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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DHS'S ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE CENTER CO-HOSTS 4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
ALWAYS BET ON YOUTH TO BENEFIT HOMELESS AND FOSTER YOUTH**

PHILADELPHIA, PA -- Valley Youth House and the Philadelphia Department of Human Service's Achieving Independence Center (AIC) will co-host a casino-themed gala to support homeless and foster youth in Philadelphia on Friday, March 28, 2014 from 6 pm-10 pm at the Wyndham Philadelphia Historic District. The event, emceed by NYC comedian and AIC alumni Monroe Martin, will include casino games, a silent auction, and live jazz music. Mr. Martin is a former Philadelphia foster youth who uses an honest and open approach to joke and storytelling that universalizes his experiences. His intellectual and hysterical perspective resonates and has earned him respect among his peers in the New York City comedy circuit.

The evening's Individual Achiever, Patricia A. Coulter of the Urban League of Philadelphia, is a committed community leader who has devoted much of her career to leadership development for African Americans and advocating for civil rights and economic and education equality. Five Below will also be honored as Community Achiever. Five Below has been a staunch supporter of the AIC's Backpack Challenge for the last several years, and in 2013 contributed to the collection of over 2,700 backpacks.

"Always Bet on Youth provides critical funding for tools and services needed for Valley Youth House to support homeless and foster youth in Philadelphia as they become productive and self-sufficient; it's a safe bet with a big payoff," says Annette Duranso, President and CEO of Valley Youth House.

According to DHS Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose, "The AIC was established to ensure that these young people have caring adults and positive role models in their lives and to provide the education, support and guidance that will enable them to make a successful transition to independence. This event helps us achieve that goal."

Since 2010, Always Bet on Youth has raised over \$77,000 to support independent living and housing services for approximately 1,500 homeless and foster care youth. These young people face isolation, homelessness, unemployment, incarceration, and exploitation as they struggle to make their way into adulthood. With the help Valley Youth House's support, career planning, mentoring, life skills training, housing and budgeting assistance, they are able to break the cycle and become productive and successful adults.

Ace of Hearts sponsors are Liberty Property Trust and Cozen O'Connor; generous support is being provided by Environetics, Iroko Pharmaceuticals, Turner Construction Company, Pennoni Associates, Penntex Construction, the Deep Waters Fund, and Beasley Broadcast Group, Inc.

Food for the event will be provided by the Wyndham Philadelphia Historic District and Ms. Goody Cupcakes; an open bar with wine and beer will also be available. Tickets for the event are \$95 for individuals, \$180 for couples, and \$45 for young professionals age 30 and under. For more information about the event or to purchase tickets, please contact Valerie Johnson at [vjohnson@vyhphila.org](mailto:vjohnson@vyhphila.org) or (215) 925-3180.

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The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) is the City agency charged with protecting children from abuse, neglect, and delinquency, ensuring their safety and permanency in nurturing home environments, and strengthening and preserving families by enhancing community-based prevention services. Through the development of organizations such as the Achieving Independence Center ("AIC"), DHS provides services to strengthen the overall well-being of Philadelphia youth and families using a personal approach that is responsive to evolving community needs.

Founded in 1973, Valley Youth House (VYH) provides a first line of defense for troubled young people and their families by partnering with agencies, systems, and businesses to create unique programming intended to preserve family life and provide youth with the necessary resources to become productive and successful adults. Services are provided by a professional staff, community volunteers, and student interns at schools, family homes, offices and more than 100 residential facilities throughout 12 counties in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The AIC, managed by Valley Youth House, provided independent living services to approximately 1,100 young people in 2013. In addition, VYH housed 198 youth and their children, and aided 132 young adults in successfully transitioning from adolescence to adulthood.

For more information about DHS, visit [www.phila.gov/dhs](http://www.phila.gov/dhs); for more information about Valley Youth House or the AIC, visit [www.vyhphila.org](http://www.vyhphila.org).