

LIVING ON THE EDGE

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Outside In provides health care, counseling, referral services and other needs. "Outside In was started 30 years ago by lesbian separatists for free health care for homeless people," Favor says.

The health clinic offers Western, Chinese and naturopathic medicine; HIV and dental care; and a needle exchange program for IV drug users. These services are free for homeless people and discounted for low-income individuals.

Outside In also provides crisis counseling and activities to build skills and promote alternatives to living on the streets. "We work out goals like housing and jobs," Favor explains. "We do referrals, job training and other skills."

Transitional housing also is available at the YWCA. Later this year, Outside In will move to new facilities up the street, where all programs will be under one roof.

Another component of its services is VOICES, a weekly support group for homeless sexual minority or questioning youth. Last year, 57 people attended the meetings.

The HIV+ Youth Housing Program provides two transitional beds for kids who are HIV-positive. They also are given medical, educational and employment assistance for independent living.

New Avenues serves kids younger than 18, such as Brandy, Stephanie and Chantel. Programs include a multiservice center, street outreach, drop-in services, education, case management, medical, food and shelter services.

To sleep, homeless kids use youth shelters—



The Seattle-based Pride Foundation recently presented Outside In a \$1,000 grant for a mural at its new housing facility

or the streets themselves. "I have squatted in parks, Southeast Portland, and I couch-surf," Chantel says.

She prefers squatting the best. "We squatted under a bridge, but the cops busted us. It was nice—only people we knew were squatting there. As long as we aren't destroying anything, we should be able to stay there."

She, Brandy and Stephanie also sleep at the Porchlight Youth Shelter, which is housed in the same building as Greenhouse. It allows youth to drop in anytime to sleep, while the neighboring Streetlight is more strict; youth only can sleep there at night and must be in case management.

Janus Youth Services is the umbrella for about 20 different services for youth in the Portland area. These include Porchlight, Streetlight, a transitional housing program and the outreach program Yellow Brick Road. Volunteers roam the streets at night carrying first aid, hygiene,

resource information and clothing for homeless kids.

Although the shelters offer a clean, safe environment for kids to sleep, they lack adequate facilities for transgendered youth. "One of the biggest challenges in our shelters is sleeping accommodations, especially for transgender kids," Kerr notes.

For example, biological males still must sleep in male dorms even if they identify as female. To alleviate this problem, some shelters have separate rooms for privacy; others partition off areas.

For socialization needs, homeless kids turn to the Sexual Minority Youth Recreation Center. "There is recreation, usually food, kids can sleep on the couches, socialize with peers, do homework," says Kathy Belge, program manager for Vanguard Youth Services, which oversees some of SMYRC's programs. She estimates about 19 percent of the youth who use the center are homeless.

SMYRC works closely with Outside In, especially with the HIV prevention programs, and has a case manager who works one-on-one with the youth. Two foster homes collaborate with the Boys and Girls Aid Society.

The youth targeted for the foster home program aren't so much street-affiliated, Belge says. "When kids are entrenched in the street culture, they aren't likely to do well in foster homes because there are rules."

But to survive on the streets, kids need more than just the youth services. They need each other.

"We are family here," Chantel says. "It's not like that at home. I have found a bond

down here, the love and caring."

Stephanie agrees. "We take care of each other."

Former street youth who now have a job and apartment haven't forgotten their less fortunate friends. "They come back and take care of us," Chantel says. "One kid—he works downtown—he comes around with a pocketful of change."

This family also makes the streets seem safer. "It's very, very few times I have been alone downtown and scared," Chantel says. "Within five minutes, you see someone you know," Stephanie agrees.

But there are rules on the streets; fierce loyalty is demanded. Chantel tells the story of a newly homeless youth stealing from another kid. "Other kids threw him off the bridge," she

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