
ANNUAL REPORT

Year-Ending June 30, 2004

We began our fiscal year by launching a \$250,000 capital campaign – *Y-US Building the Future* – to purchase our Bloomfield Retreat House. In July, we attended the Greater Hartford Open grand opening ceremonies where Y-US was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Greater Hartford Jaycees Foundation. This award (from the Jaycees *Children's Fund*) marked our lead gift for the capital campaign and opened the doors for several other major grant commitments to be made in the following months. We remain very grateful to the Jaycees for their early faith and support. We also formed a capital campaign committee in July which worked tirelessly over the past year planning and directing our fundraising efforts for this special purchase.

Last summer we were affected by the State of Connecticut budget negotiations which resulted in a hold on staff hiring for Y-US (The state is a significant funder of our programs). Our dedicated staff weathered the storm until the situation was resolved in September. We subsequently began the hiring process and were fortunate to add two Youth Workers in the fall and most recently a Behavioral Specialist in the spring of this year. During the year, two staff members departed and one staff member was called to military service for 5 months. At year end, Y-US employed a total of 20 people (13 full time).

In August, we were fortunate to have Seanna Smith of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) begin a one year assignment with us serving as a Youth Worker with both the Better Horizons and FAST programs. Seanna also worked closely with the preschool aged foster children providing small group respite care. Seanna ends her one year of service in August and will pursue a career in a youth-related field.

Several grants were awarded to Y-US for use during this fiscal year. This included grants to support our *Better Horizons* program from the Olga Sipolin Children's Fund, George & Grace Long Foundation, Charles Nelson Robinson Foundation, the Lincoln Financial Group, United Way *Children are Successful* Fund, and the William T. Grant Foundation. Other funders included the Camp Burt-Tetlow Foundation for summer respite and recreation, St. John's Episcopal Church for general support, and the Aetna Foundation for holiday support. Of particular note is the grant from the William T. Grant Foundation of New York, NY. This marks our first grant from a prominent "national" foundation as opposed to the majority of our grants which are from local Connecticut-based funders. Thank you to all our funders for supporting our children and programs this year!

We began a collaboration in September with the UCONN School of Social Work and the Department of Children and Families for a credit class in mentoring. A group of our youth in 8th grade through high school participated in two meetings per month with the UCONN students at their West Hartford campus. They would visit, share a meal and participate in group outings. The program helped both the students by providing them with insight into the lives of youth who are in need of social services, and it helped our youth by providing them with a mentor to discuss school and life issues with.

In September, we also continued the third year of our Junior Youth Worker (JYW) program which is a job training and mentoring program for several former Y-US participants (teenagers). Each JYW is paid for working two afternoons a week to help with housekeeping, office duties, preparing dinner and assisting with the after school program activities.

We held an open house at our Bloomfield Retreat House in November. This provided many of our supporters and volunteers with an opportunity to view the property that we were raising funds to purchase. Y-US youth led tours of the facility and attendees had a chance to view our Y-US video which was produced last year by Central Connecticut State University film students. (This video is now available on our website www.y-us.org and provides a compelling overview of our mission and programs).

In November we also held our annual Thanksgiving dinner for our families which was once again sponsored by our friends at Bethel AME church in Bloomfield. This year, for the first time in a number of years, the feast was held in Hartford at our main office and program site. Over 150 people attended this traditional celebration in which the food was overflowing!

We began a tradition of celebrating Quinceaneras or "Sweet 15" parties for some of our program participants in December. We held a dinner/dance celebration marking this important Latino rite of passage for two of our teenagers who have been friends since they met at Y-US a number of years ago. Over 50 people attended this event at Y-US despite a mid December raging snowstorm! This was followed by a "Sweet 16" party in January and another "Sweet 15" celebration in May. In the future, we hope to hold an annual "coming of age" celebration for all of our fifteen and sixteen year old girls.

In late March, we closed on the purchase of our Bloomfield Retreat House, a facility that we use six days a week for after school activities and overnight respite care. We had use of the facility for over a decade through the good graces of Sacred Heart Church in Bloomfield. Now that we are a proud owner, we hope to make some improvements to the property and enjoy its maximum use for the benefit of our children. Major funders for the Retreat House are: the *Greater Hartford Jaycees Foundation*, the *Hartford Foundation for Public Giving*, the *Aaron Joseph Dornan Foundation*, the *H.A. Vance Foundation* and the *Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc.* Additionally, many individuals and organizations contributed to this effort.

During the year, two Board members departed and we are currently reviewing candidates for new Directors.

In June we held a celebration dinner at our Bloomfield Retreat House to honor major supporters of our *Building the Future* capital campaign. It was well attended by Y-US staff (including our founder – Brother Marcus Turcotte), Board members and donors. It was truly a joyous occasion for all of us involved in the long process of fundraising for this purchase. As we close this fiscal year, we are still working to raise the last \$21,000 out of \$250,000 to cover our costs.

As the year came to a close Y-US:

- ⇒ Operated four youth-development programs
- ⇒ Served over 350 at-risk children in this fiscal year
- ⇒ Had 20 employees
- ⇒ Completed the year with an operating budget of \$850K
- ⇒ Drove over 68,000 agency vehicle miles in the previous 12 months

Respectfully submitted,

Louis Gilbert, Executive Director

Y-US, Inc. does not receive any membership dues or charge any service fees to its program participants.