

“Hi. I’m here today not to advertise about YouthCARE but then to tell about my life before YouthCARE changed it. I was once a street punk, lost in the path of nowhere. I didn’t have a life, I didn’t know where I was going or where I was coming from. Hating everyone that stood in my way, cops, my friends, my parents, everyone. See that boy that stole your car, that was me. See that boy who just stole something from the store, that was me.

Well... was. Influenced by people I once called friend. Smoking weed, doing stuff that breaks the law. That ain’t me. I was once an outlaw that didn’t listen to no one, didn’t listen to nothing. My Mom and Dad tried but I was always against them. Until one day my Mom’s tears fell down her eyes and I finally realize that I am a someone. That someone did care about me.

I once had a girl that I loved the most. I do anything just to make her smile. I love her deeply and I love her truly. But then my heart was broken because of the way she toyed with me. My tears did fall down from my eyes, my heart did tear into shreds but then I still didn’t forget who I am. Seeing that my past was like that. Back then I became quiet, a lone wolf.

But then all that changed when I went to YouthCARE. When I first got there, I was greeted by a whole bunch of people. I felt happy, comfortable, like they already know me. I was happy because of the way they help each other out and by the way they were friendly to each other. There wasn’t discrimination because of the color of our skin. There wasn’t no hating because of the lack of weakness. Everything was fair. I still remember a lot of joyful yelling and the happy laughs we have for one another.

When I got back from camp, everyone, my friends, my family, told me that I changed a lot. And I guess I did.

So then I just want to give one advice to everyone out there. Don’t get mad at what you did in the past, live it. That was what I learned when being in YouthCARE. Just live it. You only have one life. Live it to its fullest.

If I didn’t go to YouthCARE, I wouldn’t know who I am. YouthCARE changed my life and made me who I am today. I’m not advertising. I’m just sharing with you a little bit about my life. Thank you.”

--Toua Her, YouthCARE participant 2005-06,
Speech made during YouthCARE’s
“A Celebration of Urban Youth” event,
Monday, July 31, 2006



Toua Her with Minneapolis
Mayor R.T. Rybak