



Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity

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“HOMELESS YOUTH SPEARHEAD PREVENTION FORUM HOSTED BY SENATOR MIKE MCGUIRE”

Mill Valley, CA (December 14, 2017)— Inspired by the words of **Albert Einstein**, “You cannot solve a problem by the same thinking that created it,” the **Youth Team** from **Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity (AHO)** are changing the narrative around homelessness to prevention with a Town Hall Forum “**THINK DIFFERENT: A Preventative Approach for Homeless Youth**” hosted by **Senator Mike McGuire on Monday, September 25 6 to 8pm Guzman Hall Dominican University of California.**

Three members of the AHO Youth Team of previously homeless youth, Juliana, Christina and Tony have been collaborating with **Senator Mike McGuire, Mary Jane Burke, Superintendent, Marin County Office of Education, Jessica Colvin, TUHSD Wellness Director** at Drake, Redwood and Tam high schools, **Dominican University and College of Marin** to help deepen the community’s understanding about homeless youth and ask that the community **THINK DIFFERENT** about approaches to youth homelessness in Marin County. **Anna Pletcher, JD**, former Chair of the Marin Women’s Commission is the event moderator.

The Forum will share a model that is preventative, youth-friendly, age-appropriate, cost-effective and sustainable, that inspires the community to get involved in the solution. Additional sponsors include **Starbucks, Rocco Pizza, Sweet Things Bakery, CMCM and West Brooklyn Pizza.** AHO Youth Team’s “Youth Homelessness to Hope” murals will be exhibited and **CMCM, Marin’s local cable station, will live stream the event.**

The focus of the Forum is the growing trend of youth homelessness with the voices of youth who have experienced the struggle sharing their stories and Senator McGuire, Jessica Colvin and other community leaders participating in a panel discussion.

Homeless youth in Marin is a growing trend. According to Mary Jane Burke, Superintendent of Marin County Schools Office of Education 2015-2016 Cal PADS data, 983 students were documented as homeless in Marin County schools compared to 152 students documented ten years ago which is an 85% increase. **Marin’s HUD 2015 Point in Time count reported that homeless young people represent 28% of the total homeless population,** yet they were never included in the County’s 10-year plan to end homelessness.

While Marin’s January 2017 HUD Point in Time count appears to show the numbers for homeless youth have decreased to only 11% of the homeless population, this number does not take into account hundreds of non-system youths served by AHO each year. These youths have no support without AHO because they are not mentally ill or former foster youth.

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When addressing homelessness at its core, as AHO does, the cost of intervention is minimal, and exorbitant costs of addressing chronic, long-term adult homelessness can be avoided. For example, **the cost of one year in Marin County Jail is \$78,000 according to Captain Navarro of the Marin County Jail, San Quentin’s cost is \$75,560 as reported in the June 2017 LA Times, while intervention through AHO costs approximately \$1,000.**

AHO is Marin’s only nonprofit serving homeless youth that provides young people ages 18 to 25 everything a parent might help with through their critical transition to adulthood. A Stanford study, “Connected by 25”, reports that if youth do not receive the support they need at this critical stage they will be 50% more likely to become the adult homeless.

Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity (AHO), is Marin’s only nonprofit that provides comprehensive, youth-friendly, preventative ‘safety net’ and hand-up for these young people to *not end up* as homeless adults. **In 13 years, over 1,759 are now in stable housing, working several jobs, completing their educations and “giving back” to AHO through the AHO Youth Team projects like the Town Hall Forum.**

AHO’s 99-member Alliance for Youth partners of businesses, individuals and faith communities involved in the solution to youth homelessness provide pro bono support of free major and minor dental work, professional counseling for as long as it takes, employers that fast track AHO youth into employment, cell phones, eyeglasses, DMV identity cards, leadership opportunities and more. AHO is a one-stop shop for whatever a youth needs to achieve their personal goals.

AHO is changing lives and building youth leaders by engaging homeless youth, their peers and the community in the solution by THINKING DIFFERENT.

You too can become part of the solution. Call or email AHO today to help us create a healthier, stronger more compassionate community for ALL people. <http://www.ahoproject.org/>
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About Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity

The mission of Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity is to provide a “safety net” of stable housing, guidance and community connections for previously abused, abandoned and/or neglected Marin County young adults, ages 18 to 25, who are not supported through the funding streams for foster youth, juvenile services or mentally ill youth.

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The Forum will focus on the growing trend of youth homelessness, where the voices of youth who have experienced this struggle will share their stories and Senator McGuire, Jessica Colvin and other community leaders on the panel. Two hundred individuals, community and business leaders are expected to attend.