



STRONG FUTURES

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Strong Futures is a supportive housing program located in Union City. Strong Futures provides services to young men ages 16-21 who are aging out of the child welfare system or are homeless. Eligible youth lack family resources and are in need of transitional housing services. The youth must have the commitment and abilities to prepare for independent living and self-sufficiency. Strong Futures aims to provide the support and skills that each young person needs to make a successful transition to adulthood.

THE HOME WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE

Imagine waking up one day and not knowing where you will lay your head at night; caring all of your belongings in a backpack; and not having a single person you could call if you needed help. Imagine all of this at age 19. This is the reality for many youth that are aging out of the child welfare system. Many programs close their doors to youth after their 18th birthday and without supportive, caring adults in their lives these youth are left to fend for themselves and face the risk of becoming homeless on a daily basis. These youth live for each day; college, having a family owning a home are all someone else's dreams.

Each year over 25, 000 youth age out of the child welfare system around the nation and experience the fear of truly being alone; 800 youth in New Jersey age out of the system. Of the aging out population nationally, it is estimated that 1 in 5 will become homeless within two years of leaving care; 1 in 4 will be incarcerated within the first two years of leaving care; only 58% had a high

school diploma by age 19 and only 3% had a college degree at age 25. These are bleak odds.

Strong Futures aims to turn these statistics around. On November, 28th Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark opened the doors to "Strong Futures"; a supportive housing program for young men ages 16-21 who are aging out of the DYFS system and/or are homeless. Strong Futures will provide these youth with housing and the skills, education and confidence that each young person needs to live successfully and independently. Youth in the program are required to be productive for 35 hours a week either in school, employment, community service or the like. Community service projects, workshops, recreational trips and college campus tours provide the youth with the opportunity to have a variety of experiences, broaden their perspectives, and help make their dreams come true.



The doors are open on Strong Futures congregate care.

"TEAM STRONG FUTURES" MAKE STRIDES AGAINST BREAST CANCER



Two Strong Futures residents pose for a photo during the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk in Jersey City.

On a cold and rainy morning in October, residents of Strong Futures pulled out the long johns, raincoats, and mittens to take part in the ACS Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk. The team, composed of staff and residents, worked diligently to spread the word and raise money to support the fight against breast cancer. The team raised almost \$600 for American Cancer Society. Strong Futures residents choose a community service project to take part in on a quarterly basis. Through these events, residents learn the value of giving back to the community.

Special thanks to all that supported the team: Doris Bryant, Ruth Capellan, Lesley Moore, Gilma Garcia, Patricia Valdivia, Robert Shalvoy, Karen Elias, Shelley Steinberg, Jill Hearty, Abigail and Scott LeBlanc, Sharon Moses, and Betty Hampton



JOIN



TEAM "SWEET DREAMS"

Strong Futures is asking you to join "TEAM SWEET DREAMS" by making a donation to the youth of Strong Futures and helping to make their dreams become a reality. We are in need of the following:

- Gift Card Donations (Target, Walmart, Old Navy, Macy's, Barnes & Noble, Bed, Bath & Bayond, etc)
- Activity Donations (Tickets to sports events, movie tickets, museum tickets, event tickets)
- Guest Chefs
- Career Mentors
- Employment or Apprenticeship Opportunities for the youth
- Cash Donations

All donations are tax deductible. Please email Kathy Elias at kaelias@ccannj.org if you would like to join "TEAM STRONG FUTURES" and make a donation.

BAKE 'EM AND TAKE 'EM



A Strong Futures resident braves the heat during a life skills group.

"I said two AND a quarter cups of flour NOT two quarter cups," one Strong Futures resident loudly declared as he read the recipe for chocolate chip cookies to his partner. On this day, the youth of Strong Futures had gathered in the kitchen for their life skills group. The group titled, "Bake 'Em and Take 'Em" aimed to teach the youth how to read a recipe and use kitchen tools and utensils by making and baking cookies and cupcakes. The final products (minus a few that were burned or eaten along the way) were packaged and donated them to a local homeless shelter for a homemade dessert on Thanksgiving.