



Generosity Makes Our House a Home



Our Mission

The Harbour provides emergency housing and services to youth experiencing homelessness to promote their safety, stability, and personal growth.

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Walk in Their Shoes

Take a moment to imagine how it feels to be homeless. No one deserves to wonder where they will find a bed, especially a teenager. Life on the street is not a choice. It is an act of desperation.



Imagine how it feels to be homeless.

Growing numbers of young adults are experiencing unthinkable living conditions. The Harbour can't change the social and family dynamics that put youth in harm's way. But we can give young people the power to transform themselves—to find a path toward a stable, productive lifestyle.

We make our house their home. Physical comforts like a warm bed and nutritious meals are the basics.

The Harbour's services extend far

beyond the safety of a roof overhead. Our compassionate staff work to address the trauma that brings youth into our care and to build the skills needed for independent living.

Each story is a complex puzzle. Our staff's expertise and empathy guide them in identifying the pieces that will be an appropriate fit for every young person.

The Harbour team is completely focused on serving youth. Providing that level of professional support requires dependable sources of revenue. We receive some funding from the government, and we have earned the trust of foundations and other organizations who make our mission a priority.



Sadly, the conditions that create homelessness are not improving. There is a critical shortage of low-cost and short-term housing. In FY 2023 we provided 8,080 days of care. In 2024 the number increased to 12,139 and the average stay in our facilities grew from 11 months to 17.

As the numbers tick up, we must be prepared to maintain our commitment to shelter youth until a stable placement is found.

If you are new to our organization, please consider partnering with us to care for the most vulnerable members of our community. An investment in The Harbour is an investment in their potential. You can create opportunities for growth, productivity, and stronger relationships. If you are already a donor, our gratitude extends beyond words. We hope that you will want to continue this critical collaboration and even increase your support.

It can be difficult to walk in unfamiliar shoes, to imagine that homelessness might be preferable to living in a family.

We offer the following stories to help you understand why The Harbour is a lifeline for youth in need. We can't share many details about the circumstances that bring youth to our door, but they are far less significant than what happens once someone steps inside.



What brings youth to our door is far less important than what happens once they step inside.



Discover Their Stories



Life Skills Supported Tina's Independence

Tina came to The Harbour's emergency shelter when she was 18. She had been in the foster care system for a number of years without finding an adoptive family, and her foster mother no longer wanted to care for her.

"I was in my senior year of high school," Tina said. "The Harbour found a place for me at the Streamwood shelter. My social workers arranged transportation so that I didn't need to change schools, and I was able to graduate with my class."

"The staff at Streamwood were really nice. They took time to talk with all of us." Tina recalled. She liked the structure of regular meetings and appreciated their guidance. "The social workers made sure that we attended school. But we were also required to have a job. I worked at a jewelry store in the Woodfield Mall."

Tina credits The Harbour with teaching her skills that are helping her live independently and manage her adult life. "The social workers taught me to track my spending with a budgeting sheet that I still use. They helped me to decide how much I could spend and save with the salary I was earning."



Tina also enjoyed the group outings to movies and other recreational venues. Those events were an opportunity to bond with other residents and make several friendships that continue today.

When we asked Tina what advice she had for other youth who find themselves in desperate circumstances, she offered this insight. “Learn what resources

are available to you and use them. It's okay to ask for help. I think most people in the foster care system want to try to make it on their own. Just because you've been alone for a long time doesn't mean there aren't people who are willing to help you. It's okay to ask for their support.”



Tina learned that it's okay to ask for help.

“At first, I didn't realize how much the harbor helped me, but throughout the years, I understood that everything they did was to push me to better myself. So, I always tell them thank you, even when they reach out through Facebook. Once again, I say thank you.”

How Alex Found Acceptance

When Alex found the courage to come out to his mother, she refused to accept his chosen identity. At 18 years old, Alex was homeless and longing for a place where he could be his true self.

The Harbour was there to provide shelter and a welcoming community. Participating in our Youth in Transition Program, Alex learned critical life skills



like money management, emotional regulation, and how to search for and keep a job.

The Harbour was an opportunity to begin his journey to adulthood and independence on solid footing. After two years, Alex graduated from the program. Now he has an apartment of his own. The Harbour was a bridge that gave him a safe passage toward living his identity and his future life successfully.



Casey's case manager arranged her legal transition to her father's home.

Casey's Transition to Safety and Care

Casey and her mother fought constantly. Her home life was fraught with conflict. To prevent Casey from seeing friends, who she thought were a bad influence, her mother withdrew her from high school. The tension between the two escalated until Casey's mother locked her out of

the house.

Casey desperately needed a safe place to grow up. Fortunately, The Harbour provided a solution. When Casey arrived at Safe Harbour House the case manager swung into action. She coordinated with community partner agencies and located Casey's father in another state. After several weeks of planning, reunification meetings, and phone calls, The Harbour facilitated Casey's legal transition to her father's home. Now she can make her next transition to adulthood in a safe and loving environment.



Understand Our Impact

History



Vi Schnitz with her husband Louis (1960s).

The Harbour grew from the commitment of a few passionate volunteers. They wanted to help kids like Tina, Alex, and Casey.

In the mid-sixties services to support youth in need were few and far between. There was a runaway hotline, but the objective was to convince teens to return home. The futility of

forcing youth to remain in intolerable situations eventually became apparent. Runaways were seldom persuaded to endure the constant threats of a dysfunctional family situation.

Vi Schnitz, a powerhouse PTA volunteer, was among the activists who understood that more targeted programs were desperately needed. At her urging, Mayor John Emery established the Evanston Youth Council. Vi served as its chair for six years. During that time, many new youth-oriented initiatives were developed including The Harbour.

The Runaway Youth Act, passed by Congress in 1974 provided the funding to launch the organization. On July 1, 1975, The Harbour's first shelter opened in a building on the campus of the Park Ridge School for Girls.



Today's Challenges

Homelessness both in the Chicago metropolitan area and across the country is increasing. These statistics from the Chicago Coalition to End Homelessness tell an urgent story.

- In 2021, there were an estimated 11,885 youth (ages 24 and younger) experiencing homelessness in Chicago. Of these 88% temporarily stayed with others rather than on the streets or in shelters.
- During the 2018-19 school year, 16,451 Chicago Public School students experienced homelessness. Only 11% of those students were served by the shelter system.
- In total 3,143 unaccompanied youth and their children (under age 18) experienced homelessness.

Space to Heal and Grow

When you look at the numbers, it is important to remember the people they represent. Each individual is unique and filled with potential. Given the opportunity and guidance there is no limit to what they could accomplish or who they might become.

Our programs and services are directed toward building the skills for independent living and helping residents like Tina, Alex, and Casey discover future possibilities they may not have imagined.

“The youth at the Harbour are wonderful. They're lovely. I've met many of them. I've even cooked meals for them. They don't deserve the hand they've been dealt. And it's critical that they be cared for. They deserve the support that they're getting from The Harbour.” Gene Servillo, former board chair and long-time director



Youth Profile

Below is the FY 2024 snapshot of who The Harbour served, where our residents came from, why they needed us, and how long they were in our care.

Communities

- 22% from Chicago
- 19% Other
- 10% Evanston
- 6% Skokie, Palatine, and DuPage Co.
- 5% and below from 10 townships across Illinois
- 5% out of state

Demographics

- 48% Black
- 25% White
- 22% Hispanic
- 4% Asian
- 1% Multi-racial
- Average Age 18 ½
- Average days in care 19

Primary Factor for Housing Instability

- 64% Homeless
- 17% Runaway
- 14% Locked out

Average Length of Stay

- DCFS transitional Programs—3 years and 6 months
- Emergency shelter—19 days
- Community transitional programs—17 months

Residential Services

The Harbour offers a variety of residential options to meet the needs of the young people we serve.

- **Youth in Transition**—Up to 18 months of housing in three-to-four-bedroom single-family homes for youth ages 16 to 23.
- **Emergency Shelter**—A 10-bedroom house where runaway, locked out or homeless youth ages 12 to 23 receive short-term services.
- **Survivors of Trafficking**—Up to 24 months of housing for youth ages 18 to 23.
- **Youth in Care**—Youth referred through the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services can enter this program as early as 17 and stay until age 21.
- **Successful Teen/Effective Parents (STEPS)**—Independent apartments and services for pregnant and parenting youth ages 16 to 23.



Programs

All residents benefit from these therapeutic and skill-building initiatives.

- Case management
- Clinical support groups
- Educational support
- Skills training in these areas:
 - Parenting
 - Employment
 - Financial literacy such as budgeting and cash management
 - Sexuality and health education

Annual Accomplishments



9,570 days of supervised care



21,500 meals provided



10,000 hours of case management

A Welcoming Environment



Our compassionate Harbour team orients new visitors and helps them settle in.

While our shelters may not be a permanent home, they should feel like one.

Updates to our facilities ensure that the value we place on our residents is reflected in their surroundings. During FY24, we received a grant from the Village of Schaumburg. This funding allowed us to plan for a major kitchen renovation at Staffire



House. We were also able to replace all the furniture at our Niles locations.

Our facilities incorporate the principles of our valued partner, Designs for Dignity, an organization that is committed to providing restorative environments and promoting wellness of the human spirit. Lighting, texture, color, and comfort are among the elements of trauma-informed design that are considered during the renovation process.

The Harbour welcome bags are another way we demonstrate our concern for each resident. Incoming youth can choose from a variety of products to create an individualized personal care kit. And our experienced and compassionate staff are on hand to orient new visitors and help them settle in upon arrival.

Meet Our Team

The Harbour is led by an executive director and a Board of Trustees. Together, the executive director and the board develop the organizational strategy. The FY 2024 strategic plan outlines goals and objectives for programs, facilities, workplace culture, and finances.

Over 40 employees work around the clock to ensure our young people are cared for. They hold bachelor's and master's degrees, have obtained industry certifications and licenses, and demonstrate passion and dedication in all they do. These case managers and direct caregivers are the backbone of our agency, strong mentors and collaborators who engage with our young people every day and help them grow and thrive.

***“Recently, The Harbour has accomplished key objectives such as building a new shelter and strengthening finances. In FY24, we completed a thoughtful process of examining our vision and goals against the current and future needs of the community.”
Savio Lobo, 2024 Board Co-Chair***

To ensure that our team excels in their professional capacities we promote a culture of communication, transparency, and trust.



Make a Difference

Donors help us to do big jobs like renovating facilities, but every contribution, even the smallest, works to give our residents the affirming experience that they deserve.



This is one story of a donor who made a unique difference.

Nora Judae loved the arts, classical music, and opera. When Nora died in April 2023 at the age of 92, her will included a generous legacy gift to The Harbour. In consultation with her family, we agreed that an art therapy program for our youth would be an initiative that reflected Nora's life-long interests.

Open Studio Project is our partner in this program. Open Studio brings art to individuals for personal growth, social and emotional learning, and community well-being. Their facilitators are trained and licensed in clinical counseling and art therapy. The program is centered on individual needs.





Making art is an emotional outlet.

Making art is an emotional outlet; a place to explore experiences, ideas, relationships, and feelings that are difficult, if not impossible, to communicate in other ways. As challenging emotions surface, creating art also strengthens self-esteem, helps manage anger, and contributes to developing healthy perspectives.

The bi-monthly sessions are being received enthusiastically. Youth who have never explored their creativity are discovering meaningful insights.

We are deeply grateful to Nora for helping our residents to participate in this profound learning experience.

Nora’s gift enriches The Harbour’s mission of service. Your gift, of any amount, will do the same. We invite you to invest in youth and their potential. It’s not hyperbole to say that the power to change a life rests in your hands. If everyone who read this message took it to heart, there is no limit to what our residents might accomplish or who they might become. We invite you to find out.

Ways to Give

“My wife and I are fortunate that we are able to be philanthropic at a generous level. I wish others with the resources to do so could join us because it's critical. We need to care for each other. If you have the means, you've got to give.” Gene Servillo

Gifts to The Harbour support critical services like these.

- \$50—One week of nourishment for a young person
- \$100—Five months of early literacy materials to a child in the parenting program
- \$175—a week’s rent for a young mom and her child



- \$500—20 hours of counseling services
- \$1,000—scholarship to post-secondary education for one youth

The Harbour gratefully accepts gifts in kind, bequests and deferred gifts, contributions of cash, stock, or pledges over time, and honorary or memorial contributions.

[Make a house a home. Support The Harbour now!](#)

To learn more about The Harbour contact Mary Burke Peterson at mbp@theharbour.org. Visit our donation page [here](#).



Financial Report

The Harbour’s goal is to consistently improve and grow our initiatives. In FY24, 81% of our expenses were dedicated to programming.

As of June 30, 2023

| Revenues | | Percent |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| DCFS State Contract | \$1,182,585 | 33 |
| Private & Local Contracts | \$105,315 | 3 |
| Federal, State & Local Government Grants | \$1,531,212 | 42 |
| Contributions & Special Events | \$734,343 | 21 |
| Interest & Other Revenue | \$19,380 | 1 |
| | | |
| Total Support & Revenue | \$3,572,835 | 100 |

| Expenses | | |
|---|-------------|-----|
| Safe Harbour Emergency Shelter | \$482,201 | 15 |
| Transitional Housing for DCFS Youth in Care | \$1,030,902 | 32 |
| Transitional Housing for Community Youth | \$449,101 | 14 |
| Successful Teens/Effective Parents | \$275,795 | 9 |
| Survivors of Human Trafficking | \$355,385 | 11 |
| Administration | \$401,362 | 12 |
| Development | \$231,972 | 7 |
| Total Expenditures | \$3,226,718 | 100 |
| | | |
| Net Revenue | \$346,117 | |
| | | |
| Contributions to Capital Campaign | \$39,685.00 | |



Thank you for making time to learn about our mission

