



Like every mother, Makayla wanted to give her son a special Christmas. But without a job or even a roof overhead, the young family was facing a Christmas on the streets. No presents, no holiday meal, no joy of the season.

The Gift of Hope: Your Support Gave Makayla a Christmas to Remember

“I found Covenant House at just the right time.”

The holidays were around the corner, and while many families were out buying gifts and preparing for Christmas Day, 21-year-old Makayla was facing the possibility of spending the holidays on the streets with her 2-year-old son, Kingston.

After being in and out of the foster care system for years, Makayla was now left to figure out life on her own. The young mother wanted nothing more than to give her son a special Christmas. But without a job, and with no roof overhead, she feared they would be spending Christmas Day hungry and alone.

But Covenant House didn't let that happen. *You* didn't let that happen. The first gift your support gave Makayla and her son was a safe place to lay their heads at night.

Homelessness is dangerous for every young person, but especially for young families.

Having the safety, security, and privacy of their own space gave Makayla and Kingston the foundation they needed to grow as a family.

And it was the first step Makayla needed on the long road to independence.

The second gift your support gave was a beautiful, joyful Christmas.

“I didn't think my baby would get anything for Christmas, but Covenant House really came through for us.”

— Makayla

Each young person is special and unique in their own way. That's why, every year, we give out gifts from our youth's personal wish lists so they can feel seen and celebrated just as they are. Passionate about art since she was young, Makayla was gifted three art sets she could use to create and express herself.



The Christmas season is always such a special time at Covenant House. I wish you could be here to feel how joy and camaraderie

radiates through our shelters as staff, volunteers, and youth gather to celebrate.

While it is mostly a bright occasion, there is always still some sadness on the faces of our young people. It can be hard spending the holidays without a family or a place to call your own. Many of our youth are still figuring out their path forward and their place in the world. That can be scary, even on Christmas morning.

But, with your incredible support, we can give these kids a little extra love during the holidays. Just like we did for Makayla and her son, who before your help, were facing a Christmas on the streets. Or April, who finally felt like a kid again at Covenant House.

The greatest gift you give these young people is not just the presents on Christmas, but the proof that they are loved and bring so much to this world. Merry Christmas — I pray it is a joyous one for you and your loved ones.

William “Bill” Bedrossian
President and CEO



Caring, compassionate friends like you gave Makayla and her son everything on their wish list — and more — for Christmas.

Makayla’s story cont.

Finding Her Place in the World

And while her son was given many toys, Makayla was most excited about the coloring books gifted to him. She hopes she can share her love of art with Kingston as he gets older.

You helped give Makayla and Kingston many gifts they will treasure that Christmas season. But perhaps the greatest gift you gave was the love and support that showed Makayla she is valued, seen, and capable of achieving her dreams.

Today, Makayla is taking steps toward finding her place in the world. Dreaming of being a nurse since she was a child, she is working with our staff to secure all the documentation she needs for nursing school. Her goal is to one day work at a hospital and be able to provide for herself and her son.

This Christmas, we at Covenant House are grateful for the gift of your love and support. Thanks to you, so many young people like Makayla will have a memorable holiday, and a future full of hope and possibility.

A Decade of Dedication

It was a freezing November night in 2014 when Christina participated in her first Sleep Out. “The next day, during the reflection, all I could think of was: *How can a child muster the energy to get up and live after sleeping in the streets?*” she recalls. Little did she know that this one night would be the start of a decade of unwavering commitment to our youth.

Today, Christina has 12 Sleep Outs under her belt. But her support goes beyond sleeping on the street. In 2015, she became a board member for our Young Families program. And after years of service in that role, she joined our Latin America development board, leading fundraising and awareness efforts for our sites in Latin America.

But perhaps the role she has the most fun with is hosting holiday parties for our kids. One Christmas, Christina even dressed up as Santa’s helper and distributed gifts to every young person in our care.

“While leading workshops, serving on the board, organizing holiday caroling in New York, and joining street outreach staff in Guatemala, I’m always proud to see the impact every dollar we raise has on the lives of homeless youth across the Americas,” she says.



For a decade, Christina has embodied the spirit of compassion — and she continues to every day! This holiday season, join Christina by sharing your love and kindness to Covenant House youth.

Alumni Remembers Covenant House in His Will



In 1973, a 16-year-old Walter was brought to Covenant House with \$16 in his pocket and an old trunk jammed full of his belongings. Since his mother’s death, Walter had lived with his grandfather. But this new caretaker was never home and had little love or warmth toward his grandson.

Eventually, his grandfather kicked him out of the house. With no one else to turn to, Covenant House became Walter’s lifeline.

At that time, we had only 16 beds. Today, we house 2,400 youth a night. “I think it is awesome that you have carried on the work of Covenant House and expanded to help so many more people,” Walter says today.

Walter will never forget the care our community provided him when he was a teenager. We walked alongside him as he started a journey toward his fullest potential. Now retired, he is looking to give back. “Young people should not be homeless. I want to help in any way I can. And even though I don’t have a lot of money, I want whatever I have when I pass to go to Covenant House to help more young people.”



Dr. April Hunziker and her son, age 4, at Covenant House Alaska, 1998.

Feeling Like a Kid Again: April's Christmas at Covenant House

It was a snowy night in Anchorage, Alaska, when April Hunziker first knocked on our door. She was desperate for warmth of any kind — a safe place indoors, a stranger's smile, the reassurance that she mattered.

Fleeing an abusive home at the just 11 years old, life on the streets seemed safer than staying with her family. Though, like many homeless kids, she soon realized that sleeping outside was just another type of danger. Especially during the cold winter months.

After reassuring her that she was safe, our staff brought April to a room that would become hers. Outside the window, she was greeted with lights and decorations. It was just before Christmas.

April didn't expect anything special for Christmas at Covenant House. But that morning, she received a Christmas miracle. "I remember waking up and seeing presents and being

shocked. There were a lot of us, and everyone had something. So many people we didn't know came together and made that happen," April reflects.

It's only because of the kindness of friends like you that the youth in our care can have a Christmas celebration with presents, decorations, and a home-cooked meal. For just this one day, you help them forget their troubles and delight in the joy of being a kid again. While April says her ability to be a kid stopped when she became homeless, "Seeing the lights outside my window every year at Covenant House kept that going for a little while longer."

Today, April is now Dr. April Hunziker, MD, a physician specializing in psychiatry and a member of the board of directors at Covenant House. But that Christmas many years ago, she was a kid in need of the compassion of a caring adult like you.

Thank you for being a source of warmth and light for our young people this holiday season. With every dollar you give today, you will make this a special Christmas for more kids like April.



Give Through Your Donor-Advised Fund

A donor-advised fund (DAF) is like a centralized charitable savings account, combining the most favorable tax benefits and tax deductions with the flexibility to easily support your favorite charities.

You can use your DAF to make an immediate impact for Covenant House youth, or use your fund as a tool for future gifts to build a legacy of care.

Learn more at

covenanthouse.org/donor-advised-funds



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Covenant House builds a bridge to hope for young people facing homelessness and survivors of trafficking through unconditional love, absolute respect, and relentless support. Our doors are open 24/7 in 34 cities across five countries, and our high-quality programs are designed to empower young people to rise and overcome adversity, today and in the future.

www.covenanthouse.org

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