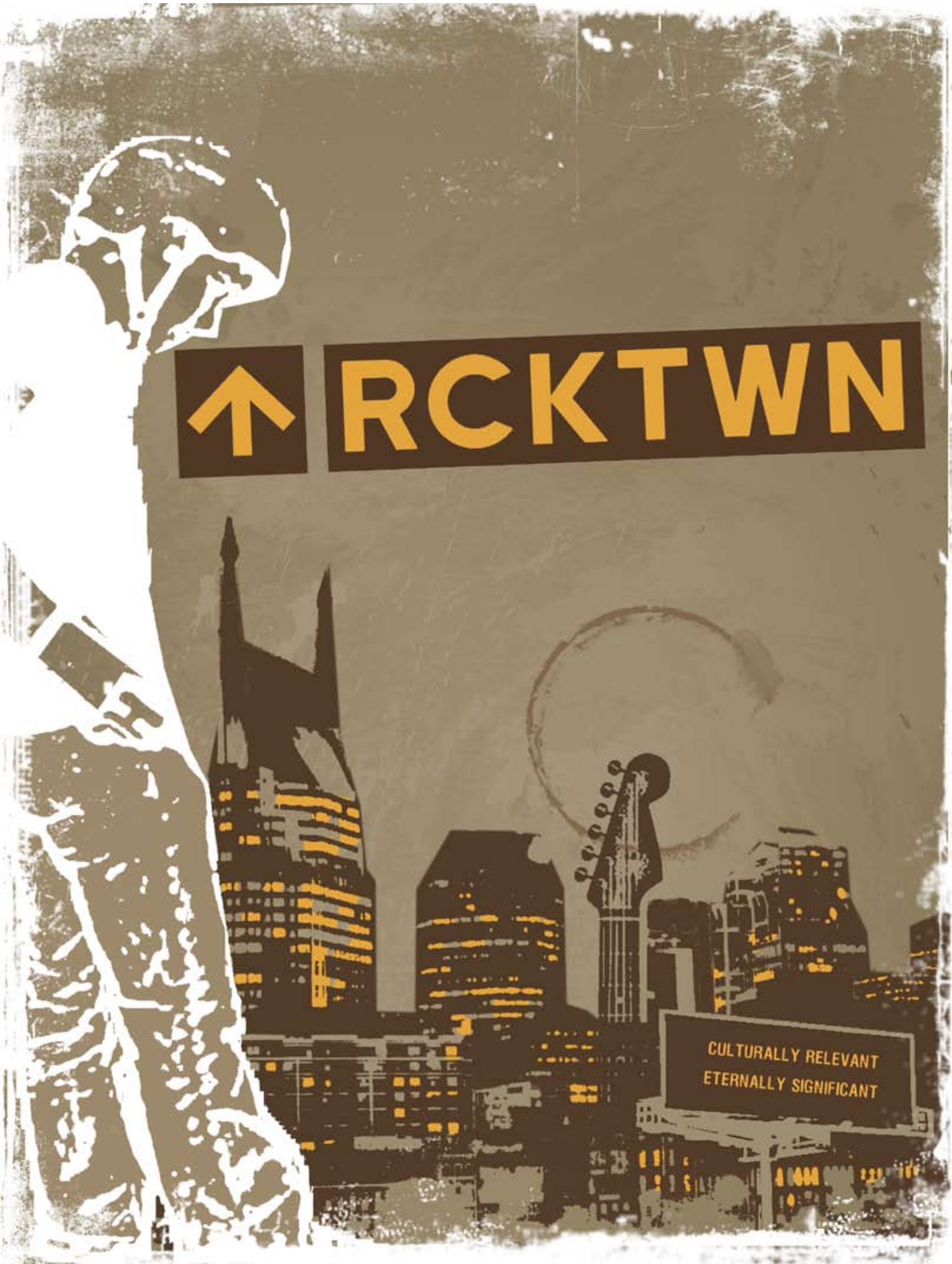




# RCKTWN

CULTURALLY RELEVANT  
ETERNALLY SIGNIFICANT



**CULTURALLY RELEVANT  
ETERNALLY SIGNIFICANT**

EVERY DAY THE DOORS AT ROCKETOWN SWING OPEN TO PROVIDE A SAFE PLACE TO HANG OUT, A CARING ADULT WHO HAS TIME TO LISTEN, AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LIFE-GIVING RELATIONSHIPS FOR MORE THAN 1,300 ADOLESCENTS IN NASHVILLE. DRAWN BY A MYRIAD OF ENTERTAINMENT AND LEARNING OPTIONS, TEENAGERS FIND ADULTS WHO SPEAK WORDS OF TRUTH TO THEM. THEY ENCOUNTER CHRISTIAN ADULTS WHO STEP ALONG SIDE THEM TO REDIRECT, COUNSEL, BEFRIEND, COACH AND MENTOR. THEY MEET PEOPLE, PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR LIVES, WHO WRAP THEM IN LOVE.

**rocketown**

# the mission of **rcktwn**

is to **create culturally relevant environments** that **foster vital relationships** between disenfranchised adolescents and Christian mentors in order to **meet their social, physical, and spiritual needs**.

Would you take a minute to step over the words “disenfranchised adolescents” and get face to face with a few of the young people who come to Rocketown every week? Meet Sara, who has difficulty developing healthy relationships because of her own lack of self-worth. And fifteen-year-old Tommy, dealing with his father’s release from prison, who feels unloved and lonely. Sam struggles with drinking, depression and suicidal thoughts. Meet Jason, who’s been told that he’s the target of the local gang who shot his cousin.

Then there are Bobby and Saxon, ages 11 and 13, who walked miles through some rough neighborhoods to get to Rocketown. When the staff at Rocketown offered to give the boys a ride home, they discovered that the children’s parents were both unemployed and had drug problems, their home had no running water and there was little food. Rocketown intervened to help the family find better housing and to connect them with a local church for counseling and employment assistance. A Rocketown staff member provided a home for the boys for 30 days while working with the state to develop a safety plan for the family. Since then, another family who participates in Rocketown programming, has embraced Bobby and Saxon, enrolling them in school and caring for them. The parents remain drug-free and are working to meet DCS expectations so that the family can be reunited.

**culturally**



**relevant**

## **empyrean coffee bar**

Teens can hang out in engaging, safe and secure place to get great coffee and snacks. Some students take advantage of the volunteer opportunities in the coffee bar. Structured and unstructured after-school activities are offered -

- > artistic programs to develop creative talents
- > performance opportunities for poetry, spoken word, singing, rap, instrumental music
- > mentoring and tutoring
- > art exhibits by local young artists
- > computers to work on projects

## **sixth avenue skatepark**

An average of 350 students come each week to the 14,000 square-foot all indoor skatepark for skateboarding, in-line skating and BMX biking, private and group lessons, professional demonstrations. Performance and leadership opportunities are also available.

The Skate Team performs at schools and community events to showcase their talents and talk about making good choices and working hard.

The layout is changed annually at the park to maintain its edge.

As a need is seen, staff members and adult volunteers mentor youth who hang out in the skatepark. Skatechurch, lead by the Rocketown staff, meets on Tuesday nights.

## **driven art store**

Business and sales training are taught in a retail environment that markets art, photography and fashion made by students. Local professionals, and sometimes other teens, instruct classes in screen printing, fashion design and photography.

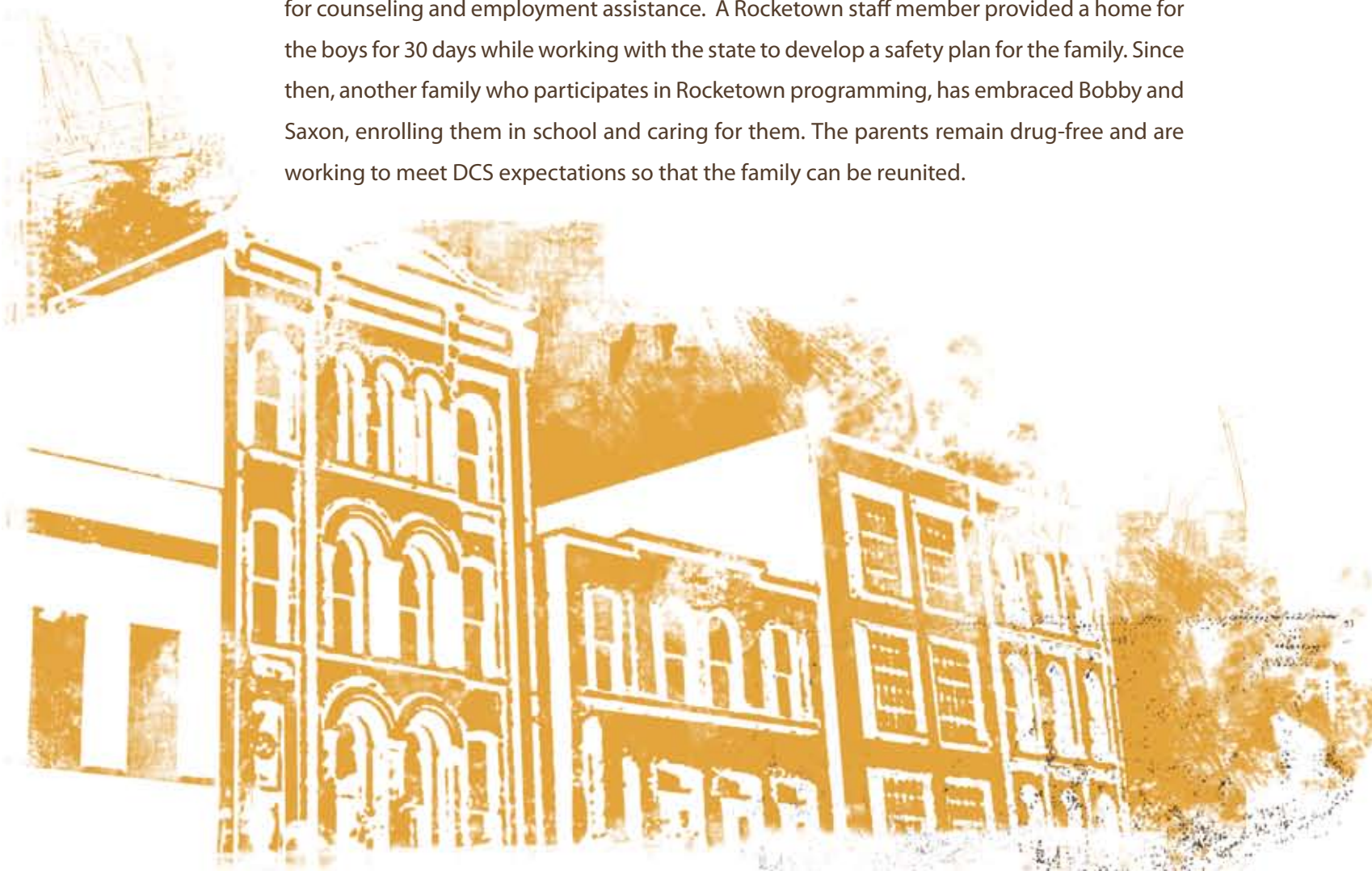
**eternally**



**significant**

**CALEB’S MOM** was at her wits end. Her 12-year-old son was failing 6th grade. Nothing she had tried—participation in sports, rewards, discipline—seemed to motivate him. However, when he started participating in Open Mic on Mondays at the Rockettown Empyrean Coffee Bar, his life began to turn around. He fell in love with percussion and began developing his skills. Caleb’s mom says that since he started his Monday routine at Rockettown “he is more disciplined, outgoing and enthusiastic about everything.” Caleb’s band has received local recognition and recently went on tour.

**STEPHEN, 15**, moved to Nashville a couple of years ago to live with his dad. He had been living with his mom in another city where his involvement with a rough group of teens was getting him into trouble. The Sixth Avenue Skatepark helped make the move to a new city a positive one. He’s now taking honors classes at school and hoping to get sponsored in skateboarding. “I look forward to Fridays when I get to come to the park. This has been a great place for me,” Stephen says.



### ROCKTOWN MUSIC VENUES

Young people need safe, positive, exciting weekend entertainment. The variety of "all ages" concerts and events at Rocketown showcase a diverse array of local, regional, and world-class musical talent like *Relient K*, *UnderOath*, *Sara Evans*, *Josh Turner*, *Hawthorne Heights*, *MXPX*, *MeWithoutYou*, *HillSong United*.

At least two times per year, high school bands compete in Rocketown Battle of the Bands. In the fall, 40 bands auditioned and 14 were selected for the competitions. The top band won studio time, played on our main venue stage and performed at Nashville's new symphony hall "free day of music."

Student performance and rehearsal opportunities are also available. Local teen bands can reserve Level 1 to rehearse and our teen music volunteers select, book and help promote teen bands. Interested students can learn about sound and light engineering.

### DANCE STUDIO

Classes in hip hop, salsa, ballet, breakdance are available at affordable prices and accessible times.

### SUMMER SESSIONS

Approximately 50% of the students who attend our summer sessions are on scholarship. We offer seven 4-day sessions from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. that focus on music, film, dance and skateboarding and are taught by area professionals. A performance open to the public at the end of each week showcases the students' newly acquired skills.

Each class provides a historical/cultural context for the activity, hands on experience, and guidance for further development.

### ROCKETOWN REP

Not your typical youth council, RCKTWN Rep—a leadership group of representatives from area junior high and high schools—gives teens a voice at Rocketown. They learn leadership skills, operate the art store, write and produce a ZINE, and are empowered to develop and promote events. Students are also given training in making positive choices and influencing others.

### STUDENTS IN DISTRESSING CIRCUMSTANCES

sometimes come to Rocketown in unexpected ways, but invariably encounter compassionate staff who reach out to them. During a recent audition for the Battle of the Bands, we asked one band to choose one word that would describe what they were feeling as they wrote the song they were to perform. The band, *From Rise to Ruin*, chose "regret." Two members of the band are brothers whose mother is dying of cancer. Their lyrics were about making good choices while their mother is living, making sure they don't have regrets. The Rocketown staff stepped into the lives of the boys with compassion and love.

"MY MOM IS IN JAIL for 6 years and I live with 4 other people in a trailer that is really really small. I get all my stuff for free from really close friends. I always stay the night with other people. I love the food at Rocketown. It would really be cool if I could have a membership at Rocketown."

Sam, age 13

"LIFE'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE STUFF WE CAN ACCUMULATE OR THE HONORS PEOPLE HEAP ON US. SERVING PEOPLE IN THE NAME OF JESUS IS WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN THE WORLD. WE HAVE TO STEP INTO PEOPLE'S LIVES SO THAT THEY CAN BE CHANGED BY GOD."

MICHAEL. W. SMITH



★ ↑ **RCKTWN** ★  
**THANK YOU DONORS**

We step into the lives of the confused and hurting. We speak truth in their language. We listen past their words to hear their hearts. We provide safe places for friends, fun and life. We offer out-of-the-box learning and entertainment options.

We can do this because of the donors who have stepped up to support this life-changing work. On behalf of the Rocketown recipients of your generosity, we express heartfelt gratefulness for your participation and endorsement.

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### Operating Income

Retail Revenue	\$105,103.31
Concert Revenue	139,138.50
Rental Revenue	144,837.68
Program Fees	115,003.24
Other Income	18,495.43
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>522,578.16</b>

### Community Support

Operating	421,514.49
Capital	250,000.00
<b>Total Fundraising</b>	<b>671,514.60</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,194,092.66</b>

### Operating Expenses

Program/Ministry	716,742.96
Management & General	191,998.00
Fundraising	110,846.12

### Total Operating Expenses

Capital Payoff	250,000.00
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We all long for a place where we can be ourselves and feel like everyone knows our name. For teens in Middle Tennessee, Rocketown is that place. From the girl who comes every couple of months for a concert to the guy who is here every day, teens see Rocketown as their place. It is their home. They never have to call or announce that they are coming- this is where they belong. At Rocketown kids know they are loved.

But that is not the end of the story. As a leadership team, it is important that our focus is not only getting kids in the doors, but also meeting their needs while they are here. The depth of need is greater than we could have imagined. Daily we see teens struggling with horrible home lives, neglect, abuse, drug use, anger, eating disorders, and depression.

Our job is to create real life grace. We do it because we believe this is the way God loves us. The underlying question is how can we love these kids more. This is where you come in. Rocketown needs more adults to listen, pray, donate and volunteer. The needs are varied – just like the teens we see.

Our relationships with teens would not be possible without our amazing community network that continues to support us. Foundations who gave to our capital campaign to pay off our building so that we can focus all fundraising efforts on outreach. Churches who step in as a safety net for teens and their families, supplying clothing, housing, Christmas gifts and more. Nonprofits that provide counseling services, bring their youth to Rocketown and hold joint events with us.

We are grateful for the individuals and organizations who give their time and resources to make Rocketown a place that is safe and where teens want to come. A place for teens who may fit in nowhere else, a home away from home... a place to be.

Gratefully,  
Staff Leadership Team

Audra Davis  
Development Director

Ben Cissell  
Outreach & Skatepark Director

Mary Virginia Settle  
Operations Director





**MUSICVENUE SKATEPARK COFFEEBAR**

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