

TEEN FEED TIMES

Winter 2004



USM Online!

Come check out our new website at www.usministry.net

The latest updates, pictures, youth poetry, and a message board to share your thoughts, concerns, or comments.



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Perseverance and the Holidays

We're approaching the holidays, a time that can be counted on to be particularly painful and lonely for our young people. We strive to be strong and supportive - a tough task lately. October bore significant loss, including the death of a gentleman who had been a part of the Ave for years. He got work at Fisherman's Terminal, a success turned tragic when he fell and was not successfully revived from the water. As we help his friends deal with their pain, we've also experienced our own loss. Kim, our office goddess of over three years, was laid off. USM has weathered budget difficulties in the past, but none as extreme as the crisis we now face. The office isn't the same without Kim; she is much missed by youth and colleagues alike.

Through whatever we experience as an agency and as individuals, we agree

that the youth are the priority: they **must** be taken care of. Our services must not be interrupted, our programs must continue, and the youth must not be negatively impacted by our struggles. Our kids have been let down by virtually everyone they have placed trust in; we refuse to add to that pain.

Staff often act as "models" for those served, teaching by example. Hasn't been that way for me lately - rather, my greatest teachers of perseverance have been our guests, for whom facing every new day is an act of faith and resilience. These teachers include the young man who described caring for his addicted mother as a little boy, and vowed that his son not have the same experience: "It's up to me to break this cycle." Also included: the young woman who asked if we could get her a clock with batteries - she was determined to attend

her college classes while sleeping under a bridge, and the group of fifteen youth who spent the afternoon with merchants discussing how both groups could better work together, as residents of the Ave. It's true that our agency status is grim; we need all the help possible to get through this time. But looking at what we see our guests surviving on a daily basis and their inspiring ability to maintain belief in a better future, what else could we do, if not persevere and carry on? I couldn't look our guests in the eyes if we didn't fight to remain solidly at their side. As we ask our friends for support through this difficult period, I thank you for your continued commitment to our young people and the services we provide. We wish you all safe and loving holidays, and thank you for helping our guests find the same.

Tele Aadsen
Direct Service Supervisor

The Director's Cut: The Reverse Side Has a Reverse Side

Lately, I've been struck with how everything seems to take longer than expected. And in that unbudgeted time all the twists and turns of unfolding circumstance yield up remarkable events and extraordinary people that could not have been planned for. And amid the

unexpected, the challenging, and the uncertain, reassurance and affirmation are constantly found in the number of good people with stout hearts who always appear to make critical contributions to a shared cause that binds all of us together.

To move beyond our current trials and divisions and

the strains of the moment we focus on what is larger than us. Then, in as little time as it takes 2 good citizens to meet and share the burden of a given task, common dedication to . . . something more . . . creates a team of volunteers who restore faith in themselves, each other
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Everyone Is Old in Winter—Notes on Teen Feed’s Age Increase

Today marks one week during which Teen Feed has served youth and young adults including the ages 22 to 25. And starting tomorrow, we will begin checking ID through the entire month of November—then we will see what this age change has actually done to the demographics of our program.

But this last week has seen a few superficial changes. New faces abound for some reason, and not all of them appear to be over 21. And of course, there are some new, old faces; the youth who aged out of Teen Feed in the last year or two who have since had to scrounge for food throughout the day.

And yet, with this change—which seems such a radical change from what Teen Feed has done for the last several

years—has not brought the dangers that many anticipated. The dynamic of Teen Feed feels the same; just ask our advocate volunteers present each week, or our outreach case managers Tele and Megan. During this last week there has been little in the way of drama or incident. It appears as though this population was ready, has been ready, for this change.

On the other side of the picture, behind the kitchen counter, our volunteers and team leaders can certainly feel a change, one which we all anticipated. Numbers have been as high the last two weeks as they were most of the summer, when we see many guests just passing through Seattle. Of course, this whole year there has been a steady increase in numbers, so it is probably not entirely due to

this recent change. The fact remains, however, that we now regularly serve

more youth than the last several years. This is a change that will fall hard on our support base and necessitates our community to make an even stronger effort. With this increase in the youth we serve and the onset of winter we now need your help more than ever.

Colin Knight,
Teen Feed Coordinator



“We need help right now to get through our day so we can keep helping our youth get through their days.”

-The Director’s Cut

The Director’s Cut—continued from page 1

and the inherent goodness that remains in a world saturated in cynicism, fear and strife.

USM is still struggling to emerge from a critical financial situation. Fortunately, good people with solid credentials are appearing as lighthouses to guide us away from the shoals. What is needed is being provided.

But, tomorrow will have to wait until we finish today. We need some help right now to get through our day so we can keep

helping our youth get through their days. Please consider a generous donation during our current lean times. Make an investment in an agency that provides year-round care and service to young people without homes. Plant the seeds now and watch their fruit flourish in the spring. Thank you, and All The Best for your Holidays.

Mark J. Snow
Executive Director



Service Links for Youth Update – Momentary Respite

There have been many moments during the past few months I’d like the readers of Teen Feed Times to be present for – be they an exchange, a quick conversation, or moments of gentleness between youth. Tele and myself share these moments over our cell phones at odd hours of the night, and always remind one another to “Write that one down! Remember that one...” That passing instant when a youth lets their guard down & lets someone in.

These moments with youth sustain me over the winter months.

One may begin to imagine the hardships of winter for homeless youth, the inclement (often dangerous) weather and the emotional struggle of the holi-



days. The cold months, however, are also times that swell with incredible highs and lows – festive meals near Thanksgiving and Christmas, the same old blue mat on the floor of shelter, a holiday party fit with gifts, & the knowledge you (still) can’t go home.

SLY staff keeps these moments with youth, these extremes, and aims to remember and value them all, be present and even during the winter months, and

keep eyes and heart in the spring. As you think on your holiday support of SLY and USM – know you are offering youth necessary hope and warmth, as well as supporting a program that will sustain youth throughout the year.

Megan Gibbard,
Outreach Case Manager

Donation Needs for the Holidays and Beyond

- ◆ **Discmans** will be the number one holiday request from our guests, and with that, AA batteries.
- ◆ **Gift cards** are a most ideal gift because it gives youth the ownership to select the perfect item. Music, books, food and movies are all fun ideas.
- ◆ **Pre-paid phone cards** are a big help to reconnect with long-distance family.
- ◆ Large sized **hooded sweatshirts** are a big one as well. Dark colors and very big.
- ◆ **Boots and shoes** are something we have in limited supply year round but make the most sense during winter, especially sizes 9 and up.
- ◆ Large, **heavy jackets** are a wonderful gift for the cold winter months. Coats insulated against the rain, especially snowboarding jackets, are a good idea as this is a constant fixture of Seattle weather.
- ◆ **Sleeping bags** are a big request – there are only 25 youth shelter beds available in the U-District on any given evening, and many more youth in need.
- ◆ **Backpacks.** Our kids need to carry all their worldly possessions with them at all times, or risk having their things stolen. Good, sturdy backpacks mean the world to our guests.
- ◆ Packets of **bus tokens** will be very helpful to a lot of kids for getting to various appointments. They can be purchased in packs of ten, the \$1.25 tokens.
- ◆ We have many youth who have learned to use writing or art as a coping skill. For these young people, **journals, notebooks, or art supplies** are a great gift.



We had over 100 homeless youth at last year's holiday party; help make it special for all by giving a gift.



Now that it's winter, shoes are a big need for our youth, especially in sizes 9 and up.



Gift cards are perhaps the best gift for our youth, as it allows them to have ownership over their present.



Gloves, scarves, warm hats and socks are essential for kids living on the street in winter.

USM's annual Holiday Party for Homeless Youth!

Every December USM organizes a holiday party where homeless youth get to celebrate the holidays out of the cold. Become a **Secret Santa** and choose one youth to provide a gift for or just help find gifts for all. Contact us at officemanager@usministry.net if you want to contribute!

Opportunities to Donate and Volunteer

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please send me more info on how I can help!

Credit Card donation:

Name on card _____

Card type _____ Card# _____

Exp Date _____ Amount \$ _____

Signature _____

Would you like this as a recurring donation on your card? YES NO

Consider a donation sufficient for:

- ◆ A book of bus tokens, (\$10)
- ◆ Hygiene items for 20, (\$25)
- ◆ Birthday or Holiday Gifts for 2 youth, (\$50 to \$75)
- ◆ One meal at Teen Feed when a food team can't help, (\$125)
- ◆ Kitchen supplies for one month, (\$200)

Guest Writer's Corner

You Know How That Is?

Man, you gotta understand-
My mind left me a long time ago.

Got up one day,
Said,
"Yo, I'll be back next week,"
And then it never came back.

I got a For Rent sign up there,
But not even the cockroaches want to live in this
dump.

You know how that is,
To get turned down by something that lives on
Twinkies?

Warm Thanks To:

- ◆ All of Teen Feed's amazing Meal Team leads who spend so much time making Teen Feed work.
- ◆ UW Hospital for all their efforts putting together a donation drive for our youth.
- ◆ St. John's Masonic for putting together a wonderful steak dinner for our youth.
- ◆ The merchants who joined our guests in dialogue: Pagliacci's, Café Allegro, The Continental, Laughing Buddha, True Value, La Tienda, Christian Science Reading Room, Safeco, Woolly Mammoth/5 Doors Up, UW Bookstore, Schultzy's Sausage, and Four Corners Art/Frame.

TEEN FEED TIMES is a quarterly publication of University Street Ministry. Questions and comments are welcome!

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Their Future Off The Street

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