New Partnership Gives Youth Aging out of Foster Care a Fighting Chance

Carolina Youth Development Center, a nonprofit serving vulnerable children and families, is partnering with Cummins, Inc. to develop an independent living transitional home that addresses the needs of youth aging out of foster care.

The international manufacturing company is providing a $120,000 grant to fund the renovation of an existing building on CYDC’s 16-acre campus that will serve as the program’s housing.

CYDC’s new transitional home will provide a safe place where up to eight foster youth 18-20 years old can live independently while receiving guidance from professional staff to develop and manage plans and career goals that will give them a better chance at success in work and in life.

The partnership project aims to reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes for youth aging out of foster care, who suffer higher rates of homelessness, joblessness and incarceration than their peers in the general population.

In South Carolina, more than 6,700 youth are in foster care, and over 600 of them are 18-20-year olds who will most likely “age out” of the foster care system without the skills and supports necessary to become successful, independent adults. The home will be offered to youth in foster care throughout the state.

“This new transitional housing will address a critical need and gap in service for youth in foster care,” said CYDC Chief Executive Officer Beverly Hardin.

“Children don’t just become independent when they turn 18. They still need guidance and a safe and stable environment in order for them to grow into responsible adults capable of caring for themselves.”
The initiative has received broad support from the community including endorsements from Senator Tim Scott, Charleston City Council, Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg, North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey and the Charleston County Sheriff’s Office.

Additionally, earlier this year, the Hootie and the Blowfish Foundation, which supports South Carolina charitable initiatives that benefit child welfare and youth arts, announced that CYDC’s transitional house would be the recipient of a $10,000 grant.

Hootie and the Blowfish guitarist Mark Bryan, who has trained CYDC staff on how to run Carolina Studios’ music recording lab on CYDC’s campus, has said that he believes CYDC is doing “some of the most important work in the state.”

The transitional home is unique in that it will provide youth autonomy more consistent with what their peers experience while living in dorms. Residents will be responsible for their own life decisions, establishing and meeting personalized milestones, learning and applying independent living skills, and positioning themselves for long-term success.

Cummins has had a long history of partnering with CYDC and their leadership felt it was vitally important to help bring the transitional home to fruition.

“Strong partnerships make for stronger communities. Cummins has collaborated with CYDC on a number of innovative projects over the years including our Auto Lab STEAM project, and we have witnessed firsthand the difference these endeavors can make in the lives of vulnerable children,” said Leon Stungurys, Components Service Director with Cummins and a CYDC board member.

“CYDC’s transitional house will provide a safe place for youth aging out of foster care to live and learn while they are completing their education and acquiring job readiness training and independent living skills.”

Senator Tim Scott, who is sponsoring bipartisan legislation in the Senate which would assist youth aging out of foster care with housing needs, echoed his support for the project, recognizing the partnership in the Congressional Record for October 5.

“I would like to recognize and congratulate the Carolina Youth Development Center, Cummins, Inc., and the Hootie and the Blowfish Foundation on its new partnership to provide youth aging out of foster care an independent living transitional house. The Carolina Youth Development Center has been a blessing to our State for over 200 years with their bold mission. They work tirelessly to empower and equip South Carolina’s most vulnerable children by providing a safe environment, educational support, and career readiness.”

CYDC’s transitional home building renovations are expected to get underway later this month and are anticipated to be completed by spring 2017.

About Carolina Youth Development Center
The Carolina Youth Development Center has a 227-year legacy of leading the way in serving the community's most vulnerable families and children of abuse, neglect and abandonment. Founded in 1790 as the nation's first public childcare institution, CYDC boasts a statewide reach, a vibrant community network of resources and expansive campuses where our children can play and grow. Our state of the art assets include our Bakker Career Center, Auto Lab, Music Studio and commercial kitchen and garden. CYDC robust umbrella of services are designed to disrupt patterns, change lives and transform communities. CYDC’s continuum of care also includes the local affiliate of the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs and the Callen-Lacey Center for Children’s shelter in Berkeley County. CYDC achieved national accreditation in August 2017, and has been continuously accredited since 1980. Visit cydc.org for more information.