

CASE STUDY: DAYBREAK

Social Enterprise for Opportunity Youth

For youth with little or no work experience, a time-limited job at a social enterprise is an opportunity to develop a diverse skill set in a real business setting that can be leveraged toward other jobs. At a social enterprise, youth are likely to gain marketable skills in the design and production of goods, quality control, customer service, marketing, and sales, in addition to soft skills. Because social enterprises are real businesses, they are fertile grounds for experiential learning. At the same time, social enterprises must strike a delicate balance between meeting their workers' learning needs and their business goals, which can be challenging.

Daybreak: Dayton, OH

[Daybreak](#) was founded in 1975 by volunteers who realized that young people who had been kicked out of their homes or had run away needed a safe place to stay at night. Originally an emergency shelter for homeless youth, Daybreak's operations have evolved and expanded over time. Today, in addition to emergency shelter, Daybreak offers street outreach, housing, education, mental health, and employment services—including transitional jobs (TJ) within a social enterprise setting—to help youth get and stay housed.

Daybreak's target population had originally been young teens ages 10 to 18, but because of increasing needs, the program has given more attention to transition-aged youth ages 18 to 24. This is a group of youth whose needs often fall through the gaps between traditional youth and adult support systems.

To help youth practice employment skills in a real-world setting that prepares them for future jobs, Daybreak created [Lindy & Company](#). Lindy's is a social enterprise that bakes and sells gourmet pet treats for cats and dogs, giving youth the opportunity to practice soft skills and gain experience in customer service, baking, recipe testing, publicity, and sales. This employment program model gives staff the chance to assess each individual's strengths and challenges on the job, while youth get the chance to experiment with their skills and discover areas of interest. Having a social enterprise in-house lets Daybreak provide experiential learning for their participants in a safe space where they can observe, model, and practice workplace behaviors while still being subject to the demands of a real work place.

In [FY 2013/2014](#), Daybreak helped 98 youth ages 18 to 24 enhance their education and 116 youth ages 18 to 24 participated in Daybreak's employment program. Of the youth who participated in the employment program, 70 completed the program, 44 obtained employment upon completion, and 43 worked at Lindy & Company. Overall, a total 89 youth obtained employment by the time they left Daybreak.

Read [our blog](#): Holistic Services: A Recipe for Success in Helping Homeless Youth Get + Keep Jobs