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## Youth Homes Plants 100-Tree Fruit Orchard at Licensed Group Home

*Submitted by Laurel Pendleton*



Local volunteers including members of the Lafayette Community Garden, The Urban Farmers, and Youth Homes, Inc., help plant at the Cherry Lane Residence in Lafayette off Pleasant Hill Road. Photos provided

following their exit from the foster system. Youth involved in education or job programs like the TAY Labor Program can qualify for important services like transitional housing, providing them with ongoing support during this critical time.

"The first landscaping project of its kind on a licensed group home property, the fruit orchard provides abundant learning opportunities as well as radically changing the outlook for foster youth," said Pendleton. "Through the generosity and forward thinking of Episcopal Charities, Youth Homes has been able to transform this dreary landscape into an oasis for youth in need."

Along with planting fruit trees, Youth Homes will be installing lavender along the driveway, increasing curb appeal as well as providing a calming influence for all residents, staff and visitors. Additionally, with a recently installed grey water system and six gallon onsite water tank, Youth Homes will be able to use reclaimed rainwater to irrigate the orchard, creating an even greener environment.

For more information about Youth Homes visit [www.youthhomes.org](http://www.youthhomes.org) or call (925) 933-2627.

As part of its successful job training program for current and former foster youth, Youth Homes planted the Youth Homes Promise Orchard Feb. 14, which consists of 100 trees at its Cherry Lane facility in Lafayette. Youth Homes worked collaboratively with key partners including the Lafayette Community Garden as well as The Urban Farmers in coordinating this project.

Trees and garden will be tended by current and former foster youth from Youth Homes throughout the year. Tree varieties include peaches, pears, apples, apricots and figs. Current foster residents can apply to work in the Promise Garden Summer Job Program, spending 10 weeks learning about job readiness.

"This unique orchard project reconfirms the idea that Youth Homes is the place where hope lives and grows," said Youth Homes Director of Development Laurel Pendleton.

Former foster youth will work in the orchard year round as they build job readiness through the TAY Labor Program. This unique project provides job training to former foster youth hired by Youth Homes to work in the community on projects ranging from light landscaping and yard clean-up to the installation of retaining walls and laying sod.

In California, it is estimated that between 20 to 50 percent of youth will face homelessness in the months



Youth Homes Program Director Kim Chilvers and Executive Director Stuart McCullough on planting day.

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