



# Youth United for Survival

Helping Transform Youth Since 1989

## **ANNUAL REPORT** **Year-Ending June 30, 2006**

Dear Friends:

This year has been one of various significant changes, but also accomplishments. Programmatically, **Better Horizons** provided a long-term peer support program serving 46 youth, ages 8-16, from the southern half of Hartford. Better Horizons focuses on positive youth development through peer support groups, arts & crafts, educational activities, meals and outings. The youth were part of four camping trips, three overnight retreats, three community service projects, and many other group activities. Better Horizons strives to support parents in their role as parents. We held seven family functions where families got a chance to step outside their comfort zone and try new things with their family members. The family activities were family camping, a Mothers' Day dinner, a family picnic, a Lake Compounce amusement park trip, and much more. All of the family activities are geared to focus on family development and a safe environment for children and parents to interact.

Our **Building Families FAST** (Foster and Adoptive Support Team) program is a short term adoptive and foster care intervention program serving children ages 2-18 from North Central Connecticut. The children are at risk of disrupting from their foster or adoptive placements or are awaiting a more appropriate placement. FAST provides individual and group respite care, behavioral interventions, and family support for over 60 children, for three months at a time. These services are contracted by DCF and clients can be re-referred back to the FAST program. FAST services were provided to 192 different youth within this fiscal year. Of those, 106 were referred back to the FAST program for additional service.

Our **Fee-for-Service** programming continued to provide – 1) therapeutic respite and recreation, 2) short-term emergency respite care, and 3) transportation (taxi service) on a limited basis. These services are contracted by DCF for youth on an individual case basis and range from one-time to long-term in duration. Fee-for-Service programming was provided to approximately 134 youth in this fiscal year. Due to the variety of referrals accepted, 46 youth that previously would not have qualified for service with Y-US were able to receive services. There has been an increase in support to youth returned to biological homes and in day-services provided to youth who are not in school for a variety of reasons (i.e. suspensions and disrupted placements.)

Most all of our services included:

- After school therapeutic support program 2 days a week
- A Clinical Psychologist who works with staff to design and implement goal plans
- In-home visits with family to discuss strengths and goals (periodically or at parent request)
- Transportation to all activities (106K miles in 8 agency vehicles)

- Communal meals and snacks
- Community outings such as recreational trips to local attractions as well as therapeutic trips (for children with public behavior issues)

This year we also had a first for our agency. We sponsored and held a “No Limits” Youth Day on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006 presented by Cassandra Mack and her colleagues from New York City. This was a one day conference at our Hartford site geared for youth ages 12 and up. The conference offered a series of 50-minute workshops designed to educate, empower, and inspire young people to “Take off the Limits” and rise to their full potential. The topics included financial stability, setting personal goals, peer pressure, and self-respect. The keynote speaker of the event was Mayor Eddie Perez who spoke about the importance of programs like Y-US in the prevention of youth violence. The children were served a buffet lunch and many prizes such as portable DVD players and gift certificates were raffled off at the end of the day.

With donated work by WondriskaRusso in West Hartford, we developed a new image for our agency. We replaced our longtime heart-shaped logo with a new butterfly, representing a monarch butterfly. Like the monarch butterfly, the logo, with wings shaped in the acronym, “Y-US,” is meant to recognize the great distances that our youth must travel in their transformation from hurt and brokenness to healing and wholeness. We now focus on our “Youth United for Survival” name, rather than our legal name of “Y-US, Inc.”

We continued to have the dedicated service of talented and caring staff to make our programming a welcoming place for children who are vulnerable and hurting. Long-time Program Director Kelly Regan left the agency in November and Program Coordinator Rafael Lopez, Jr. was promoted to serve as our new Program Director. Our Resource Development Director, Kate Kerchaert, also left in January and was replaced by Barbara Lazarski. A talented teen Junior Youth Worker, VonMarie Luna was hired for a newly created Administrative Assistant position in the fall, as well. One of our Behavioral Specialists, Tywann Gibson, was promoted to FAST Program Coordinator, to fill the vacancy created by Rafael Lopez’ promotion. As with any youth program, a number of front-line workers left and new staff were hired and we are grateful to all of them for their contributions to the important work we do each day.

Staff continued to receive training in the youth work field, including through the UCONN School of Social Work Continuing Education Program, the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits, and the Daniels Memorial Foster Care Conference. Our Program Director, Rafael Lopez and Program Coordinator, Krista Gale also became certified instructors in the Crisis Prevention Institute’s techniques for de-escalation and safe handling of disruptive client behaviors. They began teaching our front-line staff in these techniques.

Our Board of Directors continued to serve with dedication. We thank long-time outgoing Board Members Alan Dornan and Carol Glider for their many years of service. We welcomed to our Board Mark Welzenbach, Kristen Noelle Hatcher, Amethyst Bentham and Kate Kerchaert, our former Resource Development Director.

As always, we would not be able to accomplish any of these things without the support of all of our various funders. We would like to thank our major funders who supported our programs and

operations through grants and donations during the year. This list includes the following corporations, foundations and organizations:

<i>Connecticut Department of Children and Families</i>	<i>Multiple Programs</i>
<i>United Way of the Capital Area</i>	<i>Better Horizons</i>
<i>The Archbishop's Annual Appeal</i>	<i>Program Operations</i>
<i>The Bishop's Fund for Children</i>	<i>Better Horizons</i>
<i>St. John's Episcopal Church Outreach</i>	<i>Program Operations</i>
<i>Camp Burt Tetlow Foundation</i>	<i>Summer Respite/Recreation</i>
<i>George &amp; Grace Long Foundation</i>	<i>Better Horizons</i>
<i>Phoenix Foundation</i>	<i>Junior Youth Workers</i>
<i>Bank of America Foundation</i>	<i>Better Horizons</i>
<i>Charles Nelson Robinson Trust</i>	<i>Better Horizons</i>
<i>Swindells Foundation</i>	<i>Better Horizons</i>
<i>Daphne Seybolt Culpeper Foundation</i>	<i>Better Horizons</i>
<i>Paul Newman/Newman's Own Foundation</i>	<i>Better Horizons</i>
<i>Charles and Doris Bryan Fund (HFPG)</i>	<i>Better Horizons</i>
<i>Hartford Wolfpack</i>	<i>Better Horizons</i>
<i>Aetna</i>	<i>Holiday Parties</i>

Also, we thank essential in-kind donors:

*Shipman & Goodwin, LLP*  
*A.J. Bafundo & Company*  
*New Leaf Landscaping*  
*Organizational Planning Solutions*  
*Connecticut Job Corps Center, New Haven*

We would also like to thank our many individual donors who faithfully support Y-US and our programs, some for many years. We look forward to working with you and many others as we continue serving many wonderful young people!

Respectfully Submitted,

Louis Gilbert  
Executive Director

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



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## **ANNUAL REPORT** **FINANCIAL INFORMATION** **YEAR-ENDING JUNE 30, 2006**

