



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Leslie Schreiber  
Winger Marketing  
312.494.0422  
[leslie@wingermarketing.com](mailto:leslie@wingermarketing.com)

### **UCAN Launches LGBTQ Host Home Program**

*An innovative approach to moving Chicago's LGBTQ youth beyond life on the streets*

**September 14, 2009 – Chicago, IL:** A statewide study conducted by University of Illinois at Chicago Survey Research Laboratory found there were 24,968 unaccompanied homeless youth up to age 21 in Illinois in 2004.<sup>1</sup> On any given night in a year, within Cook County alone, there are nearly 2,000 homeless youth with no where safe to sleep at night. This information, coupled with findings from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force which note that as many as 20% to 42% of street-based youth self-identify as LGBTQ, the issue of LGBTQ youth homelessness has become a crisis. In response to this epidemic, UCAN, in partnership with Howard Brown Health Center's Broadway Youth Center, plans to launch the LGBTQ Host Home Program, an innovative community-based response to LGBTQ youth homelessness.

"Since opening the Broadway Youth Center nearly five years ago, Howard Brown has seen first-hand the epidemic which is LGBTQ youth homelessness," says Joe Hollendoner, Director of the Broadway Youth Center. "We are proud to be partnering with UCAN on the Host Home Program as we see it as a viable housing option for LGBTQ youth. Together we feel we can combat this crisis and provide youth with an opportunity to heal and thrive."

The LGBTQ Host Home Program partners LGBTQ homeless youth with caring adults who willingly open their homes to provide shelter and stability for youth ages 17 - 21. Both youth and the adult volunteer go through a rigorous screening and training process, facilitated and supported by trained social work professionals. The goal of these intentional placements is to support youth in a "permanent" transition from homelessness to independence by creating a safe, affirming housing option where they can pursue their educational and career goals for up to two years.

"There is a readiness within many youth who are experiencing homelessness," says Bonnie Wade, Associate Director of the LGBTQ Host Home Program. "A readiness that pushes them forward to move beyond life on the streets. But many youth cannot accomplish this alone. We are looking for adults who are interested in this unique opportunity to use their strength, patience and passion to open their homes and stand by our youth as they negotiate the road to independence. It's intergenerational community

---

<sup>1</sup> Unaccompanied Homeless Youth in Illinois: 2005, Timothy P. Johnson and Ingrid Graf, Survey Research Laboratory, University of Illinois at Chicago

building at it's core and sends the message directly to our young people that they are not alone, and perhaps most importantly, that FAILURE is NOT an option.”

UCAN and the Broadway Youth Center are currently looking for caring adults who are committed to building community in innovative ways by opening their homes to homeless LGBTQ youth. Requirements include:

- Have an extra bedroom for the youth
- Be at least 25 years old
- Have lived in Chicago for at least one year
- Complete an application form
- Have renter/homeowner's insurance
- Provide three references
- Complete background checks
- Complete an initial interview and follow up home interview
- Complete a comprehensive training which includes an anti-oppression framework; harm reduction; building healthy youth/adult partnerships; adolescent development; trauma, violence, loss; and therapeutic crisis intervention

For those interested in learning more about the LGBTQ Host Home Program, please join UCAN and the BYC at one of the following community outreach events:

- Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup> at Gallery Guichard (3521 S. Martin Luther King Dr. at 6:00 pm
- Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> at Las Manos Gallery (5220 N. Clark) at 6:00 pm
- Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> at the home of Kelly Fondow and Roi Ann Phillips (1173 S. Taylor Ave in Oak Park) at 6:00 pm.

For more information on the LGBTQ Host Home Program please contact Bonnie Wade, at [wadeb@ucanichicago.org](mailto:wadeb@ucanichicago.org) or by telephone (312) 738-5966.

## **UCAN**

A premier social service agency since its founding in 1869, UCAN's goals of healing trauma, preventing violence, and educating youth and families have led us to develop innovative and award-winning programs and services. We are unique among child welfare agencies in offering a full continuum of care to over 12,900 at-risk youth and families annually. Designed to serve a variety of needs, UCAN offers over 20 different programs focusing on out-of-home care, community collaboration, child abuse prevention, advocacy, and clinical and counseling services.

UCAN's mission is to build strong youth and families through compassionate healing, education and empowerment. Our work is accomplished through the lens of a clinical philosophy, a focus on diversity, and the "Network Advantage" which allows clients and staff opportunities to be a part of a continuum of services and programs. UCAN believes that everyone has a voice and the right to realize their full potential.

**Howard Brown Health Center** is one of the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) healthcare organizations. Through a wide array of health, wellness, social service and research programs, Howard Brown cares for more than 28,000 adult and youth clients annually. Among its many programs is the Broadway Youth Center (BYC), which focuses on the needs of LGBTQ youth ages 24 years and under. In the safe and affirming environment of the BYC, youth socialize with their peers and gain access to comprehensive services, including housing or job placement assistance, free HIV and STD testing and medical care and counseling. For more information about Howard Brown or the BYC, please visit [www.howardbrown.org](http://www.howardbrown.org).

###