



The Advocate

PROVIDING HOMES. EMBRACING CHILDREN. FOSTERING FAMILIES. **SPRING 2017**

A Bold Response to the Sobering Statistics

Many of you have met some of our amazing older youth living in the Angels' Arms homes. You know that they are children who lost their homes and families and need the love and support of their community to guide them through their childhood.

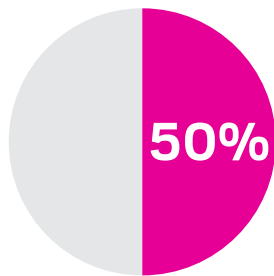
But it doesn't end there—at least not with Angels' Arms. These youth need a family. They need direction, wisdom, love and opportunities as they transition into adulthood and out of foster care.

That's why we created Life Launch, a program to work with the youth living in Angels' Arms' homes. Launch Pad is a transitional apartment for our aging-out youth who still need guidance, structure and opportunities to gain independence and increase their chance for success. You can read all about the first two residents of the Launch Pad in this newsletter.

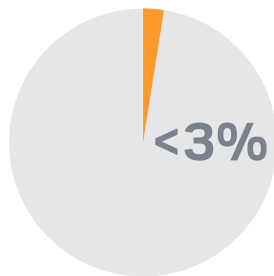
We are all in this together. We can all play a part in these young people's lives and help them find their way in the world.

HOW CAN WE AS A SOCIETY ALLOW "OUR" FOSTER YOUTH TO PERPETUATE THESE NUMBERS?

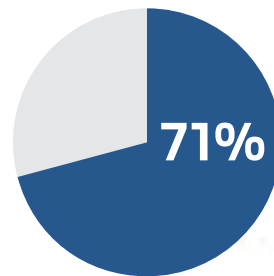
FOSTER YOUTH IN AMERICA



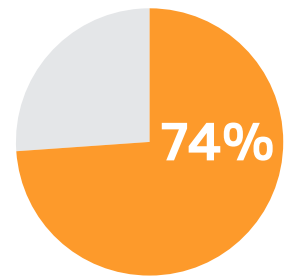
ONLY HALF WILL BE EMPLOYED BY AGE 24



LESS THAN 3% WILL EARN A COLLEGE DEGREE



71% OF FEMALES WILL BE PREGNANT BY AGE 21



74% OF INCARCERATED INMATES HAVE BEEN IN FOSTER CARE



1 IN 5 WILL BE HOMELESS AFTER AGE 18

Meet Josh,



your typical high school senior. He's a sports fanatic who loves basketball, works part time at Panera Bread, and enjoys spending time with his friends. But dig a little deeper and you will find that there is nothing typical about Josh. Throughout his young 18 years, he's endured more trials and tribulations than most of his fellow classmates. At age 11, he entered foster care with his four siblings. Most of his brothers and sisters were split up in different foster homes. Eventually, three of his siblings were adopted by a family in northern Missouri. Josh and his older brother, being of the age when you can choose to opt-out of the adoption process, chose to do just that. They liked their foster family, their school and had no desire to move away and live on a farm. Eventually, his older brother chose to leave the foster care system all together and is living on his own. Josh doesn't have much contact with him and chose to stay with Angels' Arms foster parents, Phyllis and Eldon Hackman. He recognizes that his opportunities for success are greatly enhanced with his foster family. He doesn't want to become a statistic.

“ Josh has a sincere heart and many outstanding qualities, one of which is honesty. He is not afraid to share his foster care experience with others and wants to positively impact youth in the system, helping them transition from foster care into adulthood. ”

During the last four years with Phyllis and Eldon, Josh has flourished. He has a 98% attendance rate at school, has been playing on the varsity basketball team all four years of his high school career and is looking forward to graduating in May 2017 and exploring his college opportunities. He will spend his freshman year attending St. Louis Community College – Meramec with hopes of transferring to either Mizzou or SEMO in the future. His ultimate goal is to become a social worker or a counselor, helping youth in foster care. We're not surprised to hear this. Josh's foster mom Phyllis stated numerous times that “Josh has a sincere heart and many outstanding qualities, one of which is honesty. He is not afraid to share his foster care experience with others and wants to positively impact youth in the system, helping them transition from foster care into adulthood.”

Statistically, Josh is beating the odds. As he prepares to graduate high school, only 50% of fellow foster youth across the country will be doing the same. And what's worse, only 3% of the high school graduates will earn a college degree. Many of them will end up homeless or incarcerated.

We, at Angels' Arms, are rallying behind Josh and will be there every step of the way as he journeys through college and beyond. His mentor Don has been instrumental in helping Josh navigate through his last year of high school. “In the short time that I have gotten to know Josh, I have come to find that he is a very passionate young man with a very big heart and it shows when he speaks of his brother(s) and family. He has great admiration for the sport of basketball and I hope that he continues to push for his goals and dreams in life. Out of all his great qualities that he has the one that I admire the most is his focus and not allowing things to distract him from it. I see so many youth that don't have that focus factor, but that is not Josh's case at all. He displays high focus and determination on the goals that he set before him. The best recent example was his determination to get a car. He worked as many days and hours that he could to save up for his first car and I truly commend him on that achievement.”

The Angels' Arms Junior Board

is comprised of 21 young professionals whose primary goal is to spread the mission of Angels' Arms throughout St. Louis and beyond while raising funds and attracting new supporters and volunteers. Since their inception in 2005, the Junior Board has raised over \$750,000 for Angels' Arms.

There are many ways to become involved with the Angels' Arms Junior Board. We are always looking for new members to support our mission. If you are interested in learning more about the Junior Board, please complete the online application at AngelsArms.org.



FUNDRAISING

Participating in Junior Board events is a fun way for young men and women to meet new people while helping raise funds and promote awareness for Angels' Arms. The Junior Board hosts two major events per year, including the annual Sip & Savor in the spring and the Soulard Bar Bounce in the fall.

A MESSAGE FROM ANGELS' ARMS JUNIOR BOARD PRESIDENT, HEATHER JONES

"Thank you to everyone who has supported Angels' Arms Junior Board events over the years. 2016 was our most successful year to date, with both Sip & Savor and Bar Bounce having record turnouts. I'm so proud of what the Junior Board accomplished in the past year, and I can't wait to see how our hard work pays off in 2017. Be sure to mark your calendars for the fifth annual Sip & Savor on May 19th, and our 12th Bar Bounce on October 7th!"



UPCOMING JUNIOR BOARD EVENTS



5th Annual Sip & Savor
Food and Beverage Event

Friday, May 19, 2017, 6-9pm



12th Annual Bar Bounce
in Soulard

Saturday, October 7, 2017, 12-6pm

Members

Maria Chandler
Angels' Arms

Kristin Charlesworth
*Family and Community
Therapy Services*

Maureen Decker
Nooter/Eriksen

Kevin Doll
Mills Window and Door

Mike Flavin *C.J. Thomas
Company*

Alex Frank *The Law Offices
of Jonathan P. Beck*

Jennifer Gebhardt
Purk & Associates, P.C.

Megan Gordon*
*Cigna Healthcare
(Vice President)*

Gabe Jones *Archdiocese
of St. Louis*

Heather Jones* *Lipic's
Engagement (President)*

Stephanie Jones
Purk & Associates, P.C.

Claire Juodis
Christ the King School

Elizabeth Koske *Great River
Technologies*

Shamonie Latham
AB InBev

Tracy Lyons *St. Louis
University High School*

James Milford
HK Financial Services, Inc.

Aaron Pollard*
RubinBrown (Treasurer)

Jordan Shelton*
*Lindenwood University
(Secretary)*

Amy Spellmeyer
Cushman & Wakefield

Lindsey Van Duyne
World Wide Technology

Jenny Van Hulle *AB InBev*

Life Launch Takes Off With Addition of the Launch Pad



Jeff and Jake Wheat

THE BIG 2-1!

The big 21st birthday. Most young adults look forward to this milestone with great anticipation and excitement. They can't wait to be "legal." In reality, for most 20-year olds, turning 21 doesn't really drastically change their lives. Their parents don't cut them off from all financial support just because they've celebrated this rite of passage into adulthood. But for young adults still in the foster care

system in Missouri, their 21st birthday means they've "aged out"—they will no longer be eligible for benefits they received from the state while in foster care. Their lives will change drastically and they are expected to become independent adults overnight.

In reality, many youth who age out of foster care lack the concrete resources, independent life skills and social networks and relationships to be successful. As a result, youth who age out face multiple challenges and have poorer outcomes across a host of domains compared with their same-age peers in the general population. Without the proper preparation for this huge step, young adults aging out of the foster care system face a much greater risk of incarceration, drug addition, pregnancy and other high-risk behaviors.

Currently, there are 19 youth in the Angels' Arms Life Launch program. To help prepare young people for the transition to adulthood and aging out of the foster system, Angels' Arms introduced the Life Launch program in 2015. Life Launch pairs teens and young adults, ages 14–21, in foster care with their own mentor. "Mentoring

by a caring, well-trained adult can provide children and adolescents in foster care with adult support to develop the skills they need to make a successful transition to independence" ("Mentoring Youth in Foster Care" from reachga.org website).

Angels' Arms Life Launch mentors participate in training to prepare them to better serve the needs of their mentees. Mentors help youth with life skills, career exploration and college preparation as well as collaborating with other agencies that focus on the aging out population. Through monthly get-togethers, these mentors develop a trusting relationship with their Life Launch partners, encourage them to explore interests and work with them to consider future goals—educational, career and even financial. By working one-on-one with youth, mentors help educate, support and prepare their mentees for life after foster care. Mentors use their own life experiences and knowledge to help their mentees discover how to develop a plan that will turn their aspirations into reality. Life Launch participants learn that if you can dream it, you can do it, but you have to have a plan to get there.

FULFILLING A DREAM

When space became available in the South County Angels' Arms home, the Life Launch team saw the opportunity to fulfill a dream—to take Life Launch a step further and help with the transition to total independence. This space

Become a Life Launch Mentor...

HELP YOUNG ADULTS TRANSITION INTO RESPONSIBLE ADULTS

If you're 21 or older and are interested in using your life experience to help serve as a positive role model/coach to an Angels' Arm youth in our Life Launch program, we want to hear from you! Training is required to help you learn how to better support your mentee's educational, personal and career needs. You will meet with your mentee at least once a month and participate in special group events with other Life Launch youth and mentors. For more information, please contact Bess Wilfong at 314-842-8400.



Jake and Jeff with their foster sister during the holidays

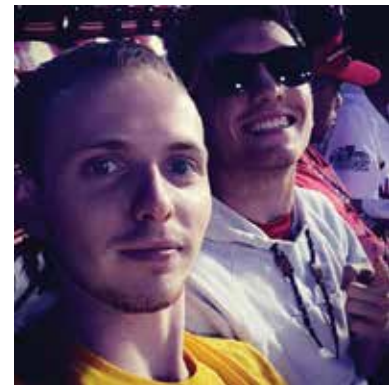
“Knowing there’s always somewhere to turn and knowing someone is always there for you makes all the difference in this world. Angels’ Arms is family.”

**ANGELS’ ARMS FOUNDER/ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BESS WILFONG**

could be reconfigured to create an apartment to help prepare Angels’ Arms residents aging out with the transition to life on their own after foster care. Dubbed the “Launch Pad,” this new apartment welcomed its first residents in March 2017.

Twin brothers Jeff and Jake Wheat turned 21 in February and were the perfect candidates for this new extension of Life Launch. Careful screening was conducted to make sure that this would be a good fit for Jeff and Jake. Both young men were required to complete an application and an individual interview with Bess Wilfong, Angels’ Arms Executive Director, and the Life Launch Coordinator. Their foster mother also was consulted to determine the likelihood of their success in this new, independent environment. Jeff bubbled over with excitement when he and his brother learned that they would be the first to inhabit the Launch Pad. “We’re just very glad to have the opportunity—of course we won’t let you guys down. I’m more than thankful. I don’t know how to repay you guys. With our success...that’s how we’re going to repay you guys! You’ll see!”

Jeff and Jake had to agree to fulfill certain requirements when living in the Launch Pad. They must remain in college and be employed. They must demonstrate their ability to manage their money. Both young men opened savings accounts with Angels’ Arms partner, Lindell Bank. Regular meetings with the Angels’ Arms Life Launch Coordinator will help them set financial goals and ensure that they are working toward them. They will pay rent and pay a utility fee to help prepare them for the real world. They may be eligible to have some of their rent payments returned to them, contingent upon successful program completion.



Jake and Jeff enjoying their first Cardinals game with Angels’ Arms.

Jeff and Jake on graduation day, one of their proudest accomplishments to date.

Both brothers have been Angels’ Arms residents since they were 17 and have worked diligently to overcome previous obstacles to their education. They graduated from high school last June and are attending St. Louis Community College – Meramec. While working on their general education courses, Jeff is considering a career in Communications and PR, while Jake is contemplating civil engineering. They enjoy working out together in their free time. Jeff is employed at i9 Sports and Jake works at Elicia’s Pizza. Jeff and Jake are looking forward to having their own space and are excited to take on the responsibilities that will be required of them when living on their own.

A New Start for the Tripp Family



Shane and Jenny Tripp in front of their new Angels' Arms home.

ON SEPTEMBER 5, 2016, our Angels' Arms home in Ferguson was destroyed by a fire. The foster family was out of town and thankfully no one was hurt, but all their belongings were lost. "We came home to a devastating realization that our beautiful home on Maple Avenue had caught fire. It was so surreal. But the Angels' Arms staff told us that one day our lives would get put back together," said foster mom Jenny Tripp. Jenny and her husband Shane have been with Angels' Arms since 2012 and are therapeutic foster parents specializing in caring for foster children with higher needs.

Over the last six months, Angels' Arms has been busy working on relocating the Tripp family to a new home in South St. Louis County. Jen Wallner with the Wallner Team was instrumental in helping us find the perfect house for the Tripps. We had numerous

individuals donate furniture to furnish the bedrooms, dining room and family room. We had dozens of volunteers help with minor repairs and renovations and cleaning the home. Also, our friends at Community Associations Institute (CAI) held a drive in December to collect household items for the family such as bedding, dinnerware, gift cards, cleaning supplies and much more.

After weeks of renovations and last minute finishing touches, we were finally able to hand over the keys to Jenny and Shane on January 11, 2017. "We got to enter our new residence and were blown away by how much work was done to ready the home for our family and the children in our care. There were so many volunteers and donors that made all our wishes come true, and we are looking forward to starting the new year in our new home."

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Kaplan University of St. Louis



"Kaplan University is delighted to support wonderful non-profits like Angels' Arms who make a world of difference helping our neighbors in need.

Our employees love volunteering, giving back and making our communities better, which is closely aligned with our mission as educators," said Dr. Suzanne Marshall-Caby, Kaplan University President for its St. Louis Campus.

In 2016, more than 1,100 Kaplan University employees put in 4,200+ volunteer hours helping 95 local non-profits across the country like Angels' Arms through Kaplan's Serve-a-Thon initiative.



INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT ANGELS' ARMS:

- Office work in preparation of upcoming events
- Database data entry
- Organizational opportunities
- Yard work
- Skilled work at the foster homes (electrical, painting, plumbing, etc.)

UPCOMING EVENTS



Fri. May 19

Sip & Savor

Hilton Frontenac St. Louis
6-9 pm

A food and beverage tasting event (beer, wine and spirits), over a dozen St. Louis food vendors, amazing raffle items, live music by the band Fresh Heir and an interactive photo booth experience. VIP and regular tickets are available.

TICKETS

Regular Ticket: \$50

VIP Ticket: \$70

Sat. Oct. 7

Bar Bounce

Historic Soulard
Neighborhood
12-6 pm

Join 1,000 of our closest friends in Soulard for one of STL's largest bar crawls. Follow a pre-assigned route to six fun bars and enjoy an exclusive Angels' Arms Bar Bounce t-shirt and FREE BEER with each ticket purchase! Plus great food and drink specials throughout the day.

Sat. Nov. 18

Stepping Out for the Angels

River City Casino and Hotel
6-10 pm

Stepping Out is Angels' Arms' signature fundraising event, directly benefitting the foster children living in our twelve Angels' Arms homes. Join our special guest emcee and host of Show-Me St. Louis, Heidi Glaus, for an evening of cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, exclusive silent and live auction packages, gourmet seated dinner and a moving presentation from our youth.

Board of Directors

Mark Conrad
Gaines Dittrich
Robert Dolrenry
Adam Goldstein
Mary Grasse
Michelle Haley
Tom Hartnagel
Jeff Hewitt
Stephanie Hill
Brandon Loeschner
Board Vice President
Chris Madison
Board Treasurer
Donna Mitchell
Robert Miromonti
Mary Meyer
Board Secretary
Steve Peate
Lisa Pepper
Tom Reed
Manuel Rivera
Jim Ruebsam
John Siefert
Tom Smallwood
Dr. John Stein

Lindsey Stokes
Romondous Stover
Amy Sullivan
Chris Swenson
Eric Verhulst
Board President
Colleen Wasinger
Tim Yeaglin

Board Member Emeritus

Stephen Hampe
Dr. Frank Wood

Honorary Board

Julie Buck
Ramon Gallardo
Craig Hingle
Kathryn Jamboretz
Dan Leach
Dan McLaughlin
Laura Dierberg Padousis
Dave Peacock
Eric Schmitt
Missouri State Treasurer
David Zickel

Every Child DESERVES a Halo

tutoring 3 meals a day EYECARE SAFE HOME GOZ Loving family UTILITIES CHILDHOOD Mental care

When you sign up with HALO, our monthly giving program, you're giving foster children in the St. Louis area homes and lasting opportunities.

angels' arms

To join HALO, visit angelsarms.org/halo



angelsarms.org

12128A TESSON FERRY ROAD
ST. LOUIS, MO 63128

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Louis, MO
Permit No. 1247

FOLLOW US



Grants and Special Donations

A heartfelt thanks to **Bob's Discount Furniture** for their \$1,000 donation in support of our foster families.

We are happy to have the support of the **St. Louis Italian Invitational Golf Tournament**, and thank them for their \$6,000 gift.

Angels' Arms was blessed to receive a very generous \$10,000 grant from **The Saigh Foundation**.

Thanks to our friends from **St. Louis Cardinals Care** for their \$2,400 grant to support our foster families.

Concord Village Lions presented Angels' Arms with a \$2,500 gift from the proceeds raised during their annual golf tournament.

Thank you to **Youthbridge Community Foundation** for their \$5,000 gift.

Angels' Arms is grateful to **The Dan Mueller Foundation** for their generous \$13,000 gift from the proceeds raised during their annual golf tournament.

Angels' Arms was honored to receive a \$10,000 grant from the **Trio Foundation of St. Louis**.

Zonta Club of St. Louis showed their support with a gift of \$2,500.

Many thanks to the following supporters for their generous donations to help continue to push Life Launch forward:

- Dana Brown Charitable Trust** \$15,000
- Employees Community Fund of Boeing St. Louis** \$3,000
- Kellwood Foundation** \$25,000
- Wells Fargo Foundation** \$5,000

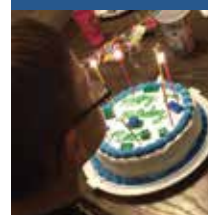
VISIT www.angelsarms.org
FOR A COMPLETE AND CURRENT
LIST OF ANGELS' ARMS
VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS.



Birthday Pal

Have you been looking for ways to get more involved with Angels' Arms? Why not become a Birthday Pal? As part of the Birthday Pal program, you can help make lasting memories for some deserving children. John Kreitler and the staff at Schaefer Auto Body in Webster Groves have provided parties for several children,

including personalized cakes and gifts. When asked why they do it, John simply replied, "Because something that seems so small makes such a huge impact."



We are grateful to Schaefer Auto Body and all of our birthday pals. To learn more about sponsoring a birthday party, contact Amber Odom, amber@angelsarms.org.