



Choosing Our Roots

Safely Housing Queer Youth

2020 Community Report

The mission of Choosing Our Roots is to ensure that all queer Alaskan youth and young adults have access to safe homes, supportive communities, and opportunities to thrive.

COR Values: Dignity & Respect · Empowerment · Cultural Relevancy · Community · Hope

This year, my girlfriend and I hosted a COR participant in our home. We took a virtual sewing class, and he darned a hole in my sock while sharing memories of his grandmother teaching him to sew. Another participant taught their host's son to play chess, while the son taught the participant to skateboard. There are so many ways to give.

To each of you who has donated money, hours, and resources to COR, thank you! To hosts who have opened up your homes despite the increased risk, thank you! And to all of you using your voices to uplift vulnerable LGBTQ+ young people, thank you!

In a year of risk and struggle, COR has continued providing critical services, while youth participants have continued pursuing individual victories and community activism. By pushing COR to take services virtual, the pandemic laid groundwork for expansion to the Kenai Peninsula and Bethel, and increased accessibility to those outside Anchorage.

We all are essential hands in shaping communities that value black, brown and indigenous lives, that are accessible to people with disabilities, that protect the houseless, and that make space for a multiplicity of gender, sexual, and romantic identities. Thank you for all you are doing to make it so.

In hope,

Ariel Berg
COR Board President

“This is probably the best my life has ever been. I can’t believe how far I’ve come in the past year.”

— COR Youth Participant



COR youth, staff, donors and volunteers display creativity and commitment as they rise to the challenges of 2020.

Because of you, young people are finding safety, even in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Noelle has experienced housing instability for most of her life. Having a safe stable home has been her primary goal. She spent years bouncing between family and friends' homes, navigating the constraints of poverty and an unsupportive family environment. After accessing homeless support services this summer, Noelle found that other housing systems didn't work for her as a multiracial, bisexual person. She reached out to COR because she heard that we are queer-centered and do good work with black and brown people. After two weeks of quarantine in a hotel, Noelle recently moved into her new host home. **She is grateful to have found the safety she has long been seeking.** She says, "We are in a cold state, where everything is isolated, and hopelessness is high. I would be lost if I didn't have this program. I had nowhere else to go, and this program helped keep some hope to keep going." Noelle is a musician and artist who is passionate about equity and justice. She wants to finish school, and to help other young people have their voices heard and their dreams supported.

In 2020, COR has:



Housed 13 youth
in safe, supportive,
identity-affirming host homes



Provided case management to 33 youth as they work toward fulfillment of their personal goals



Empowered 9 youth to move into stable housing after participation in COR programs

- ◆ **Matched queer youth with mentors** for ongoing one-on-one support
- ◆ **Advocated for the needs of homeless LGBTQ+ youth** in local and statewide systems

**"I love COR because it helped me realize what I am capable of."
— COR Youth Participant**



Hosted 45+ multigenerational events
for social support and community building (inc. live and virtual events)

- ◆ **Created opportunities** for youth leadership development
- ◆ **Facilitated youth-led outreach projects**, including a suicide awareness video and a podcast series focused on the queer Alaskan experience
- ◆ **Compensated youth leaders** for their valuable time and wisdom shared

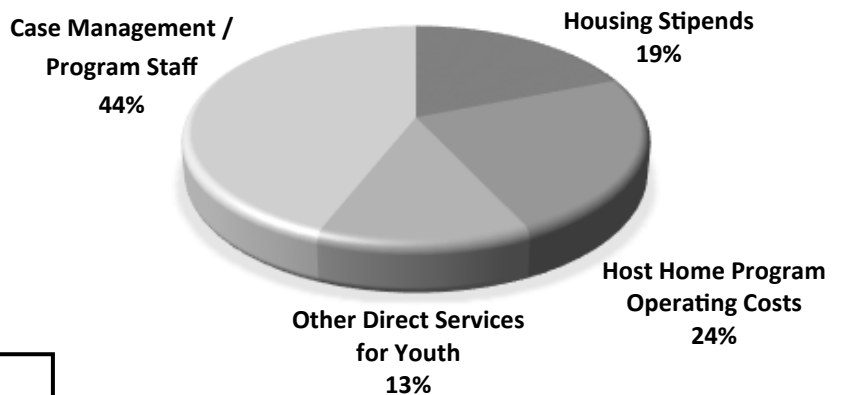
The Financial Information presented here reflects the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2020. This has been a year of rapid growth, and we are poised for continued growth in FY21 as we launch services in new regions of the state. This growth is essential to meet the needs of our communities, and it is possible because of your support.

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| FY20 Total Revenue | \$254,046 |
| FY20 Total Expenses | \$173,636 |
| Net Revenue | \$80,410 |
| FY21 Operating Budget | \$519,008 |

REVENUE



EXPENSES



“I give to Choosing Our Roots because everyone needs a loving home where they are free to be themselves, and are accepted and admired for *being* their true self. “

— Annmarie, COR Donor

During intake with COR staff, Tyler set a goal: **“I want to be able to say I’m happy and mean it.”** After years of chronic homelessness, coupled with discrimination due to his disability and his transgender identity, Tyler was depressed and sometimes suicidal. He didn’t feel that he had been genuinely

happy in over a decade. Over the past year, with case management and advocacy support from COR, Tyler was able to stay housed. Meanwhile, he had access to art, mental health support, gender affirming healthcare, and a community of peers. Recently, he moved into permanent supportive housing. Now safe in his own long-term home, financially stable, and connected to a variety of support systems, Tyler is exiting COR programming. He hopes to stay active within the COR community and to serve as a mentor for future participants. And he has new goals, such as meaningful employment, maybe becoming a social worker, and owning a dog. Looking back at the goal he set a year ago, Tyler affirms, **“I can actually say that now!”**

COR Serves Alaska

- 2019** Launched services for youth in Anchorage & Mat-Su Valley.
- 2020** Expanded these service areas. Launched services on the Kenai Peninsula.
- 2021** Launching services in Bethel. Continuing to expand program in all service areas throughout AK.

THANK YOU for Your Generous Support!

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Alaska Community Foundation *
Alaska Counts
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority *
Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault
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Burn & Bloom Body Movement Studio
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Rage City Roller Derby
Rasmuson Foundation *
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State of Alaska *
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Trans Justice Funding Project, a fund of Tides Foundation *
U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) *
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* grant awards above \$5,000

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We are grateful to all who make this program possible and do our best to maintain a thorough and accurate record of contributions received.

If you believe there has been an error or omission, please let us know: info@choosingourroots.org or 907-764-6233

THANK YOU for Your Generous Support!

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Gayle V. Magwood
Ian McCarthy

**"This is the most brilliant
and most loving group of
people I could be in."**

— Ptery, COR Board Member

Learn more about the COR
team, explore how you can get
involved, and sign up for our
monthly e-newsletter at
www.choosingourroots.org

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**“It kinda saved my life...
I was struggling with mental health
issues—still am—and would never
have really started getting better
without the support of everyone here
and everyone who’s a part of COR.”**

— COR Youth Participant



Skayellahr and Julia represented COR and provided fierce advocacy for queer and trans youth at the Statewide Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day in Juneau.



In a time of increased isolation, COR is creating virtual spaces for social support, community building, skill sharing, and queer joy.

**“COR truly goes beyond
community for me and becomes
family... My voice is important,
and I wouldn't have known that
if I wasn't a part of COR.”**

— COR Youth Leader

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Choosing Our Roots

P.O. Box 141831
Anchorage AK 99514

907-764-6233

info@choosingourroots.org

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