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Covering all the bases

Just after dusk, the **HOMEBase YOUTH SERVICES** van pulls up outside **CENTRAL ARIZONA SHELTER SERVICES (CASS)**, where about 150 homeless people wait to see if they will have a bed for the night. The sight of the van brings teens out of the alleys and parks for free bottles of water, sandwiches, socks, blankets and other necessities.

"We stop by CASS every night because sometimes state social services will tell kids who have just turned 18 [and can no longer be supported by state funds] to go there," says **JAY ZIEGLER**, an outreach coordinator. "This way we can get them out of an environment that's designed for adults."

Although the van can only reach a small number of Phoenix's estimated 5,000 homeless who are between the ages of 18 and 21, the 200 or so they do reach each week get bus passes to the organization's outreach center, which provides counseling, bus tickets for runaways to return home, food, clothing, medical care referrals, laundry and shower facilities, and referrals for both overnight shelter and permanent quarters.

After they have set up a case with the center, youths are eligible to apply for the organization's transitional living facility, which provides 25 beds, and training in life skills. Within two weeks of their arrival at the living center, resi-

dents are working or going back to school so they can graduate to a more independent living center, where they pay rent on a sliding scale.

Eighty-six percent of all the youths who check into the living center stay off the streets for good, making the HomeBase program the most successful outreach program for 18 to 21 year olds in the Valley. And although there are far more kids who need help than there are beds, at least the rest can go to HomeBase to get supplies, eat, rest and clean up before going back onto the streets.

For information or to make a tax-deductible contribution, call 602-263-7773.

— Dan Marek