



Excellence Since 1974

Youth Services System Inc.

87 Fifteenth St., PO Box 6041, Wheeling, WV 26003

304-233-9628 • Fax: 304-233-0056

www.YouthServicesSystem.org

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Contact: Elizabeth Griffith, Media and Communications Coordinator, egriffith@ysswv.com

Youth Services System, Inc. celebrates 50 years of service

WHEELING, W.Va.— Youth Services System, Inc. (YSS) celebrates its 50th anniversary with the community on April 27 from 5 p.m. – 10 p.m. at [Stratford Springs](#). YSS is gearing up for a big celebration of 50 years of success and service.

YSS founder Ronald C. Mulholland, along with a group of like-minded community members, had the vision to create something that would change youth's lives and the generations of youth to come. YSS was founded and incorporated on May 2, 1974, originally called Ohio County Youth Services System.

Within its first year, YSS opened the first W.Va. emergency shelter for boys, the Samaritan House. Several years later, YSS started the first licensed Transitional Living Program for older youth/young adults in 1981. In 1983, the first emergency shelter for girls in W.Va., Helsinki Shelter, opened. Then in 1986, the first juvenile detention center in W.Va. was opened by YSS, what is now known as the Ronald C. Mulholland Juvenile Center.

Mulholland was honored in 2009 as YSS' Good Samaritan, and during his speech he said, "The one absolute, the one moral imperative is that we must respond! We must say yes...yes...and yes again. Children cannot survive our failed efforts. Children can no longer be seen as a constituency worthy of only occasional concern."

Samaritan House initially offered an alternative to youth incarceration. Many community members took the time to advocate for the funding of the program. In a letter to the Wheeling City Council, Rev. Gary R. Beale wrote, "Jail is no place for children." Beale continued, "No provisions are made for recreation, education, training or any type of rehabilitation." Included in his letter was a call for support when he stated, "It is incumbent upon this community to provide adequate service and facilities for its youth."

The initial funding for Samaritan House came from the [Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston](#), and hot food was donated by the 18th Street Center. Public support from the [League of Women Voters](#), [Junior League of Wheeling](#) and faith-based originations gave Samaritan House credibility. After a few years of community support, public funding through the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) began.

Ron Klug, one of the six people to sign the incorporation papers in 1974, has been an active part of the agency since day one. Klug was working as a Case Manager for the DHHR at the time of incorporation,

in what was called the Youth Services Unit. Klug was a strong advocate for youth and helped Mulholland create the agency. Klug spent 45 years on the Board of Directors and is now an active Emeritus Board Member.

Klug says, “We needed other alternatives [to youth in jail.]” Klug continues, “We thought shelters were the first things needed to be developed for kids.” During this time, Klug met Mulholland and they began to make plans for what would be known as Youth Services System, Inc. (YSS).

Sue Abraham, another of the six who signed the incorporation papers, says, “I don’t think any of us thought [YSS] would be what it is today.” Abraham continues, “It was a dream of ours in the beginning to get to where we are today.”

Now, YSS occupies two youth shelters, two transitional living sites, a juvenile facility, three recovery homes, and a main office where clients and community have access to an array of community-based services such as: prevention services, assessment/evaluations, therapy, supervised visitation/parenting education, youth mentoring, school-based mental health services and a youth employment program. YSS serves 6 counties in W.Va. (Ohio, Marshall, Brooke, Hancock, Tyler and Wetzel) and accepts youth from all 55 counties. YSS also operates over 25 programs for youth and families.

Rod Lee, YSS Chairman of the Board of Directors, says, “Anything that was new in social work or social services in the area, YSS was out in the forefront. Creating opportunities, creating programs and services for youth and families.” Lee continues, “[YSS] never said no and would accept any challenge.”

Thanks to the determination and passion of the founding members, and from the continuous support from donors and community members, YSS has helped countless youth and families. Just last year, YSS was able to help 11,516 youth and families.

This year, YSS would like to honor its [mission, vision and values](#) by bringing the community together to showcase the impact the agency has made over the past 50 years and to celebrate with all who have played a role in the success of the agency.

Jill Eddy, CEO of YSS, started with the agency in 1987 as the first college intern at the juvenile center. Eddy says, “...to see everything come full circle is surreal.” She continues, “I am so proud of our staff and the impact that we have daily. We truly are creating better futures for those we serve.” Eddy has been with the agency full-time for 25 years.

The event will include a gourmet dinner buffet, dinner music by Roger Hoard followed by dancing to [Eli and the Mojo Kings](#), with former board member [Geoff Brown](#) as event emcee. Basket tickets and silent auction items will also be available for purchase during the event. Tickets may be purchased [online](#).

For more information about the event, contact our Special Events Coordinator, Holly Fox, at hfox1@ysswv.com or (304) 233-9627 ext. 109. To learn more about YSS, visit their website at www.youthservicessystem.org.

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About Youth Services System, Inc.:

Youth Services System, Inc.’s mission is “to create better futures for children, families and our community.” YSS is committed to responding to the complex needs of youth at serious risk. Since 1974, Youth Services System, Inc. has reached thousands of youth and their families with our shelter, residential, community-based and professional services. Together with youth and their families, we work to improve their physical and emotional well-being, to address the debilitating effects of abuse, substance use, and trauma, and to build the skills and connections they

need to be successful. Accredited by CARF International, YSS is supported by our volunteer Board of Directors, dedicated staff and faithful community, allowing us to make a measurable impact in the lives of youth. For more information, visit www.youthservicessystem.org.