



## **A GEM Hidden in Plain Sight:** A Journey through YES' Past, Present, and Future

- YES seeks to empower youth and communities to become their own best resource •



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## REPORT PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to honor the past, to acknowledge the present, and to prepare for the future of Youth Enrichment Services (YES). YES' ability to overcome challenges over 30 years is in part a result of our ability to create, innovate, and relentlessly serve the youth and families of Pittsburgh. YES provides a variety of opportunities and programming for youth, and develops and implements interventions that are rooted in theoretical frameworks and evidence-based literature and account for youths' changing needs. This document weaves together the story of YES, which has evolved tremendously over 30 years; each iteration of programming better than the next through understanding the youth we serve while integrating evidence-based practices to support our work.

## LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

Captured time in a bottle. We have all heard it said that time is our enemy, or perhaps our friend. Some speak of time running out, golden moments, or even perilous times. As YES approaches its 30th anniversary, we reflect on three decades of intentional, heartfelt, passionate, and intellectually profound work, artistically crafted and delivered with hope and prayer.

As we reach this milestone, the only fitting words are these: *though the arc of time may have a beginning and an end, YES can look at its founders, participants, funders, stakeholders, and even critics and say, in this moment, we have captured time in a bottle.* And so, we celebrate.

We celebrate our victories and defeats, close calls and triumphs. We celebrate every child who passed through our doors, those who learned, who were inspired, who found direction, and who were given a chance for a better life. We honor every dollar from generous donors, those who saw the vision and said, "I'm in, even if just for a while." We celebrate every staff member, young and not-so-young, who came to YES seeking financial stability, as well as those who joined out of altruism, those who believed in a better world and knew they had something meaningful to contribute.

To those who have since moved on to other ventures, know this: we still hold you in our hearts, and we honor your commitment to our cause.

Looking back, the numbers are staggering. What began as a small, community-based program in public housing in rural southern West Virginia, designed to provide after-school care for kids and prevent the dreaded "summer loss" of academic skills, has grown beyond imagination.

From the start, we embraced peer mentoring as one of our core beliefs, standing firm on the principles of high quality, high intensity, and high touch as the formula for moving participants forward.

Our science-based approach has allowed us to continually evaluate and measure not only the impact of our work but also the efficacy, efficiency, and deliverables of our process. In Pittsburgh alone, over 5,000 individuals have come through the program in the last 30 years. Many have gone on to lead remarkable lives, while others have found fulfillment simply as good citizens.

YES is, at its core, a blue-collar program. Everyone, board members, staff, stakeholders, and funders, understands that it's a grind. At times, it's a thankless job with no clear view of what's next. Yet, every time we see a child in need, a parent desperate for help, or a community suffering from a lack of resources, we see a challenge. And we march on.

So, thank you. Thank you for everything you've done to help us reach this milestone. We know the road ahead is uncertain, and there will be more challenges to come. But one thing is clear: we are battle-tested, sharpened by our experiences, and polished for the next 30 years.

Grab your hat, we've got more memories to make and more legacy to build before this chapter comes to a close.

Sincerely,



**Dennis Floyd Jones, PhD**  
Executive Director,  
Youth Enrichment Services



# WHO IS YES?

Youth Enrichment Services (YES) is a grassroots non-profit organization located in East Liberty, dedicated to serving the youth and families of our community and the greater Pittsburgh area. YES offers a wide range of programs designed to meet the specific needs of youth served, and constantly strives to help youth become their best selves and develop into their own greatest resource. Through efforts in mentorship, education, advocacy, and exposure, YES aims to equip, empower, and enrich students by providing educational, social, cultural, and workforce opportunities that prepare them for success.

Since 1994, YES has served over 5,000 youth ages 6 to 24 through its year-round programming which includes: academic enrichment, alternative to detention, peer mentoring, life skills training, cultural enrichment, diversity awareness, workforce readiness, violence prevention, and wellness-based programming. YES seeks to empower communities holistically to become their own best resource. To accomplish this, YES provides social and economically at-risk youth of color opportunities to explore, challenge, and rewrite the limiting and harmful narratives they have been given by society as a means of self-realization, systemic change, and becoming intentional community stewards, despite barriers to success, like the school-to-prison pipeline. YES' position in the community is like the confluence of Pittsburgh's three rivers in its ability to prioritize serving youth on the margin by adapting to changing needs and directly confronting the social, economic, and academic injustices and disparities that overwhelmingly affect them.

**Y.E.S.!**

## Innovative program enriches youths' lives

By BILL ARCHER  
of the Daily Telegraph staff

**BLUEFIELD** - Life can be tough for a kid, especially in the summer.

With parents working, oppressive heat during the day and often unfriendly streets at night, some children lack the opportunity for positive growing experiences from the day public schools close their doors in June, until they reopen in the fall.

Summers can be especially taxing for children living in the projects, in three West Virginia cities, the summer of 1993 might just be a little "cooler," thanks to an innovative program that addresses the needs of children.

The Y.E.S. Program - Youth Enrichment Services - is funded by a federal grant through West Virginia University and is now being offered in Charleston and Bluefield. It is a six-week program that provides day long activities for participants.

"All of our adult staff members are certified teachers," Y.E.S. instructor Deborah Neal said. "There are just so many things the children can learn."

There are now 35 children - age 6 to 13 - in the program. There are an additional 16 teen-aged volunteer "mentors" and a staff of eight adults. Courses offered include multicultural education, computer

training in Dickason Hall on the Bluefield State College campus, fitness, wellness and nutrition.

"We have special activities in the afternoon," Neal said. "Yesterday, Dr. David DeBerry came in and demonstrated traditional African dress and customs. It was really informative, and the children loved it."

Fitness, wellness and self-esteem are among the most important elements of the program. Karen Miller and Stephanie Mosher have been working with the students in these vital areas.

"The students are learning to participate in healthier activities," Miller said, "and at the same time, they are increasing their knowledge of health and

ment was hot, and a fan blowing hot air across a half-dozen students brought little relief. However, as Perry asked questions about African-American inventors, the students remained focused and learned.

"The black cultures had everything the way things used to be back in history," said Melaine Hayes, a recent graduate of Bluefield High School.

Hayes will be attending West Virginia as a Westcran this fall, but during the summer, she is serving as a Y.E.S. mentor.

"Black history was a favorite topic of mine in high school," Hayes said, "but Carolyn Williams was the only one who would talk about it, and that was mostly during February. I think students could learn more from studying all cultures through the year - not just black history in February."

Perry spent a great deal of time discussing the accomplishments of George Washington Carver and his work with the peanut and sweet potato. He also told of men like Garrett Morgan, inventor of the traffic signal.

"When we go on field trips like to the Blueensie Dam, Beckley Exhibition Mine, Virginia Tech or Pipestem, we get bus transportation from Mercer County Schools," Perry said.

"It we're just traveling around town, the Bluefield Transit System provides free transportation."



**A learning experience**

Y.E.S. Program multicultural education instructor Ronald Perry points out commemorative stamps that have been issued by the U.S. Postal Service in recognition of contributions made by African-Americans to the American way of life.

Neal said other guests scheduled to visit with the program participants include attorneys Sam Hall and J. Franklin Long, story teller Dr. Bob Henry Baber, Dr. C. Stuart McGeehee and Alester Wells. "We're using these people as role models," Neal said.

Bernice Wilson has been drilling Y.E.S. participants in sentence writing strategy. "Hopefully, by the end of this six weeks," Wilson said, "these children will be able to write a good sentence."

Mosher was instructing a class of very young students on honesty. She drew on examples the children could understand in order to get her point across.

"It's fun," Alecia Francisco, a seventh grade student who will be attending Bluefield Junior High School this year said. "I've learned a lot about the past and stuff."

Ronald Perry has been teaching multicultural education. The small room on the second floor of a Tiffany Manor apart-

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YES showed me how to love myself and to continue to move forward when I thought there wasn't a chance for me in the future.

- Lynette Brimage  
YES STUDENT

# OUR MISSION, VISION, & ETHOS



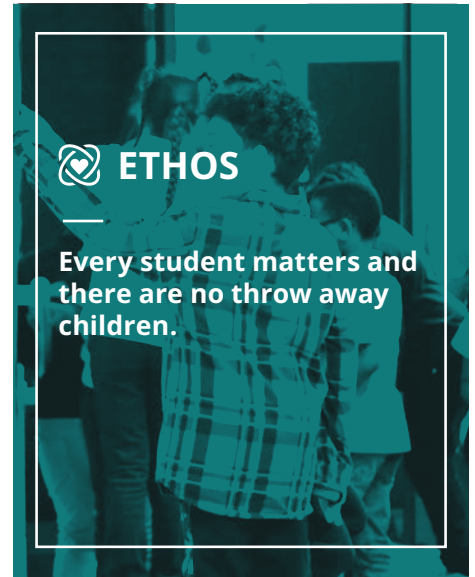
**MISSION**

YES provides socially and economically at-risk youth the opportunity to achieve success through participation in mentorship, education, and enrichment programs.



**VISION**

YES seeks to empower communities to become their own best resource.



**ETHOS**

Every student matters and there are no throw away children.

## OUR PROCESS

YES works to serve the youth of Pittsburgh and surrounding communities by developing high intensity, high quality, and high touch programming. By implementing evidence-based approaches, YES strategically and intentionally supports youth and families by bridging well-defined gaps between communities and access to resources. As we enter our third decade of service, we remain committed to developing processes that make our services unique.



### High Intensity

- Length and consistency of programs and services



### High Quality

- Passion, knowledge, and skill that staff, volunteers, and interns bring to our programs and services



### High Touch

- Multiple and diverse technologies used to engage students and families in programs and services beyond the bounds of physical space





# WHAT MAKES YES DIFFERENT?

## We Do It All

Rather than only addressing one area of youth development (i.e. academic enrichment, fitness and health, mentoring, workforce development), YES develops holistic solutions for ALL aspects of young people's lives. By centering our focus on unique programming and models, we have created a distinctive framework that enhances the work that we do, and allows for the development of both collective and individual support and creative solutions for our youth.

YES strongly believes and adheres to the notion that there are no "throw away kids." We stand by the principle that all people matter, and all youth matter. While there are several phenomenal programs in the City of Pittsburgh and surrounding areas, many are unable to address the arduous barriers that preclude youth, and particularly high risk youth, from engaging in resources that could improve their overall well-being and future trajectories.

Over the last 30 years, YES has worked with over 5,000 youth. Some come willingly, and others come because they have to. However, they all stay because they want to. No matter what the hardship, YES welcomes any and all youth who want to be in the space, and even youth who do not. YES believes that sometimes, even when adolescents are being pushed by family members, teachers, or court mandated offices, they should still be welcomed into the safe community space. Ultimately, YES' wide range of programs and opportunities retain many of our youth. In fact, many YES alumni maintain contact, volunteer, and some even come back to YES as passionate staff members who strive to change the lives of current YES students.

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**YES has become my most essential resource.** I have a multitude of memories of me needing help, not being able to get assistance from friends or family and having no one to turn to. **But YES has been there, ready and willing to lend a hand in any way... I can never thank them enough.**

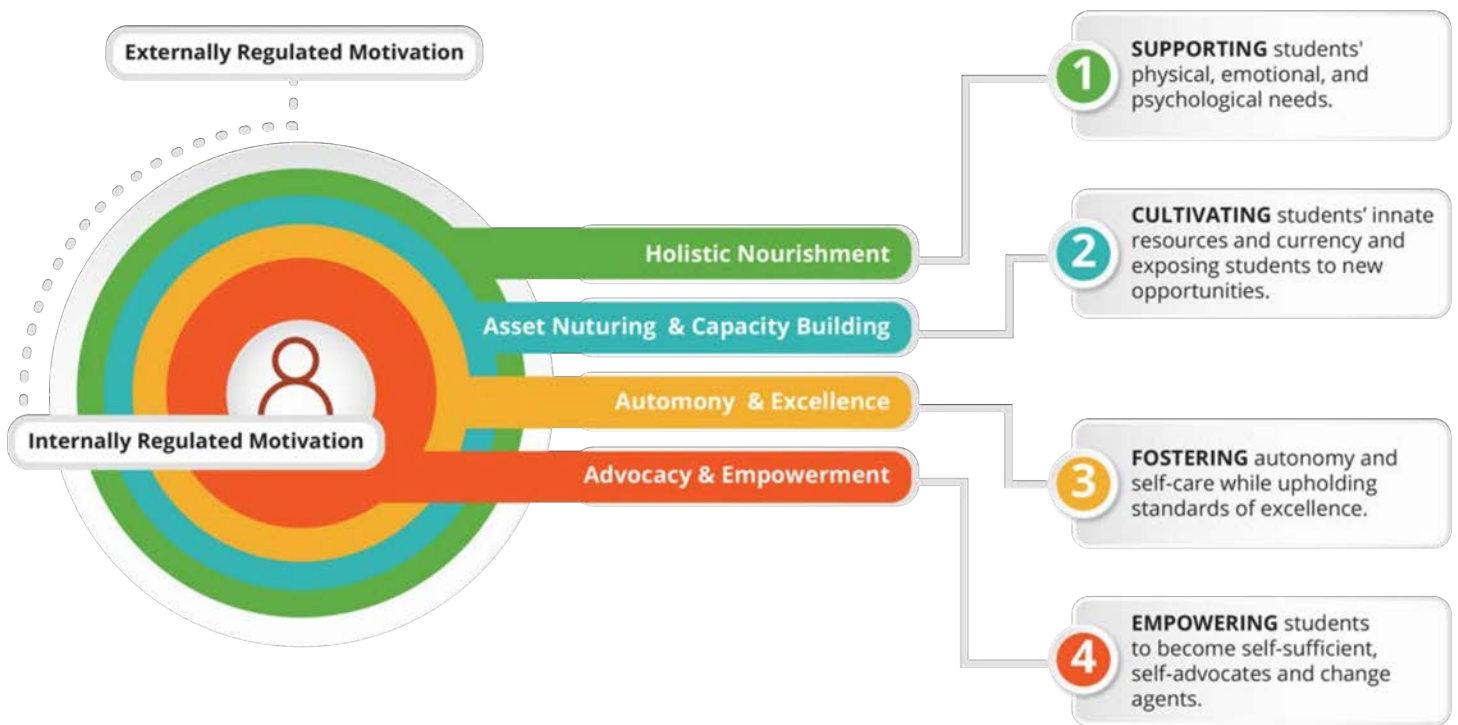
**- YES Student**



# MENTORSHIP MODEL

Mentoring is the foundation for all YES endeavors. At every tier of engagement, mentoring is a catalyst to convey, inspire, empower, and uphold strong personal self-conduct. It is central to YES' philosophy of improved physical, emotional, and academic development as means to achieve cultural enrichment, career development, and life skills enhancement. With time, YES reconceptualized its theoretical mentorship model and, in 2018, worked alongside staff and a visiting scholar to capture the process of youths' internalization of motivational regulation and becoming empowered community advocates for social change.

Currently, YES employs this mentorship model with four concentric circles that, in accordance with the science of motivation, gradually lead inward. That is, each inner circle symbolizes the progressive internalization of motivational regulation (Jones et al., 2021). YES operationalizes this motivational model through a program of strengths-based mentorship that focuses on the use of students' strengths in their homes, schools, and communities. Strengths-based mentorship centralizes students' psychological needs, the very needs most overlooked by the education system (Deci & Ryan, 2016).



Through strengths-based mentoring, YES helps students extend their preexisting assets by exposing them to new opportunities related to employment, academics, leadership development, community engagement, and recreation. Students see their competence, especially their ability to face and overcome challenges, and grow through these experiences.

## OUR MENTORSHIP APPROACHES

YES' mentorship philosophy is actualized through several approaches, which are explained below. These diverse approaches are woven and integrated into all aspects of YES' work.



**Peer to Peer** engagement helps high school peers develop social and teamwork skills (Karcher, 2005). These interactions develop organically through participation in programming, and help develop the sense of community and safe space that many of our youth do not have otherwise. Furthermore, youth's positive experiences in YES programming fuels their desire to bring other friends and acquaintances from their schools and neighborhoods.



**Near-Peer to Peer** engagement enables a mutually beneficial relationship to develop between older YES youth and/or interns, who can provide younger students with perspectives and advice that helps them gain confidence in exploring academics and career options from new vantage points (Tenenbaum et al., 2017). These near-peer interactions serve as an opportunity to develop self-advocacy skills in younger students, improving their ability to recognize and ask for what they need (Boat et al., 2022).



**Staff to Student** engagement is critical to the success of our programming. Program evaluations suggest that staff support and relationships help motivate students to seize opportunities and continue with programming (Jones & Jones, 2020). Staff serve as the central connection point for all of the other mentorship approaches, as staff play a significant role in the initial recruitment of students and near-peer support. Additionally, these caring adult-student relationships provide youth with a space where they feel safe and respected (Vaclavik et al., 2017), which positively impacts their health and wellbeing (Grossman et al., 2006).



**Staff to Staff** relationships enable our staff to support, challenge each other, and grow in all aspects of life. The bond between co-workers throughout their time at YES laid the foundation for YES' tenure and establishing long-term relationships with one another.



**Staff to Family** relationships help families strategize on ways to help their youth. Many of our youth face unthinkable barriers and challenges to provide for their families and access to resources. YES' expert staff help families reconnect, gain access to knowledge and resources, and continue to contribute to their communities and the city of Pittsburgh in positive ways.

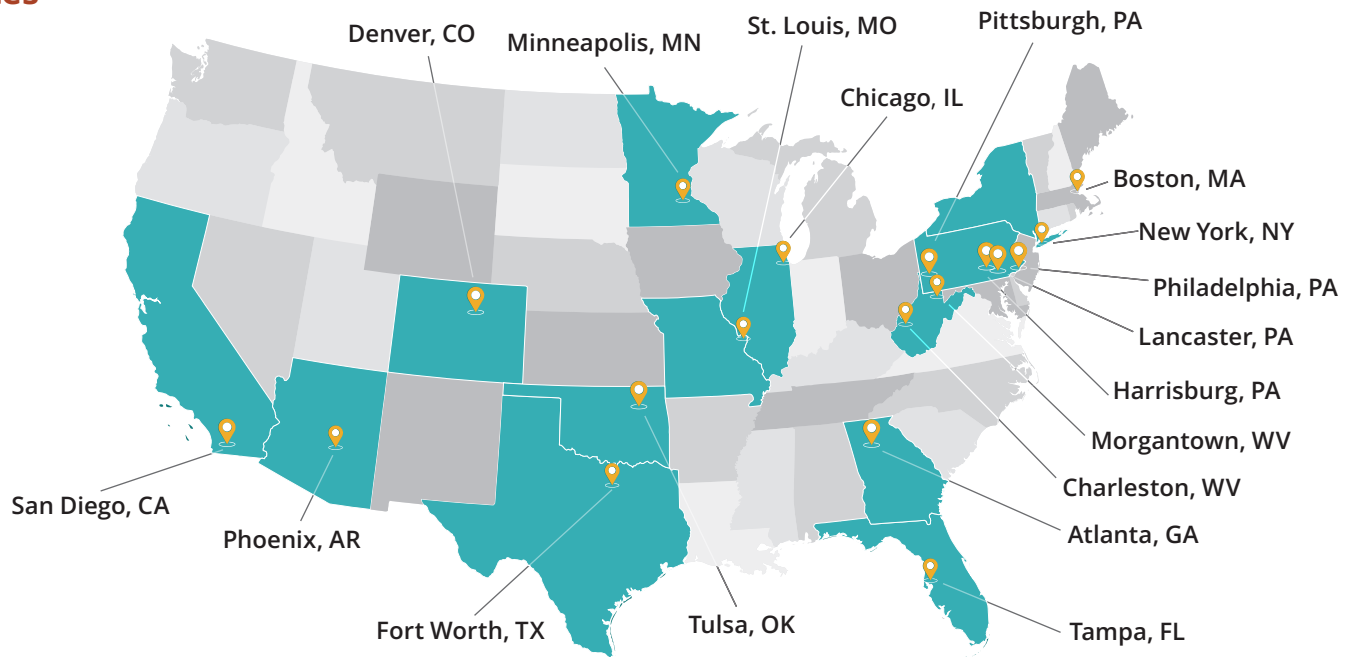
# RESEARCH INTEGRATION

YES has leveraged research to drive programming structure and execution since its inception. Project YES, the parent of YES, was the initial experiment that actualized findings in literature to address the needs of unhoused youth in West Virginia. The successes of Project YES demonstrated the value of implementing well-researched methodologies as the vehicle for intentional programming execution.

Starting in 2010, YES began implementing a more formal evidence-based structure and aggressively sought after scholarly endeavors. YES has increased its presence at local, national and international conferences, published numerous articles on YES-related discourse, and has contributed to the conversation of best practices in after school enrichment spaces. The appendix of this report reflects YES' engagement in scientifically rigorous data collection and analytic practices that connected its programmatic efforts to research opportunities within the scholarship community. Below is a visualization of YES' scholarly footprint over the past 30 years. We anticipate significant growth in our research footprint as a result of a newly developed research team, which consists of high performing researchers who have earned PhDs, along with a host of undergraduate and graduate students.

## OUR SCHOLARLY FOOTPRINT

### States



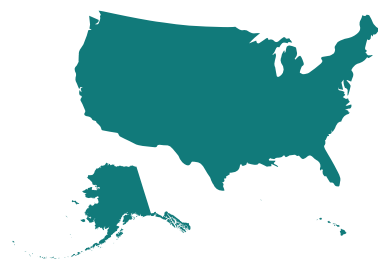
### Countries

 United States

 Canada

 Kenya

 Ghana



Not only does YES contribute within the scholarly community through journal articles, conference presentations, and workshops, YES has over two decades of experience translating critical research skills to all youth who participate in programming. Through exploring literature and observing opportunities that are traditionally inaccessible to our youth, YES began strategically integrating research into its programming. The literature suggests that early development of research acumen can help improve critical thinking and problem solving skills (Anyon et al., 2018; Leman et al., 2024), both of which are top skills desired by employers in the 21st century (Carnevale & Smith, 2013), and are challenging to teach within traditional school curriculums (Willingham, 2007).

In response to these findings, YES adapted Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) methodologies during summer programming to challenge youth to engage with their communities from a problem solving and leadership perspective. Not only did this research improve youth confidence, it helped develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills, and demonstrated that even at a young age, they can lead the charge for making their communities better.

YES has continued to leverage and adapt the YPAR curriculum, resulting in the production of several projects, solutions, and deliverables, all led by our youth. YES' research and practical experience demonstrated that there was a need for developing cohorts for several aspects of summer programming, which served youth aged 14-21. This shift helped address the varying needs and stages of life for participants, as well as providing new research opportunities for previous Learn and Earn participants. As YES grew its capacity and research curriculum, the YPAR curriculum became one of the cornerstones of the academic enrichment programming associated with YES' youngest participants. For older youth, YES created a curriculum to expand the opportunities for our youth to engage in rigorous research methodologies.

## BY THE NUMBERS



**60**

**CONFERENCE  
PRESENTATIONS**



**15**

**JOURNAL  
PUBLICATIONS**



**20**

**MEDIA  
PUBLICATIONS**



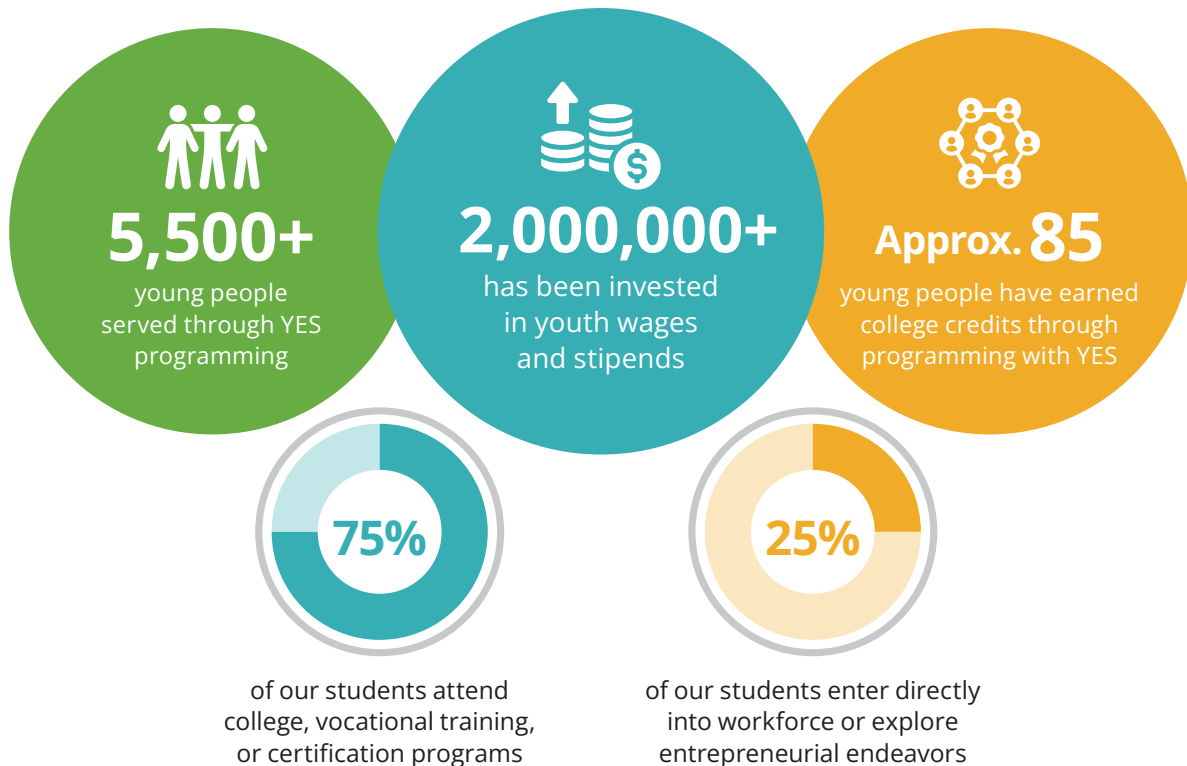
**15**

**WORKSHOP  
PRESENTATIONS**




## 30 YEAR IMPACT


YES is humbled by the opportunity to serve as a public health intervention to better the lives of students, families, and communities over the last 30 years. Here, we quantify our impact by reflecting on the number of people served.





## WHAT DO OUR YES ALUMNI BECOME?


A core principle YES tries to instill in youth is the desire to give back and pay it forward - "To whom much is given, much is required". We are happy to report that many of our program alumni lead with servant hearts, are engaged in community service, and have a passion for vulnerable communities and individuals. Our alumni are lawyers, professors, researchers, social service providers, educators, technologists, information scientists, engineers, coaches, and so much more.


 **Over 1.5 million saved** for taxpayers through diversion services and alternatives to secure detention

 YES has more than **10** university partnerships

 YES has helped students obtain over **\$5 million dollars in scholarships** to pursue their post-secondary endeavors

 **75+** YES students have returned as YES employees, interns, instructors, or volunteers

 **65+ organizations** involved in the Collective Impact Violence Prevention Partnership

 **1,000+** families have received resource support, holiday giveaway supplies, wellness care, and everyday living assistance

# THROUGH THE DECADES

## KEY EVENTS

Since its inception, YES has undergone several cycles of growth and preservation, each iteration yielding significant contributions to YES' current and ongoing growth cycle. From cultivating community trust at the close of the 20th century to enrolling the children of previous YES participants, YES' legacy is dynamic and ever- deepening. YES staff capacity and resources are now at a critical mass, thus enabling the fusion of the lessons learned during the first two decades of YES' service with its recent momentous growth. The timeline below demonstrates key events that demonstrate YES' 30 year synergistic approach to ongoing community engagement.

### DECADE 1: 1990-2003 - THE ORIGINS OF YES

#### 1990-1993: The Very Beginning

YES has engaged in summer programming since the very beginning to address the summer learning gap experienced by all youth. Many of the aspects of this early programming have continued to serve as the backbone for YES' continued work (i.e., Academic Enrichment, Mentorship, Sports Development, and Agricultural Training).

**1994:** Project YES moved to Pittsburgh and became Youth Enrichment Services



**1990:** Project YES, a **summer learning program** for West Virginia youth in public housing, began

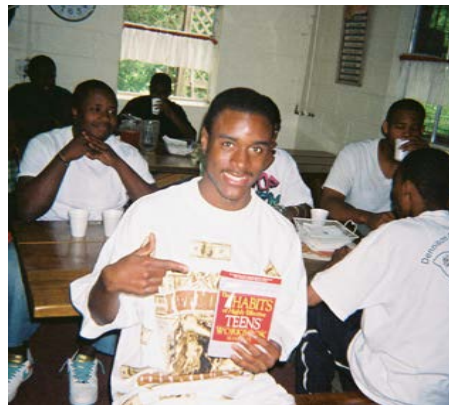




## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### 1994–2003: New Beginnings - Diversionary Services and Support

YES' change in location and name brought new opportunities and new beginnings. In serving youth in the greater Pittsburgh area, YES etched a place for itself as a primary intervention to address urban blight, academic underachievement, and high drop-out rates among disadvantaged youth. In 2000, YES expanded its profile by providing case management, in-home and in school visitation, curfew calls, and mental health and screening referrals for the Allegheny County Court.



**2000:** YES began Diversion 2000 services in partnership with Allegheny County and the Juvenile Probation Office (JPO)

## DECADE 2: 2004-2013 - DEPTH OF PROGRAM OFFERINGS

As YES expanded and began to serve more youth, and recognized the youth needs beyond traditional diversion and restorative practices, it became critical for YES to transition and build capacity. From 2004-2009, YES underwent significant changes that led to more recognition of its contributions.

As YES continued to grow, this required more financial resources and YES began seeking additional sources of funding. To help acquire this funding, in 2010 YES began to leverage more formal evidence-based structures, and YES aggressively sought after scholarly endeavors, rigorous data collection, and analytic practices to connect programmatic efforts to research opportunities within the scholarship community. This provided YES the resources and support necessary to engage youth in more intentional health and wellness programming.



**2010:** YES continued to increase its presence in scholarly academic spaces to promote YES mission, vision and ethos



**2004:** YES engaged in deep partnership building with the local community and continued expanding its organizational reach after a decade of service in the Pittsburgh area



## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### 2004–2009: YES Expanded Its Global Footprint Through Publishing And Increasing International Travel

- YES continued to build diversion programming staff and resources to support more youth. This included leveraging new peer mentoring concepts to enhance services provided for youth in the justice system
- YES began to strengthen board of directors to drive YES initiatives forward
- YES office moved out public housing and to Commerce Way, shifting YES into the non-profit sector

**2013:** YES began codifying its best practices and expanding its research and evidence-base infrastructure



**2012:** YES began to offer health and wellness programming for youth participating in diversion programming. Programs such as YES M.E.N.N, Sister Circle, IMAGE, and Girls At Play, were developed to provide a positive and safe community space for diversion youth

## DECADE 3: 2014-2024 - DEPTH + BREADTH

YES' third decade brought forth an influx of funding - increasing our ability to increase staffing, iterate on existing programming, and develop new programming to address the needs of our youth.

This season gave YES the opportunity to increase the depth and breadth of program offerings and opportunities for our youth. This included expanding summer program offerings, growing our diversionary services, and the development of more school-year programming and integrated services for all youth.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

#### 2017

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YES partnered with the Allegheny County Health Department to engage youth in research through community-based participatory approaches.

- YES reimagined health and wellness programming (Sister Circle, IMAGE, Girls at Play, and Y.E.S.M.M.E.N.) to launch the Female Empowerment and Wellness Initiative (FeWi) and Voices to Men (VTM)
- YES developed and implemented the College and Career (CCP) program, aimed at preparing high school juniors and seniors for their post secondary transitions

#### 2018

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YES partnered with scholar-in-residence to build more research capacity and define YES' mentorship model.

- YES continued a relationship with the Allegheny County Health Department to support youth engaging in community health work

**2015:** YES developed a 3- cohort model for summer Learn and Earn participants to provide intentional support based on age and work experiences



**2014:** YES expanded summer work experiences for youth through partnering with Learn and Earn as a provider

**2016:** YES partnered with the Pittsburgh foundation to create and execute the All About Me (AAM) Program aimed at addressing high truancy rates for marginalized Pittsburgh youth

## 2019

YES launched the Pathways to Access Program (PAP) to provide workforce development resources to support youth in meeting their post-secondary goals.

## 2022

Through the leadership of Mayor Ed Gainey, YES, and other partners (Heinz History Center, CCAC, and Partner4Work) the inaugural cohort of Youth Civic Leadership Academy (YCLA) was launched.

In response to the unfortunate loss of YES youth and friends of YES youth, intentional efforts were launched to develop programming with more intentionality towards violence prevention rather than violence intervention

- YES led efforts to hold the first of many Violence Prevention Summits in Pittsburgh to provide a space for ideation and actionable steps towards violence prevention
- YES launched the Fun and Fitness Involving Sports and Health (FFISH) program, which provides youth from Kindergarten through 8th grade access to skilled coaches, mental health experts, stipends, and social emotional learning interventions as a mechanism towards violence prevention



**2023:** YES developed its Teen Council, an initiative that began in the early 2000s was revitalized as a part of YES' violence prevention initiatives to support youth in taking steps to actualize strategic plans developed during the violence prevention symposium



**2020:** YES developed innovative programming and virtual work experiences in response to covid 19

- Expanded post-secondary support model to embrace a workforce and career development friendly model

**2024:** YES invited stakeholders and friends to explore its newly renovated and expanded office space to accommodate staff work and programming needs



## VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE: 2024–2033

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Look around you. Everything changes. Everything on this earth is a continuous state of evolving, refining, improving, adapting, enhancing... changing. You were not put on this earth to remain stagnant.

- Dr. Steve Maraboli



Even while celebrating YES' accomplishments, we refuse to rest on our laurels. YES is always strategizing and laying the groundwork for future initiatives. As we continue to build and plan, we invite you to help us build YES' ability to impact communities and our youth. Over the next decade, YES aims to:

- Expand its research capacity and scholarly footprint
- Iterate on youth research programming and methodologies
- Develop academic program offerings that improve our ability to support youth through evident education gaps made wider by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Increase youth access to support for workforce, health and wellness, and academic resources through strategic partnerships
- Continue to build our hub of partnerships and continue to strategize on alignment of efforts to make Pittsburgh and surrounding communities safer with more opportunities
- Strategize ways to expand violence prevention initiatives beyond the City of Pittsburgh and surrounding communities

The future is what we make it, and YES looks forward to sharing future developments.



## EVOLUTION OF YES PROGRAMMING

YES is a proud leader in youth empowerment through our strengths-based mentorship model to address urban blight, academic underachievement, and high drop-out rates among disadvantaged youth. Over the past 30 years, YES has offered a wide variety of general services such as student, family, and school relationship building, wellness activities, enrichment, case management, and resource support.

While YES programming may operate through new names or staff members, YES remains committed to its core mission of providing young people with lasting knowledge and skill-building opportunities to inform their paths toward success. YES' programming and initiatives are categorized below.



## DIVERSION AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES PROGRAMMING

Nearly 25 years ago, Youth Enrichment Services (YES), Inc. began the Diversion 2000 (D2000) in partnership with Allegheny County Department of Human Services and Allegheny County Juvenile Probation. As the first provider of alternative-to-detention services, YES, through D2000, provides youth with mentoring and monitoring service provision to help them reframe their current narratives, abstain from criminal involvement, and make positive progress toward their identified life goals.

Since its inception, YES' Diversion Program has successfully supported youth in navigating the juvenile justice system, desisting criminal engagement, refraining from recidivating, reconnecting with their secondary educations, and accessing post-secondary career and educational endeavors. YES' Diversion Program has also saved county taxpayers over a million dollars by limiting youths' engagement in secure confinement. These successes have substantiated YES' unique service provision, informed its intervention model, and continue to position it as an effective service provider.

Evolving to meet the nuanced needs of our community, YES now has three Diversion and Restorative Services programs - Diversion2000, Extended Diversion Services, and Diversion Prevention Third Iteration (DP3). Each program addresses a unique subset of risk factors and needs that contribute to youth propensity to choose criminogenic behavior, encounter the juvenile justice system, and experience recidivism.





Diversion 2000 → Extended Diversion → Diversion Prevention Third Iteration

### **Diversion 2000 (D2000)**

Diversion2000 (D2000) is a program that started in 2000, is a pre-adjudication mentoring and monitoring detention alternative program that was developed in collaboration with, and funded by, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services' Juvenile Probation Office to address the over-confinement of children ages 10-18.

Program participants are co-ed youth, vulnerable to societal and delinquency risk factors, struggling with below-par academic achievement, and lacking sufficient supports to prevent recidivism prior to adjudication.

YES intervenes in the youths' immersion into the justice system to limit the degree of harm and mitigate potential recidivism prior to a youth being adjudicated by the court. D2000 youth are active from the time of arrest or detention hearing until they attend their adjudication hearing or until their judge or probation office ends their enrollment.

### **Extended Diversion Services (EDS)**

Extended Diversion Services (EDS) is an extension of the D2000 monitoring services in addition to the personal-development curricula and value-added components of YES' prevention-specific programming. Each EDS enrollee - who is either an adjudicated or risk adverse youth - is assigned to a long-term mentoring relationship with their Intervention Specialist, who utilizes validated goal setting to encourage personal growth and self-investment. EDS participants receive the 24/7 monitoring and mentoring services characteristic of D2000 programming, while also adding components of personal development and life skill curriculum, cultural enrichment events, and pro-social relationship coaching, including adult and peer mentoring.

### **Diversion Prevention Third Iteration (DP3)**

Diversion Prevention Third Iteration (DP3) is our Restorative Practice program designed to prevent youth from becoming involved in the juvenile court system. DP3 supports learners from diverse economic, gender, religious, racial/ ethnic, ability, and political backgrounds and leverages a constructivist approach and curriculum, also known as The Code. Participants' identities inform the class content which can be altered to meet developmentally appropriate and gender-specific identity contexts. DP3 often engages youth in 12-weeks of content involving social literacy learning through cognitive based theory. The structure is helpful for both facilitators and youth participants in orienting and connecting the material covered during curriculum implementation. The curriculum is broken into units which include: Personal Spaces, Public Spaces, Academic Spaces, Professional Spaces, and Personal Self Reflection.

## MENTORING AND WELLNESS PROGRAMMING

While mentoring and wellness initiatives have been integrated into the fabric of YES programming since Project YES, there became a growing need to provide more targeted support for our youth. YES' diversion youth needed a safe, gender-inclusive space where students develop positive peer relationships, prioritize well-being, and focus on wellness through individual and group mentoring settings. As program engagement increased and YES offered services to all youth, mentoring and wellness programs shifted to meet the needs of the diversified population of youth.



Y.E.S.M.M.E.N ↘ Voices to Men

### Y.E.S.M.M.E.N

Y.E.S. M.M.E.N was conceptualized as a male-centric program specifically focused on the physical, emotional, and social development of male leaders through mentoring, physical activity, and group-forum styled discussions. This program ultimately was designed to develop young men into informed and motivated leaders within their communities.

### Voices to Men (VTM)

Voices to Men is an out-of-school time program designed to foster young Black boys' holistic health and wellness. In this counterspace, young men celebrate friendship, determine a personal philosophy of manhood, learn to navigate resources to achieve self-sufficiency, and navigate life alongside adult and near-peer mentors. This space is conducive for young men to smile, laugh, and live. In this context, young men share their promising stories of hope, joy, and healing, and unlock their authentic voice, a voice that is allowed to speak its truth without fear of ridicule and hesitation.

In this safe space, young Black men share their pain and heartache, but also their power and dreams for the future, where every pain is not death, where ridicule is not a challenge from a rival gang, and where safety is in fact healing and freeing. Voices to Men is a social and cultural enrichment program that creates a space for young men to discuss topics related to their social development. VTM also includes weekly outings for youth from each sphere of YES programming to interact in a non-academic environment.



Sister Circle ↘ IMAGE ↘ FeWi

## Sister Circle

Sister Circle was developed as a space to provide female diversion clients group mentoring. Over time, this space became available to all female youth, and focused on helping young Black females build and maintain positive self-images, while nurturing the inner champion in each participant.

## Investing, Motivating, and Assisting Girls through Exercise (IMAGE)

The Investing, Motivating, and Assisting Girls through Exercise (IMAGE) program was designed to match high school females from Pittsburgh Public Schools with middle and elementary school girls to cultivate mutually beneficial relationships. High schoolers facilitated weekly lessons on physical activity, leadership development, wellness awareness, self-esteem, and self-awareness in order to assist youth in accomplishing their academic and personal goals.

## Female Empowerment and Wellness Initiative (FeWi)

Female Empowerment and Wellness Initiative (FeWi) is designed to provide and foster a positive and healthful space for sisterhood. In a series of sessions and outings, YES students think broadly about wellness through multiple domains. In doing so, they counter the narrative they often confront around standards of beauty, health, and simply being. As sisters move through the program, and work through this deconstructive process, they develop improved self-confidence, self-awareness, and challenge standard notions.





GAP ↘ Camp FeWi

## Girls at Play (GAP)

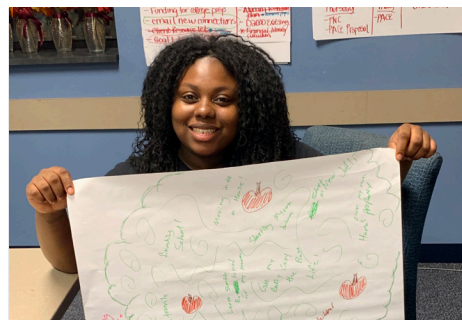
Girls at Play (GAP) was a health promotion program for overweight & sedentary Black girls whose goals are: 1) Develop a culturally relevant wellness promotion curriculum for pre-adolescent and early adolescent Black American girls age 8-14 that increases health and fitness and reduces the risk of developing hypertension, diabetes and other obesity-related diseases among participants. This program was developed as the opportunities for recreation are limited in the Black community. This fact, combined with the increasingly sedentary lifestyle of all American children and the typical Black American diet of inexpensive high starch, and high fat foods, informs the necessity of wellness programs like GAP.

Within Girls at Play, 3 sub programs existed:

- “Eating what you like, but eating Right,” a culturally sensitive nutrition program for Black American teens, developed and presented by a certified nutritionist
- Sports Clinics, featuring noncompetitive swimming, volleyball, and basketball led by peer mentors and coached by YouthPlaces staff and Pittsburgh Public School physical education teachers.
- “Go, Girl, Go,” a behavioral health promotion curriculum focusing on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, developed by the Women’s Sports Foundation

## Camp FeWi

In continuation of the partnership with Homewood Children’s Village (HCV) and Partner4Work, YES adjusted and expanded its sport-based, female empowerment summer program, Camp FeWi in 2018 to ensure that Pittsburgh’s underserved female youth have access to high quality physical fitness, personal growth, and wholesome lifestyle programming currently offered primarily to male youth - and to address and challenge the chronic social disparities and health inequities affecting young females of color.



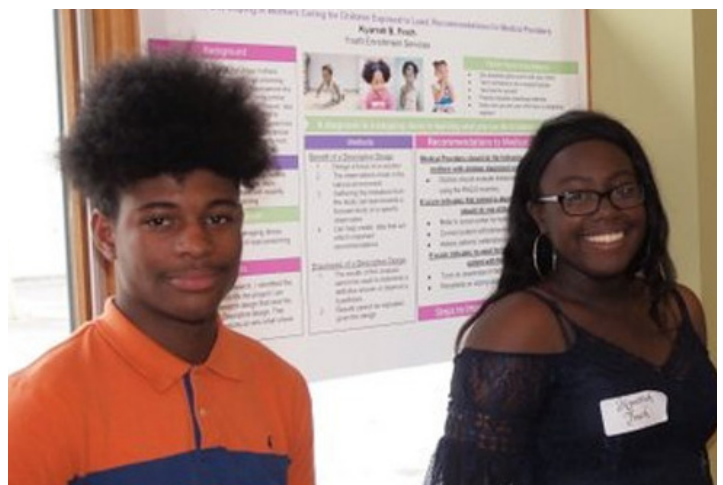
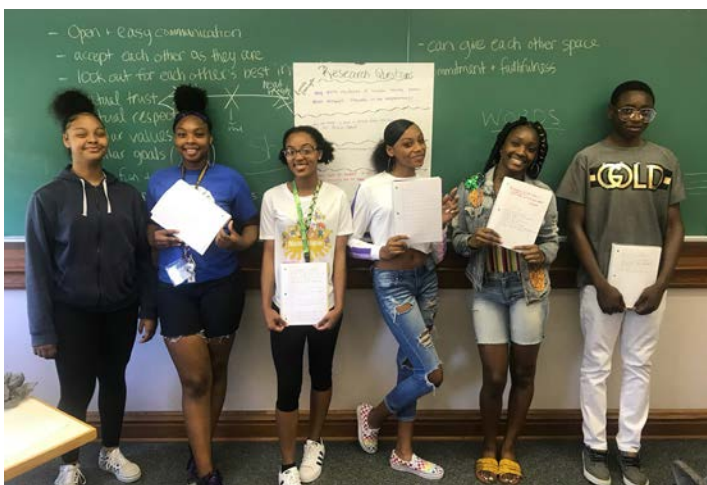
# SUMMER PROGRAMMING

YES' summer programming is one of the most expansive and comprehensive program offerings. Project YES started as a summer program that exposed participants to Academic Enrichment, Mentorship, Sports Development, and Agricultural Training. Eventually, YES started offering summer work for students. At its inception, YES provided summer work for 10 students. To date, summer programming has grown to provide summer programming and work experiences for 100-150 youth annually. More descriptions of summer programming content and outcomes are available in our Annual Summer Reports, located on our [website](#).

## EARLY SUMMER PROGRAMMING ELEMENTS

Early iterations of summer programming included several elements that are still integral to summer programming today.

- **Summer Work for Success:** Summer Work for Success was a week-long program exposing youth to workplace etiquette and practices through a series of workshops and simulations to develop youths' employability and job-readiness skills to become competitive in the local and global economies.
- **Summer Study for Success:** Summer Study for Success was designed as a six-week career immersion and research initiative through which students gained exposure to exploratory classes, cultural and social experiences, and research projects. Students identified relevant topics aligning with their exploratory classes and were expected to conduct 170 hours of secondary research, develop 5-7 page APA-style papers, log a daily journal documenting their summer experiences, and prepare a presentation to share with YES stakeholders.
- **Summer Magic:** Summer Magic was developed as a six-week initiative preparing academically remedial youth to overcome learning gaps in reading, writing, and math to become Pittsburgh Promise eligible by addressing academic hardships and learning difficulties.
- **Faith Ranch:** Faith Ranch, both a place and a YES program, was identified consistently across interviews and surveys as a favorite memory and highlight of the 2010-2014 YES era. For more than 20 years, YES commenced its summer programming every third week in June in Jewett, Ohio, miles away from the city enclaves, to train students through a boot-camp like structure to build mentorship, leadership, teamwork, and survival skills. The ultimate goal of Faith Ranch was to certify youth as teen mentors. Using Sean Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens and 6 Most Important Decisions, students developed important insights and strategies to become effective leaders.



Students' workshop experiences were supplemented with a host of physical activities such as canoeing, lake swimming, horseback riding, and ultimate frisbee. This experience culminated in a youth-led talent show where young people expressed their unique gifts and talents. Whether seeing the multi-colored peacocks roam the land or hearing the goats express their excitement, this place was deemed sacred. This place was an escape. This place was a reconnection with nature. This place was home. Unfortunately, Faith Ranch was discontinued as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, elements of Faith Ranch experiences have been integrated into other programming initiatives.

## SUMMER PROGRAM EXPANSION: LEARN AND EARN

Learn and Earn is a county-wide program facilitated and funded by Partner4Work to provide paid workforce development opportunities to youth during the summer. YES is a Learn and Earn provider and goes beyond program expectations to combine workforce development with additional academic, social, and cultural enrichment opportunities.

In addition to the early summer program elements described above, YES rose to the challenge of having youth who wanted to participate in Learn and Earn more than once engage in different and unique experiences. YES' cohort model, which is being widely adapted by other programs, divided participants into cohorts based on their age and work experience.

- **Summer Scholars:** 14 year olds with no work experience
- **Advanced Summer Scholars:** 15–17 year olds with some work experience
- **YES Veterans:** 18–21 years olds with more work experience

## YES' CURRENT SUMMER PROGRAM STRUCTURE

	Summer Scholars	Advanced Summer Scholars	YES Veterans
<b>Employment Preparation</b>	Pre-Employment Training		
	Summer Work for Success		
<b>Work Experience</b>	Apprenticeships	Work Placement	Work Placement
<b>Academic Enrichment</b>	Summer Magic	Summer Study for Success	Independent Project
<b>Social and Cultural Outings</b>	Wellness Wednesdays		
	Trip Thursdays		
	Cultural Trip		
<b>Culminating Event</b>	YES' Annual Research Symposium		

Within these immersive summer experiences, YES is particularly proud of the development of apprenticeships for our youngest Learn and Earn participants, the continued YPAR curriculum, and the enhancement of Summer Study for Success.

## Apprenticeships

Summer Scholars engage in unique apprenticeships yearly. The purpose of these apprenticeships is to provide Summer Scholars with the necessary skills to successfully engage in work environments. Apprenticeships are designed by highly skilled interns, who turn their hobbies and unique talents into an opportunity for youth to explore new areas.

## Summer Study for Success (2024)

This year, YES combined our standard research curriculum with our specialty courses to afford Advanced Summer Scholars the opportunity to dive deeper into focused topics. These scholars engaged in a rigorous research process with respect to their justice lab focus and identified claims of interest to explore. As a part of this experience, our youth developed surveys to explore public perception of the claim. Furthermore, students leveraged creative expression to produce a variety of creative outlets.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the elements of Faith Ranch were re-imagined as Wellness Wednesdays, Trip Thursdays, and an annual End of the Summer Cultural Trip to integrate wellness, culture, and exposure to experiences beyond the city of Pittsburgh. Recent trips include Detroit, Michigan, Cleveland, OH, and Washington, DC.

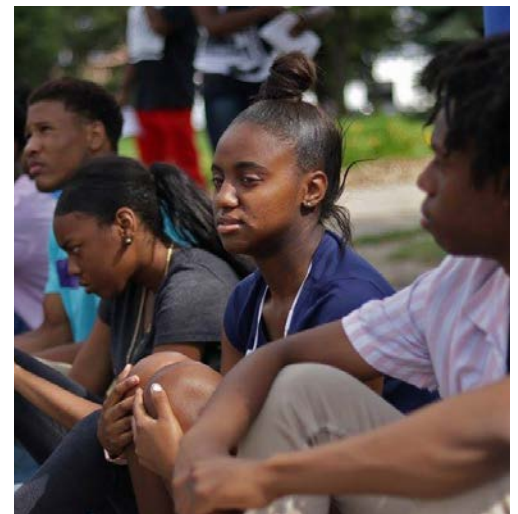


## SPECIALTY PROJECTS

YES has been extremely responsive to youth and stakeholder needs and co-develops programs in partnership with youth to ensure they incorporate their passions and interests guided by new, relevant opportunities. Below are a few highlights of specialty summer projects that demonstrate the depth and breath of student interests and work.

### Lead (Pb) Project

Leading the Discussion on Lead (Pb) was a youth participatory action research project for youth to explore lead exposure in their community alongside professionals from the County Health Department. This community-university-institution partnership allowed youth to transcend their traditional roles as research subjects and instead become data architects, gatherers, and analysts. Our young people's work demonstrated, quite powerfully, their capacity to bridge the gap between their community and the Health Department as they addressed issues in health equity. They proved themselves to be valuable community stakeholders and informed innovators, and, in doing so, further strengthened the core YES beliefs that they deserve seats at the table.



## YES Writers

To reinvigorate story writing and telling among young people, YES piloted a six-week writing project to expose students to the power of story writing and the process of narrating their own stories. Students were provided opportunities to view the world beyond themselves by studying literature to find their voice. The purpose of this project was to develop different perspectives to build empathy and understanding, which in turn breeds compassion and kindness. At the program's end, students published their stories in a book and presented a pictorial presentation to supplement their written stories at YES' summer symposium.

## YES Incubator

YES incubator operates from the premise that YES students are already successful entrepreneurs in important respects, having also developed the resilience, hustle, and resourcefulness necessary to negotiate a system that is not designed to meet their needs. The Incubator seeks to help students translate their human capital into more explicitly entrepreneurial literacy practices, such as: understanding business logistics, ideating, designing, and prototyping new ideas, developing viable business plans, communicating and empowering self-narratives, and attracting investments.



# WORKFORCE AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

YES has always been passionate about helping youth and communities become their own best resource. One of the most influential ways to support youth in this journey is through workforce and academic programming. To develop programming that would support a large number and wide range of youth, YES created a database to gather program data, and through rigorous analysis, has since been able to develop more holistic programming for all youth. Although different, workforce experience and academic agility are synchronous in many ways. YES' academic programming aimed to provide students with the academic resources and strategies to achieve their short and long term educational goals. For many, educational goals are tied to careers and occupations, which require the opportunity to explore, experience, and develop real-world skills in order to be successful.

In 2016, YES received funds from the Youth Service Investment Fund to develop the All About Me program.

## All About Me (AAM)

YES' All About Me program was created to address truancy, academic performance, and social adaptation in Pittsburgh Public School students with the overall goal of making participants eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise, a scholarship program for Pittsburgh-area post-secondary opportunities. AAM includes weekly success mapping sessions, tailored 1-on-1 tutoring, and various social and cultural enrichment opportunities. There are participation requirements related to school district and housing status. Youth receive quarterly stipends determined by their attendance, grades, and participation in program events. The AAM program is designed to facilitate 6th – 9th grade students' educational, behavioral, social, personal, and economic successes and advancement through one-on-one meetings, small group sessions, and consistent progress monitoring and tracking. The ultimate goal of the program is to prepare students to proactively work towards achieving meaningful and successful futures.



While the AAM program was a success and set youth on a positive trajectory towards graduation, older YES youth express the need for guidance and support when transitioning from high school into college, as well as support navigating the challenges faced by a majority of college students. YES heard the needs of its youth, and responded through the creation of the College and Career Preparation (CCP) and Alumni Support Program in 2017.

### **College and Career Preparation (CCP) and Alumni Support Program**

The college preparation program is a comprehensive, three phase intervention designed to support students through a unique part of the college process and to meet their personal application needs. The program captures the nuances of the college matriculation process and works to prepare students for their post-secondary journeys. In Phase One, we help students fuel their “engines” by telling their stories and preparing financially, personally, and academically for college. We also help students package themselves as attractive candidates amongst their peers through discovery analysis sessions.

In Phase Two, students secure their “spot on the trip” by submitting highly refined and polished college applications to their desired schools. As students engage in this phase, they narrow their choices and eliminate schools in which they become disinterested.

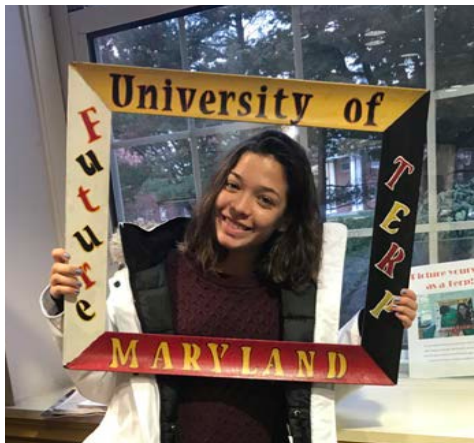
Phase Three compliments the others in that it empowers students to solidify their college choices and feel comfortable navigating the college onboarding process. Students meet the goals of each phase by engaging in various program components: admission testing support, iMentor Meetings, College Application Development Sessions, College 101 Sessions, and College Tours.

“

**Thank you guys for your support and helping me... apply for college and while I was in college it means a lot.**

**- YES Student**

While YES provided work preparation and experience for youth through summer programming for years, in 2019, YES was able to expand its annual summer workforce programming into the academic school year through the creation of the Pathways to Access Program (PAP).



## Pathways to Access Program (PAP)

In partnership with Partner4Work (P4W), YES' Pathways to Access Program (PAP) is a workforce development program that serves city and county youth in grades 10 - 12. The program's main objective is to expose youth to a variety of career pathways, workshops, and work experiences that prepare students with the tools to successfully enter and stay in the workforce. While the primary program emphasis is on employment preparation, PAP is also designed to nurture students who seek post-secondary educational pathways. In light of this, PAP integrates college and career preparatory services into its service model to ensure students are equally prepared to pursue traditional post-secondary or vocational schooling.

YES' desire to provide its youth with access to opportunities that are traditionally deemed off limits for youth of color was made possible through expanded program opportunities. Furthermore, earlier YES programming and youth-led projects demonstrated the power in developing and maintaining partnerships that can expand access to resources and opportunities for our youth. Through the leadership of Mayor Ed Gainey, YES had the opportunity to play an integral role in supporting and continuing to develop the Youth Civic Leadership Academy (YCLA).



## Youth Civic Leadership Academy (YCLA)

YCLA equips youth with transferable skills, competencies, and the experiential learning necessary to thrive as civic leaders, community stewards, and changemakers in the workplace and beyond. YCLA provides opportunities to access, explore, and experience career fields typically deemed off limits for youth of color and those without significant monetary and social capital within Pittsburgh including decision making fields like civics, education, and infrastructure. Through integrated coursework, experiential learning and research based projects, YCLA provides insights into Pittsburgh's past, present, and future. YCLA provides an immersive and integrative experience made possible through the leadership of the City of Pittsburgh Office of the Mayor and supporting partners-the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC), the Heinz History Center, Partner4Work (P4W), and Youth Enrichment Services, Inc. (YES). In completing this program, youth are able to:

- Earn 3 CCAC college credits
- Complete engaging assignments and establish connections with city leaders
- Develop a career plan known as an individual service strategy (ISS)
- Engage in 10-30 hours of experiential learning with city departments
- Develop and present a research project at the final research symposium

Now entering its fourth iteration, YES has intentionally combined workforce readiness, academic opportunities, and research as its vehicle to help youth develop into destined changemakers.

“

I do not want to go to another one of my kids' funerals, I don't. I just don't. I can't.

- Dennis Jones

PHD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMMING

In many ways, YES has always aimed to address youth-induced violence, as many of our teens have been exposed to and experienced the loss of loved ones due to violence. However, the need for more targeted violence prevention efforts moved to the forefront after a YES participant was shot in September 2021. Following this incident, two friends of YES members were shot.

These tragic events shook the YES community at its core, but generated the fuel to begin discussions towards Violence Prevention Initiatives. Violence prevention efforts became YES' core initiatives. By 2022, several reports indicated that there was a significant increase in gun violence throughout Pittsburgh and Allegheny county, especially among youth. YES responded to these traumatic events within its community through bringing the community together through ideation summits and retreats. Several meetings between youth, parents, families, and funders, and other stakeholders resulted in grants that supported the development and execution of several programmatic outputs by 2023.

### Violence Prevention Summits

Since 2022, YES has led annual Violence Prevention Summits to bring the community together. Participation and interest has grown over the past three years, from 150 participants to over 400+. Each summit was designed with the intent of listening to the voices of people who often feel unheard, and work together towards solutions. All stakeholders engaging in these Summits were committed to decreasing violence and improving Pittsburgh and surrounding communities.

- “Earlier in the year, revenge was my only way to feel OK. If someone was to do something crazy to me, I felt like the best way I can do is get back at them. It was really bad at that point in time, but now my mind is more open to a positive side of life. There's so much more to my life than, 'OK she did this to me so now I have to get her' or 'he did this so I have to go get him. Revenge is not going to lead me anywhere.” - **YES Youth**



YES youth proposed actionable ideas that government departments, educational institutions, businesses, and nonprofit organizations can implement for prevention. Then, YES synthesized the teens recommendations in a report, including:

- Creating programs for teens to build skills in mentoring, conflict mediation, listening, and empathy
- Increasing teens' collaboration with police departments, along with initiating a gun buy-back program specifically targeted to teens
- Generating opportunities for local business owners to network with their communities and help teens strengthen their employable skills

## Teen Council

Teen Council (TC) was revitalized and designed for youth leaders interested in using their voices to improve their communities, especially around issues of violence. Many youth see the need and want to rise to the challenge. Members of TC have developed resources and training for teens to help de-escalate situations that have often led to violence.

- “Nothing will get done if you don’t take action... You have to actually step up and do something.” Youth see the need and want to rise to the challenge. They feel the need to help their peers learn helpful skills, become leaders and learn to engage.

A subset of TC youth, known as the Youth Justice Advisory Board were invited by PA Lieutenant Governor Austin Davis to represent Allegheny County, presented their innovative plan to tackle gun violence to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. The opportunity further demonstrated to our youth that their voice matters, and they have the tools necessary to influence change.





### **Collective Impact Violence Prevention Partnership (CIVPP)**

The CIVPP was born in 2022 out of an acknowledgement that entities in our region are not able to address gun violence in their communities on their own. Over the last two years, stakeholders from up to 65 organizations have met regularly through monthly meetings and quarterly convenings to actualize 8 youth created big ideas for addressing gun violence. These eight big ideas are:

1. Create a Job Fair to connect teens to minority business owners.
2. Provide safe spaces for teens to engage in social activities after school.
3. Create programs for teens to build skills in conflict mediation.
4. Provide opportunities for teens to learn overall coping skills.
5. Create opportunities to connect people to a grief counseling program.
6. Create collaborations between teens and community councils and parent groups so that they can help each other.
7. Initiate a gun buy-back program targeted to teens.
8. Create opportunities for collaboration with the police departments.

## Violence Prevention Hub

In 2023, the Violence Prevention Hub was developed as a resource for violence prevention work. This project is a timely and critical response to the pervasive violence impacting our community. YES is developing a city-county wide peer engagement, violence prevention, resilience building, restorative practice ecosystem to reduce risks of youth resorting to gun violence. This Hub addresses academic, leadership, workforce, and socioemotional challenges via prevention and intervention services. The Hub has been co-developed with families, school districts, and community organization partners to cultivate a respite for youth that increases their sense of belongingness.

- The Hub builds leadership capacity of teens in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County to increase socioemotional protective factors and reduce criminogenic factors.
- The Hub serves as an ecosystem of connective tissue - community members will access what they need from the Hub to cultivate their own resilience factors as these are unique to each individual.
- The Hub engages youth through the Teen Council and YES' program suite, families through the Parent Council and a resource bank, and the community through violence prevention summits and engagement services.
- The Hub builds resilience of youth, families, and the community to provide impact on multiple levels so that the Hub operates long term as equipping youth with access to an identity within a thriving and local ecosystem builds their resilience and protective factors thus disincentivizing gun violence.
- The Hub builds resilience of youth, families, and the community to provide sustained multigenerational impact via a thriving and local ecosystem that promotes protective factors amidst disproportionate community violence and justice system involvement.





The funding towards Violence Prevention efforts also afforded the opportunity to revitalize YES' commitment to physical health and wellness. This new initiative, known as **Fun and Fitness Involving Sports and Health (FFISH)**, is a sport-for-development program designed to support youths' physical activity, mental wellness, positive peer friendship development, and conflict resolution. This program is offered to students across the city and county to youth in grades K-5 and 6-8. To date, this program has had over 150 students engage in several sports such as Golf, Boxing and Swimming - many of which are not accessible to YES youth. Now in its 5th iteration, YES considers a measure of success being that many youth who join the program continue to participate and try various sports.







## WHAT DO PEOPLE SAY?

While it is valuable to leverage scholarly literature to develop and execute high touch, high intensity, and high quality programming, the growth and benefit of programs is best measured by feedback from students, families, and the community. This feedback holds the most value for YES, as our primary goal is to support students and serve the community. Program surveys, interviews, focus groups, and organic conversations serve as the basis for our feedback, and we use this feedback as data to improve and shift programming to fit essential needs. Below are quotes from various YES stakeholders. While there are many many more, this provides a small snapshot of the sentiment expressed by those around us.

### STUDENTS

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"...**YES has become my most essential resource.** I have a multitude of memories of me needing help, not being able to get assistance from friends or family and having no one to turn to. **But YES has been there, ready and willing to lend a hand in any way...I can never thank them enough.**"



"...**YES has not only instilled great characteristics within us,** but it has also **created a sense of community in which we are all thriving.**"



"**YES helped me with managing my money, time, and the ability to work with others even if we aren't friends.** It's helped with **expanding my network** and how prepared I am to work in other places."



"I was in need of direction and motivation, and **members of YES were able to provide that for me.** I was getting ready to graduate high school and felt very lost."



"**YES showed me I am something and can be anything.**"



"It was just a really pivotal thing in my life because I got so much guidance through the program that I might not have had otherwise."



"I definitely attribute that (success in my career) to **YES for giving me the work ethic and vision.**"



## PARENTS and FAMILIES

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“From the moment we met the staff our anxiety eased — everyone was so supportive, welcoming and nurturing. Over the next weeks, I saw incredible growth in Lidia’s confidence, in her **independence, and her awareness** of the city outside of our neighborhood. The camaraderie with peers and the many amazing field trips she experienced opened her eyes to new perspectives on the world. Thank you for providing this valuable community resource and your commitment to the positive development of our youth.”

## STAFF/FRIENDS OF YES

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“In 1992 at the age of 17, I would have never imagined the amazing impact being a mentor would have on me. At the very first YES Youth Summer Camp, under the leadership of Dr. Jones, I gained knowledge and understanding that was, and still is, integral to my continual journey of growth and maturation. I will be forever grateful for my experience and for YES.”

**-Tamura Gordon Singleton** (Youth Mentor, James Paige Learning Center)



“I’ve had the privilege of working with Youth Enrichment Services for several years now. The accessibility and quality service it provides are exactly what parents and students need. It is an honor to work with YES to uplift, empower, and address the needs of the community. YES is an asset to the City of Pittsburgh and hopefully can be the blueprint of quality service for communities throughout the country.”

**-Kevin Cooper** (Judge, Allegheny County Magisterial District Court)



## BOARD MEMBERS

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“YES helps young people believe in themselves as agents of change and empowerment, and provides them with tools, support, and experiences to do that, treating each young person who comes into contact with the organization as someone with beauty, grace, dignity, potential, and dreams” **-Abby Wilson** (Vice President, YES Board of Directors)

## 10 LESSONS LEARNED IN 30 YEARS

Over the last 30 years, YES has learned valuable lessons informed by students, stakeholders, experiences, and literature. Below is a summary of 10 key lessons learned from the perspective of YES' Executive Director, **Dr. Jones**:

**1** When you **pursue your true purpose**, very little can deter you from achieving your destiny.

**2** Seasons of uncertainty will come before you find your path, so **keep pushing** forward with hope and faith—your destiny will be revealed when you're ready.

**3** **Believe in people.** Though we often focus on self-interest, many are committed to serving others and their communities. Find those who will help you achieve your destiny.

**4** Don't give up on your dreams, your passion, or your commitment. **Never let your haters win!**

**5** Although it's your destiny, **you can't succeed alone.** If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together. It takes a community of friends, mentors, critics, and supporters to achieve your goals, so be patient, humble, and understanding as you build these relationships.

**6** **You don't have all the answers.** Some of the wisest lessons come from people of all ages and experiences—lay aside your ego to learn from others.

**7** **Money matters.** Achieving your dream requires investment, so it's your job to secure the resources needed to bring your vision to life.

**8** Learn how to operate in bigger spaces. The lessons from smaller experiences will prepare you for larger opportunities, and you must **be ready** when they come.

**9** The world is vast and diverse, but human emotions like fear and hope are universal. **Embrace** multicultural environments as part of your journey.

**10** **Community is everything.** A healthy community forms the foundation for change, from the neighborhood to the state level. Always strive to improve it, one step at a time.



## SUMMARY

*"If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."*

YES is proud of the work accomplished over the last 30 years - the research, innovation, and lives impacted through strong and dedicated leadership, and the commitment and love of others. Each decade brought forth new opportunities, and the resources to grow and change for the better. Even during challenging times, YES has built an excellent record of showing up and delivering when it matters. From capacity building and data collection to increased program offerings, YES established and implemented a variety of initiatives to refine its approach to improve program implementation, create sustainable infrastructure, and clearly define and actualize program goals. Although names, locations, and people may change, in every season YES did not falter on its mission, vision, and ethos. While this document highlights much of YES' impact over 30 years it is by no means exhaustive, but our hope is that this document helps capture the growth and development of YES over the years. We hope that by sharing in this celebration of accomplishments, it will ignite your passion and desire to join us in continuing to build upon YES' legacy of excellence and youth empowerment.







## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

YES expresses its utmost gratitude for the love, support, and commitment it has received over its 30 years. The invested belief in YES' work has allowed YES to experience transformations through organizational growth, new program development, and high quality service delivery. We are thankful for the outpouring of time, resources, and investments from all. Below are a few acknowledgements to highlight some of the impacts you have made:

### YES Students

YES students are first and foremost the most important stakeholders, as without our youth, our work would lack meaning and purpose. YES staff and supporters do what they do because of YOU. We thank you for choosing YES as your shelter and safe haven and, for your trust you have put in YES to support you, even through the hardest times. Students, we are so proud of each and every one of you, and we have found it to be an honor and privilege to serve all of you. We intend to support future students, as we have done in the past, and as we do in the present. Know that you are always welcome.

### YES Interns and Volunteers

While YES' staff and other stakeholders are valuable to our community and our ability to serve youth, our Interns and Volunteers are key to our success. Our interns and volunteers provide "boots on the ground" services for our youth. Many of the incredible projects and deliverables created by our youth were guided and inspired by YES volunteers. We cannot thank them enough for the support they provide our youth.

### YES Board Members

Nonprofit boards of directors are instrumental in providing guidance, leadership and support for YES' grand ideas and goals. Each member of YES' board of directors has expertise in areas that continue to help YES grow in ways that in our early years, we could only imagine.

#### ERICA LAMAR MOTLEY

Board President

#### CHERYL BIGGS

Board Member

#### SARAH SUMPTER

Past Board President & Board Member

#### BARBARA CARDINAL-BUSSE

Board Member

#### ABBY WILSON

Vice President & Board Member

#### WILLIAM LIST

Board Member

#### RICHARD WITHERSPOON, JR.

Treasurer and Board Member

#### DON SEATON

Board Member

## YES PARTNERSHIPS

Over the years, YES has truly embodied the concept of partnerships, or an agreement between different parties to share responsibility. Our youth truly need a village - a way to provide them with countless opportunities, access to resources, and a host of mentors to help guide them. Very few YES initiatives have iterated, grown, and matured through the constant nurturing and development of partnerships. Here, we would like to recognize and thank our current partners for their continued support.

1Hood	City of Pittsburgh, Operation Amani
A Plus Schools	City Theater Company
APOST	Civic Champs
A's Vision	Clairton School District
Amachi Pittsburgh	CMU
Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas	Communities in Schools, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County
ALCOSAN	Community College of Allegheny County
Allegheny County DA's	Connecting Champions
Allegheny National Forest	Corapolis Youth Creations
Amachi Pittsburgh	Duquesne School District
Andy Warhol Museum	East End Cooperative Ministry
Anjali Soi, Conflict Mediation Skills for Youth	Empowering Teens to Thrive
Assemble PGH	Finish for Good
Back2Purpose	Focus on Renewal
Big Brothers Big Sisters	Garfield Jubilee Association
Boys and Girls Club	Greater Valley Community Services
Boys and Girls Club of Western PA	Hampton Area School District
CCAC - Homewood Brushton	Homeless Children's Education Fund
Chef's Outreach Association	iShip & Pack
Citiparks Paulson Recreation Center	Kelly Strayhorn Theater
Citiparks Phillips Recreation Center	Kingsley Association
City High	Kyle's Hope, LLC
City High Charter School	Larimer Consensus Group
City of Pittsburgh Housing Authority	Lady Carpenter
City of Pittsburgh Mayor's Office	





Learning to Learn Childcare Center  
Life Male STEAM Academy  
Manchester Academic Charter School  
Manchester Youth Development Center  
Mayor's Office  
Mayor's Office Youth Sports & Initiatives  
McKees Rocks CDC  
McKeesport Area School District  
Mentoring Partnerships of Southwestern PA  
Neighborhood Resilience Project  
Northway Community Ministry  
Office of Violence Against Women, PPU  
Operation Better Block  
Partner4Work  
PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency  
PA State Senate  
Parkway West Career & Tech Center  
Penn State University  
Phase 4 Learning Center  
Pittsburgh Kings Football  
Pittsburgh Public Schools  
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Plant a Seed PGH  
Propel Schools  
Rivers Club  
Salvation Army  
Sharpened Mindz  
Small Seeds  
The Black Tea Brown Suga Network  
Tech 25  
The History Co:Lab  
The Senator John Heinz History Center  
Three Rivers Youth  
UPMC Children's Hospital Department of Young Adult and Adolescent Medicine  
UPMC ET3  
Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh  
Urban Pathways Charter School  
West End P.O.W.E.R  
West Liberty University  
Westinghouse Youth Wrestling  
Wilkinsburg Athletic Association  
Wilkinsburg Family Support Center  
Women for a Healthy Environment

## CURRENT AND HISTORIC YES FUNDERS

- Allegheny County Health Department
- Allegheny County Department of Human Services
- Citizens Bank
- City of Pittsburgh Stop the Violence Grant
- The Grable Foundation
- HEAR Foundation
- Henry L. Hillman Foundation
- Huntington Bank
- Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
- Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
- Pennsylvania Humanities Council
- POISE Foundation
- Program to Aid Citizen Enterprise (PACE)
- Partner4Work
- The Pittsburgh Foundation
- PNC Charitable Trust
- POSNER Foundation
- Remake Learning
- Richard King Mellon Foundation
- Whole Foods Market



## YES STAFF

Over the last 30 years, YES staff have ideated, created, and executed some of the most creative and engaging opportunities for our youth. Much of this report and celebration of accomplishments is due to the hard work and sweat equity of past, present, and future YES employees. YES recognizes and salutes sacrifices that were made: early mornings, late nights, tight deadlines, and challenging caseloads. Know that your dedication and commitment to the youth of Pittsburgh has not gone unnoticed, and is appreciated by all!

**DENNIS FLOYD JONES, PHD**

**DENISE JONES**

**DEANNA SINEX, PHD**

**MELINDA JONES**

**DANIELLE STEWART**

**WILLIE KNIGHT**

**SAHAR HUSSAINI**

**JAQUAN BROCKMAN**

**JEREMIAH NASH**

**CAROL LEE**

**GLEN ALMON**

**DON SEATON**

**OLIVIA KELLEY**

**CARMIN JONES**

**LORI CRAWFORD**

**SHIRLEY BORNER**

**MEILONI ERICKSON**

**MARIO MCGEE**



# APPENDIX

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# YES PUBLICATIONS, WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES (YES' CV)

## AWARDED GRANTS (SINCE 2005)

Funder	Year	Amount
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2005-2008	<b>\$1,110,752</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2009	<b>\$373,517</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2010	<b>\$378,995</b>
Pittsburgh Promise	2010	<b>\$18,697</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2011	<b>\$358,501</b>
Pittsburgh Promise	2011	<b>\$23,889</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2012	<b>\$409,018</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2013	<b>\$339,478</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2014	<b>\$378,250</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2015	<b>\$343,460</b>
Hillman Family Foundation	2015	<b>\$100,000</b>
P4W LE	2015	<b>\$84,549</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2016	<b>\$262,790</b>
Pittsburgh Foundation	2016	<b>\$298,000</b>
P4W LE	2016	<b>\$97,435</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2017	<b>\$411,301</b>
P4W LE	2017	<b>\$177,414</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2018	<b>\$391,840</b>
Allegheny County Health Department	2018	<b>\$8,000</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2019	<b>\$294,541</b>
Pittsburgh Foundation	2019	<b>\$143,503</b>
P4W LE	2019	<b>\$269,024</b>
Whole Foods	2019	<b>\$5,600</b>
Pittsburgh Foundation	2020	<b>\$25,000</b>
Pittsburgh Foundation	2020	<b>\$70,000</b>
POISE Foundation	2020	<b>\$6,500</b>

Awarded Grants (continued)

<b>Funder</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Grable Foundation	2020	<b>\$15,000</b>
PA Council on the Arts	2020	<b>\$3,500</b>
PA Humanities Council	2020	<b>\$7,000</b>
PACE Strategic Plan	2020	<b>\$71,500</b>
P4W PAP	2020	<b>\$102,000</b>
Economic Injury Disaster Grant	2020	<b>\$10,000</b>
Partner4Work Learn & Earn program	2020	<b>\$278,125</b>
Nickels for Non-Profits	2020	<b>\$11,988</b>
Nina Baldwin Fisher Foundation	2020	<b>\$5,000</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2020	<b>\$381,403</b>
Hillman Family Foundation	2021-2023	<b>\$200,000</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2021	<b>\$481,426</b>
Partner4Work Business Entrepreneurship Program	2021	<b>\$160,000</b>
Partner4Work Learn & Earn program	2021	<b>\$250,000</b>
Annie E. Casey Foundation	2022	<b>\$203,000</b>
Pittsburgh Foundation	2022	<b>\$80,000</b>
Richard King Mellon Foundation	2022	<b>\$400,000</b>
Whole Foods	2022	<b>\$2,500</b>
Pittsburgh Sports Now	2022	<b>\$25,000</b>
HEAR Foundation	2022	<b>\$7,300</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2022	<b>\$481,426</b>
Partner4Work Pathways to Access Program	2022-23	<b>\$289,360</b>
Summer Jobs Connect Grant	2023	<b>\$13,565</b>
YWCA/POISE	2023	<b>\$75,000</b>
Partner4Work Learn & Earn program	2023	<b>\$281,000</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2023-24	<b>\$481,426</b>
Partner4Work LITE program	2023-24	<b>\$270,000</b>
PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency Youth Justice Advisory Board	2023-24	<b>\$150,000</b>
PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency Violence Prevention Hub	2023-25	<b>\$650,000</b>
Partner4Work Learn & Earn program	2024	<b>\$244,454</b>

## Awarded Grants (continued)

Funder	Year	Amount
PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency Belonging In and Beyond the Burgh	2024	<b>\$25,723</b>
Pittsburgh Foundation	2024	<b>\$100,000</b>
Richard King Mellon Foundation	2024	<b>\$400,000</b>
Grable Foundation	2024	<b>\$15,000</b>
POSNER Foundation	2024	<b>\$5,000</b>
POISE Foundation	2024	<b>\$20,000</b>
P4W School Year program	2024-25	<b>\$300,000</b>
PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency Youth Justice Advisory Board	2024-25	<b>\$100,000</b>
Juvenile Probation Office, Department of Human Services	2024-25	<b>\$481,426</b>
PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency Justice Assistance Grant	2024-26	<b>\$250,000</b>

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