



# Teen Feed Times

Summer 2007



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## Looking Forward, Moving Forward: Continuing a Twenty –Year Tradition of Service

*This October USM will mark 20 years of serving homeless youth in the University District. Over the course of this year we have explored the past, and present, of USM. This final installment focuses on where USM is headed over the next few years.*

From our earliest days giving out blankets, food and kind words in the form of an individual “street minister” to our current state running two programs critical to the survival and growth of our young people: Service Links for Youth (SLY), and Teen Feed USM has always played a key role in the development of comprehensive services in the University District, and to the collaboration across agency lines that makes these services work so well.

Since our budget crunch and subsequent belt tightening a few years ago, we have bounced back, leaner and more effective, and find ourselves in an exciting time: actively looking at our current programs- refining them to make them even more effective in reaching young people at-risk, as well as looking at where need still exists and how USM can play a leading role in filling those gaps in service without overtaxing our staff

**USM’s Mission:**  
*“University Street Ministry brings together the civic community and people of all faith traditions in committed service to homeless youth, young adults and their futures. We provide meals and outreach case management in the University District of Seattle, Washington”*

and our financial resources. To this end, USM is in the process of looking forward and planning our moves over the next few years. While this is still in the process of being fleshed out, I’d like to share

with you some of the things we are in the process of doing:

One of our main focuses is to increase outreach to the young people who most need our

programs. We’ve created a brochure about Teen Feed directed at homeless youth—something that hasn’t existed for some time. More importantly, we are looking to increase outreach time both in other programs and on the street. One of the things that really makes USM programs so important over the years is the unconventional approach we have taken to social work: low barriers, meeting our clients where they are at, and accepting them both as who they are and who they have the potential to be.

Our goal oriented approach to case management with SLY has been highly successful: instead of telling youth what they need to do to get off the street, we work with them to achieve their goals. In the spirit of this, we are going to start having a monthly check in session with our youth, where they can

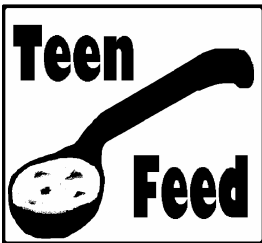
bring suggestions, concerns and feedback about how to make Teen Feed more able to meet client needs, and more chances for the young people who come to Teen Feed to find empowerment by helping to plan, prepare and serve the meals. The adaptability of SLY and Teen Feed allow us to better meet the changing needs of street youth.

In order to more completely achieve this goal, USM will also continue to collaborate with other area agencies through the University District Service Providers Alliance (UDSPA), ensuring that there is consistent care throughout the University District. By collaborating as part of a consortium of agencies as opposed to having one large agency doing everything, we are all able to focus our efforts where our particular skills are. It allows each agency to retain its unique style and character—thereby allowing us to reach as many different and diverse young people as possible.

As of this writing, our Board of Directors is stronger than it has been in years. Board members are reviewing and updating our by-laws and looking at further training and board-recruitment options. This July, the board held elections for new executive officers, and is looking at ways to support our staff and more effectively steer the organization.

Funding is also something which we are taking on in new

**Continued on the back page**



## Building Bridges: The Coffee Conversations

I'm choosing to take a break from writing about Teen Feed specifically this issue, to instead share with you something inspiring that happened recently:

On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, the University District Service Providers Alliance hosted it's second ever Coffee Conversation, a facilitated conversation between some of our youth and University District merchants. Similar to the Donut Dialogue, which lets youth meet with SPD officers, the intent is to try to create some level of understanding between two groups, and create more of sense of community within the University District.

Homeless kids and business owners often find themselves in conflict with each other. Merchants often have concerns about the effect large groups of young people standing around will have on their businesses. While many different groups congregate on the sidewalks of the U District, often times homeless youth seem to stand out. Also, lack of adequate access to things like bathrooms often necessitates them entering the businesses in question without ever purchasing anything... not what business owners generally want.

On the other hand, many of our

young people feel unfairly singled out by area businesses. It seems common to hear about acts of vandalism, shoplifting, etc being blamed on street youth, regardless of who the real culprit is. They have sometimes valid concerns that store security is more likely to focus on them than, say, a group of UW students or Safeco employees. They also point out that they frequently have nowhere to go to, which is why they are outside of businesses to begin with.

The conversation started with some basic introductions and

*Continued on the next page*

*"Young people and merchants are both interested trying to stop fitting people into neat boxes: homeless, merchant, customer, student"*

## Hearing Our Youth: U-District Youth Speak Out on Homelessness

On Wednesday afternoon, August 1<sup>st</sup>, three Teen Feed guests piled into a car with me to journey to the KBCS radio station in Bellevue. I had been contacted the week previous by the "Voices of Diversity" talk show host regarding a program they were doing about youth and young adult homelessness. "Could we get



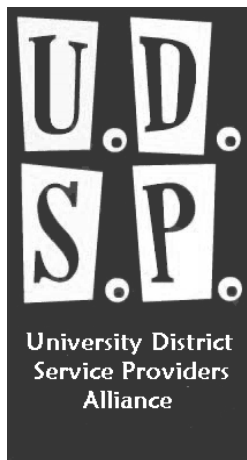
some homeless youth participants?" she asked. Well... Involving the young folks I work with in any talk show/newspaper article/study is not something I choose to do lightly. Unfortunately, there are some opportunities for young folks to share their "voice" on particular issues that end up being empty tokens. Young

people are asked what they feel on particular issues, without any honest consideration of what they have to say unless it is in line with what the prevailing opinion happens to be. In these situations, young homeless folks make themselves

vulnerable by sharing their experiences and thoughts... only to have those thoughts not valued.

*"Folks think it's amazing that we are homeless and making it off the streets. In reality, we're just people"*

After several phone calls with the show's host, it seemed like KBCS was indeed interested in what youth had to say - authentically interested. I asked three young adults with different takes on their experiences being homeless to participate.



University Street Ministry is a Member Agency of the University District Service Providers Alliance.

The University District Service Providers Alliance (UDSPA) is a coalition of nonprofits working together to create a comprehensive continuum of services for homeless and street-involved youth and young adults. The UDSPA helps member agencies share resources and work together efficiently while pursuing our shared mission of offering a full spectrum of compassionate, quality care and support to Seattle's homeless and street-involved youth and young adults.

UDSPA Member Agencies are: 45<sup>th</sup> Street Clinic, ROOTS, Sanctuary Art Center, Seattle Education Access, Street Youth Ministries, University District Youth Center, University Family YMCA, and University Street Ministry.

For more information, visit [www.udsp.org](http://www.udsp.org).

At the station, while we waited around for our turn in the booth, the young folks paced around and talked about their experiences. In the ride back to the U-District, three folks who didn't know each other talked about what they took from the brief afternoon at KBCS. There were differences of opinion on homeless services - one said there were too many, one said not enough. Folks talked about previous experiences when they were asked to talk about *being homeless*, and on this issue - there was consensus in the car. To paraphrase, "Folks

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## Enter to Win Two Southwest Airline Tickets

In recognition of the University Street Ministry 20th Anniversary, please send a donation in any amount between now and October 20th, 2007, and you will be automatically entered to win TWO Southwest Airlines tickets to anywhere in the continental U.S. The winner will be contacted by phone the week of October 22nd.

*Staff and Board members not eligible. Please direct any inquiries to Allison@teenfeed.org*

### Teen Feed (cont. from p. 2)

ground rules for a respectful dialogue, and then Sgt. Newsom of the North Precinct gave a presentation on some of the civility laws which frequently come into play with homeless youth. It was a good chance to get some clarification about where property lines stop (the sidewalk- but business owners are responsible for keeping clean everything out to the street), parks exclusion orders, and trespass admonishments.

After a break, we had small discussions at individual tables. Mine was with two youth: S & V, one business owner: N, and me silently observing and taking notes. What we found was really inspiring. In conversation, the young people and the merchant found that they both are interested in viewing the University District as a real community, one which takes care of its own. They were also all interested in trying to stop the "othering" of fitting people in to neat boxes: homeless, merchant, customer, student, etc.

S & V were frank, admitting that some of their peers do engage in theft, vandalism and the rest, but they were quick to point out that there were many within the street community who recognize that it is important to maintain good relations with their neighbors, and who resented being stereotyped. While they did not want to make excuses, neither did they want to be unfairly treated due to their perceived connection to them. For his part, N stated that everyone who comes into his business he views as an individual, and he lets their behavior dictate how they will be treated: "give respect, get respect."

## Special Thanks to the following donors:

Amgen Foundation	Microsoft Matching Gifts Program
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We ended with a brainstorm on some questions to report back to the larger group with about what we had learned, and what and how to continue working on issues that needed to be addressed. Each table had one youth and one merchant get up to share. It seemed that everyone had come to a better understanding of each other as individuals, and because of this, more able to give and receive basic respect and dignity to each other. Everybody left feeling a sense of hope for a stronger and more unified Ave community.

When you are in the University District, come to the Ave, and check out the independent businesses lining the street. Smile at the folks on the sidewalk, as opposed to just averting your eyes, or looking right through them. It is amazing what real face-to-face communication and respect can do.

--Eric

## Donate or volunteer with USM!

*Please clip this form and send it in the enclosed envelope along with your donation.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me more information on how I can help.

I would like my donation to be listed as anonymous.

A financial contribution sufficient to:

- \$500- Provide fees and application costs for Washington State ID for 5 youth
- \$250- Provide 20 youth with direct mentoring and support with SLY Case Management
- \$200- Buy Teen Feed kitchen supplies for one month
- \$100- Buy 2 backpacks & 2 sleeping bags
- \$50- Give toiletries to 25 youth
- \$20- Buy bus tokens for 10 youth
- \$\_\_\_\_ Other Donation



**Looking Forward (from pg. 2)**

and exciting ways: since Allison Lord was hired on as part-time Development Director last fall, USM has raised \$172,815, having surpassed our goal for this fiscal year of \$165K six weeks early. We still have several pending grants, and in the coming years hope to see our funding broadened and diversified even further.

**SLY (from pg. 2)**

think it's so amazing that we're homeless and making it off the streets. In reality, we're just people. And we have had this experience of being homeless. But we're still just people. See us that way."

—Megan

Having quality staff is critical to any organization, and USM is no different. To this end, we are very consciously looking at ways to prevent staff burnout and turn over, thereby providing a more consistent and higher quality of service to our youth. Many of their lives have been marked by extreme chaos and inconsistency from adults, so providing reliable and compassionate staff who are here for the long-haul is important to them achieving success.

All of us at USM are excited

**What to Give Right Now...**

**SHAVING SUPPLIES**

Looking presentable is important for many of our youth, not only for finding jobs, but also for their self-esteem. **Disposable razors** and **travel-sized shaving cream** are a constant need for our young people.

**SOCKS**

Keeping feet clean is crucial to being able to stay on your feet all day, as many of our young people have to do. Without a lot of access to laundry facilities, **clean new socks** make all the difference.

**FOOT CARE SUPPLIES**

Even with clean socks, preventing damage to feet sometimes takes a bit more. Foot powder and anti-fungal creams are critical to maintaining healthy feet.

To donate, please contact Allison Lord:  
Allison@teenfeed.org

about what the coming years hold, and are committed to continuing to serve our youth as long as the need exists.

--Eric

SUMMER 2007

**Enter to Win Two Southwest Airline Tickets:  
See Inside for More Details**

*Marking 20 Years of  
Serving Homeless  
Youth.*

**CHECK US OUT  
ONLINE!  
www.teenfeed.org**

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**UNIVERSITY STREET MINISTRY**



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