

## PROPOSAL FOR JOINING HEARTS

**Organization Name:** Lost-n-Found Youth

**Name:** Rick Westbrook

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**Phone Number:** 678-856-7824

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**Short Description of Need:** Housing & support for homeless youth with HIV/AIDS

**Short Description of Impact:** Youth will have access to housing and care.

**Expected Full Program Cost:** \$197,190

**Requested Funding Amount:** \$50,000

### Mission

Lost-n-Found Youth is an Atlanta-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to take homeless lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths up to age 25 off the street and transition them into more permanent housing.

### Organizational Background

Lost-n-Found Youth provides a continuum of service for homeless and at-risk youth ages 13-25 that addresses immediate needs and supports long-term positive outcomes. Initially grassroots and volunteer-run, LNFY saw a critical need for an LGBTQ competent youth shelter and youth aid programs in Atlanta. Over the past six years, LNFY has experienced astonishing growth expanding services to include a crisis hotline and a youth drop-in center.

Current interventions include: 24/7 phone, text, email crisis response; street outreach and drop-in center; 180-day transitional housing (6 beds); clothing, food and hygiene supplies; mental health evaluations/counseling; HIV/STD testing and referrals to health and dental services; assistance for lost or stolen birth certificates, driver's licenses or state ID cards; GED training/testing and education resources; and employment assistance, resume writing, and interview skills training.

LNFY's drop-in Youth Center is open to all youth in need regardless of whether or not they identify as LGBTQ. Youth Center hours are Sunday to Thursday from 10:00 to 5:00 p.m., Friday, from 10:00am to 7:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday noon to 5:00 p.m.

LNFY is Atlanta's leading nonprofit with the specialized expertise on and dedication to the needs of LGBTQ homeless youth taking a special responsibility to ensure their well-being.

## **Organizational Leadership & Experience**

Lost-n-Found Youth is governed by a twelve-member board of directors with day-to-day oversight provided by Executive Director, Rick Westbrook, a long-time activist in the LGBTQ community. LNFY's Deputy Director for Operations, Nasheedah Muhammed, M.Ed., serves on the board of the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies at UCSF, and AVAC PxRoar Advocate, and as a consultant for the AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta.

Lost-n-Found Youth's HIV programs are managed by Brittany Garner, LMSW, Deputy Director for Programs. Brittany was a collaborator in the 2015 Homeless Youth Count and Needs Assessment project by Georgia State University and she has authored several papers and made presentations on the topics of LGBTQ youth and homelessness. Brittany has an Associate of Science (psychology) from Georgia Perimeter College, a Bachelor of Arts (psychology and women's, gender, and sexuality studies) and a Master of Social Work from Georgia State University.

This year, Antwone Williams joined the staff as the Linkage to Care Specialist, our first staff position dedicated to working on HIV-related case management. Antwone ensures that our clients receive HIV testing, education, and warm referrals for additional community services. He provides clients with linkage to care throughout their time with our organization. He also serves as an important liaison to other partner agencies so that clients receive the comprehensive support that is so important to their successful transition to independent and self-sufficient living. We have been able to get all HIV positive clients who have worked with LTC Case Manager housed which is a new milestone for us as an agency.

## **Program Implementation & Administration**

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

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LNFY's street outreach team covers a variety of routes and locations (e.g. Downtown, Midtown, and the West End) in Atlanta twice a week. At program entry, each client is assigned a case manager who works with them to create an individualized service plan. Case managers coordinate with Community Advanced Practice Nurses (CAPN), Positive Impact/MISTER, and the Fulton County Department of Health and Wellness to provide testing and access to PrEP and PEP as needed.

While some testing is offered onsite every two weeks, other services, especially for those who are HIV+ require transportation to offsite locations. LNFY will schedule and assist in transporting youth to appointments for linkage to care, with a case manager in attendance to help guide youth through what can often be a stressful process. In addition, MISTER provides on-site STI testing and Fulton County Health Department provides HIV, TB, and STI testing once a week. LNFY is in talks with MISTER and Fulton County about expanding the partnership to include PEP and PrEP services, and linkage to care within 72 hours.

Through specific strength-based case management for multiethnic sexual minority youth, as well as a harm reduction and trauma informed lens, LNFY case managers build rapport and work with clients to create goals around their status—be it adherence to care or keeping their partner safe. LNFY fosters an environment that fights HIV stigma, leading to more conversations about HIV and disclosure. It is important that clients feel safe in an environment that understands their lives and their sexual health needs.

There exists a stigma towards HIV from other providers and we have had to become strong advocate for our clients. We have also experienced stigma in the LGBTQ community and high risk communities. Reducing stigma towards people living with HIV/AIDS is critical to ensuring that our clients receive the support they need.

## **OUTCOMES**

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So far this year, LNFY has seen 336 youth of whom 40 have disclosed their positive status. We believe more youth are HIV+ but have not yet disclosed their status. The desired outcomes for our service to them and future clients is to housing and care by providing:

- 1) Space in LNFY's Youth House for up to 180 days while they work towards independence;
- 2) Assistance in obtaining employment and permanent housing so that they can become self-sufficient; and
- 3) Linkage to care, HIV/AIDS education, and adherence counseling.

These services are particularly targeted at high-risk young gay and bisexual men and young transgender women of color. Outcomes are tracked using Apricot, a secure web-based case management software. Using this software, LNFY can track self-disclosure of HIV status, and link those who are in need of care as well as preventative services.

## **METHODOLOGY**

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As the only providers of transitional housing accepting specifically LGBTQ HIV-positive youth in Metro Atlanta, Lost-n-Found is committed to providing culturally competent, ethical, and effective services to homeless LGBTQ youth and young adults. In addition, the majority of LNFY's staff identify as LGBTQ giving the organization a high level of cultural competency in this

area. The True Colors Fund's 2015 report, *Serving Our Youth*, cites such staff qualities as one of the three major factors of success for organizations serving LGBTQ youth.

The various programs and services offered by the agency are grounded in developmental and practice frameworks that are at the forefront of systematic and effective strategies for youth homelessness and HIV interventions:

- **Emerging Adulthood:** The prevalence of risky behavior peaks during the emerging adulthood stage.
- The **Minority Stress** conceptual model posits that sexual minorities face risk of mental health problems in their lives because they experience chronic stress that is a result of their sexual minority status.
- **Gay Affirmative Practice** affirms a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity as an equally positive experience and expression to heterosexual identity.
- The **Empowerment Approach** in social work practice focuses on both the individual and their environment, with special attention on the oppression that people experience and how it affects their being.
- **Harm reduction** is a set of practical strategies aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use and sexual risk behaviors.
- **Motivational Interviewing**, paired with **Transtheoretical Change** (stages of change), works on facilitating and engaging intrinsic motivation within the client in order to change behavior.
- Instead of seeing youth as problems to be managed, **Positive Youth Development** views youth as a resource that is to be developed.
- **Strength-Based Case Management** focuses on six principles: concentrating on client strengths, looking to community for support, empowering client's self-determination, strong relationship between client and case manager, intervention through outreach and advocacy, and empowering the client to grow and improve.
- **Trauma Informed Care** recognizes the various ways trauma can impact the way youth access services and creates paths to recovery and resists retraumatization of clients.



### Shane's Story\*

At the age of 16, I had survived two conversion camps, four suicide attempts, and an exorcism just because I'm gay. I successfully proved to the court that my father's practices on me were inhumane, my emancipation was filed and I was free to be me. A man in Atlanta offered me a place to get on my feet and after refusing to sleep with him, I found myself and my things in Piedmont Park. Nothing like seeing snow for the first time by waking up covered in it. After being raped by three men, I gained the mindset that if they are going to

take it anyway, I might as well get paid so I began escorting which led to drug use.

One day a man told me of a place that helps people in situations like mine and he even would give me a ride. I agreed but I remember thinking this old man is just trying to take advantage of me. But that wasn't the case. Brittany, the deputy director, conducted my intake and I was on my way to the house. I stayed for three months, saved \$6,000, and me and a friend went in together on a condo. I thought I was set but not even a month later, I woke up at 4:00 a.m. surrounded by fire. I was rushed to the hospital with critical injuries. When I woke up, I was told there was nothing to go home to. I called the only person I could, Rick Westbrook, and once again they put shoes on my feet and clothes on my back.

I am currently diagnosed HIV+ and having trouble coming to terms with it. Rick saw me struggling and stepped in to get me on meds. Now I am undetectable. I owe so much to this wonderful organization including the very breath I just took. When I have no fight left, there LNFY is. When I need clean clothes for a job interview, there LNFY is or if I need someone to talk to, there LNFY is.

*\* At Lost-n-Found Youth we respect everyone who comes to us for help – and many are working toward a fresh start in life. So while their stories are true, client names and images may have been changed to protect their privacy. Thank you for understanding.*

## Program Budget

2018 Budget Item	Amount	Budget Notes
Case Management	\$37,005	Case management staff for direct program services. 1.5 FTE
Client Transportation	4,750	MARTA passes distributed to clients in need of transportation to HIV and support services.
Youth Center	\$80,400	Rent
Youth House Rent	24,297	Rent and utilities
Resident House Manager	44,298	Salaries, Wages & Taxes
Program Management	7,210	Deputy Director of Programs. 0.2 FTE
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$197,960</b>	