcoming open houses this school year and bring a few friends.
- Simply tell others why YOU believe in the work YOTO does and the impact our YOTO Family makes in our community.

In short, I hope that this summer - and for the foreseeable future - you'll join me, Sue Ann, and the many YOTO Family members who are already challenging ourselves to inspire both support and awareness for YOTO and the youth we serve. My journey has been filled with ups and downs, and I wouldn't be where I am today without the incredible support from people like you and our amazing community. I know for a fact that there are many, many more young people in our community who are challenging themselves to overcome the odds and graduate. With your support and commitment, we can create a community that gives them every opportunity to reach their goal of high school graduation and become the people they aspire to be.



*Thank you so much, and I hope to see you soon!*

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Rashel O.'

**Rashel Olalde**

Senior YOTO Development Coordinator  
 University of Arizona Graduate  
 Proud YOTO Alumna

*PS: We have a match opportunity! A member of our YOTO Family has generously offered to match all gifts to YOTO's Back to School Challenge dollar-for-dollar up to \$10,000! Double your impact and help us meet the match by making a gift today!*