



Youth Services of Tulsa: *Windows of Opportunity*

Youth Services of Tulsa (YST) offers a 24-hour shelter for youth needing a home away from home. Common reasons for shelter stay include runaway situations, children awaiting permanent placement from foster care, severe family conflicts or as an alternative to juvenile detention.

Windows of Opportunity was a product of years of discussion and deliberation. In the end, the decision was less a choice than a necessity. The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) had leased the shelter to YST for \$1.00 a year. When DHS needed more space, YST was asked to find a new location.

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One of the biggest challenges was moving from free rent and utilities to a location that would cost millions. Another obstacle was City's strict zoning laws, but moving outside of central Tulsa wasn't feasible. If they moved too far in any direction, they would not be accessible to the youth they served.

On top of this, YST had never attempted a capital campaign before. They had never even gone to the community with requests for substantial amounts of money.

A local corporation agreed to pay for a Pre-Campaign Study conducted by Hartsook. YST began the campaign's silent phase.

A public announcement took place the following year. The study suggested an initial capacity to raise \$2.4 million, but the nonprofit realized, fairly quickly, it would need more to meet all the regulations necessary to build a shelter. The board agreed to a \$3-million goal and retained Hartsook to provide counsel for the campaign.

To get things started, a board member asked an acquaintance in the community

to serve as the campaign committee chair, even though that person had no history with YST at the time. Not only did the individual agree to serve as chair, but provided the campaign's lead gift. Other board members opened numerous doors for YST, and they were also very generous in their giving.

The campaign's first major gift came from a Tulsa philanthropist who agreed to meet with YST and listen to their story. The expectation was that he might offer to introduce them to another Tulsa philanthropist who they felt would be interested in their work.

During the meeting he asked, "What would you like me to do for you?" They explained their interest in receiving an

introduction to his friend. "Certainly, I can do that, but what would you like me to do for YST?" His question came as such a surprise that he had to spell it out: He wanted to give his own gift of significance to the campaign. His gift provided as much of a boost in confidence as it did a financial lift.

When YST finally found land in the right location to be zoned for their purposes, the

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price was higher than expected. The property had been on the market for 10 years, so the board made an offer. The owner did not respond. YST adjusted the offer, but shortly after negotiations began, the owner died.

During this time, a board member, who was involved in real estate development, looked into petitioning the City to close a street adjacent to the property. This agreement gave YST an additional third of an acre and helped solidify the land deal.

YST applied for a grant from the Donald W. Reynold Foundation. After moving through the process, they were invited to make a presentation, but YST did not receive the grant. Instead, they received enough money from the Foundation to conduct more research and planning.

The Foundation thought the organization had been too cautious. They felt the facility needed something more forward thinking and technologically advanced. The Foundation said YST could return once the research was accomplished and the necessary upgrades were made.

YST spent a year following through on the Foundation's suggestions. Board members spoke with many people and traveled to programs that were considered exemplary.



They had consultants go through their long-range plans and took the advice seriously. Then, they went back to the Foundation and made a new pitch. Within a month, YST had an acceptance letter in hand.

The \$6.34-million Reynolds grant required that an additional 20% be allocated for endowment. After raising substantially more than the original goal, YST still needed to identify over one-million dollars for endowment.

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Some donors were not interested in transferring gifts from capital to endowment, which meant more fundraising and more work. But in the end, the campaign exceeded its goal and expectations. What began with a \$2.4-million goal opened Windows of Opportunities, raising \$10 million for Youth Services of Tulsa.

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