



YAC Members, from left to right: Haley Nelson, Kimberley Burke, Paula Zheng, Nick Parker, and Miguel Rohrbacher.

### **Youth Action Committee Aims to Fight Teen Homelessness**

Can teenagers help fight teen homelessness in Juneau? This is the question that a group of students from Juneau Douglas High School are taking on. The Youth Action Committee (YAC) is issuing grants to Juneau charities that the students themselves deem best suited to tackle this problem.

The Youth Action Committee is a branch of the Juneau Community Foundation. It began last fall and receives support (and pizza) from the “Island Pub” for their monthly meetings.

The Youth Action Committee has just received a pledge of \$10,000 from the local Douglas-Dornan Foundation to award grants to non-profit organizations who feel that they can address and aid the problem of youth homelessness and need for vocational training. Paul Douglas, trustee of the Douglas-Dornan Foundation, says “We are very impressed with the learning and work the YAC has accomplished in its first year.”

Applications are available online at [www.juneaucf.org](http://www.juneaucf.org) for organizations wishing to apply for grants up to \$5,000 by the deadline of August 15<sup>th</sup>. Grants will be awarded in October after the YAC students have reviewed all proposals and made site visits to the top applicants.

The first goal of the YAC is to ensure that those who would benefit from vocational training have the means to do so by providing affordable education opportunities. Not every student is on a college track, and although many members of the community encourage them to be, the YAC believes that the desires of those students to begin working should be honored.

The second goal reflects the student's concern over their homeless peers. Recent statistics have shown that one out of every thirty students at JDHS is homeless, or "couch-hopping." This commonly stems from a variety of reasons including unsafe home-lives, family members abusing alcohol and drugs, domestic violence, poverty, and mental illnesses within the family. This puts teenagers at higher risk for the same problems.

"When you know kids who are homeless, it really hits close to home," said Nick Parker, a member of the Youth Advisory Committee. "As youth in the community ourselves, we feel that it is in our best interest to see that our peers do not end up on the streets permanently, whether the reason is drugs, abusive home-lives, or any number of other reasons."

Building trust among adults and youth ensures a healthier, more functional community. With the help of the Juneau Community Foundation and local organizations, the YAC sees a tighter connection between the youth and adults of Juneau on the horizon. They hope to encourage non-profit organizations in the community to respond to the YAC goals and submit grant proposals. Haley Nelson, another student YAC member, summarizes the group's aspirations in this way: "If non-profit organizations can foster our hopes, then perhaps they will facilitate making them into reality."