



# YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES

*Community News, YES Updates, Spotlights, & more!*

DECEMBER 2022

## Happy Holidays & Happy New Year from YES!

YES faced some of its toughest challenges in 2022. From the lows of burying students who died way too young from gun violence to the highs of embarking on a weekend trip to Washington D.C. with a group of close to 50 young people for a cultural immersion experience. During this year, some of YES' team members transitioned away from the organization, returning to school or moving elsewhere. Yet, this year also brought some of the best and brightest on board. These committed individuals come to YES with a desire to support the mission with all of their energy, enthusiasm, and idealism.

We feel that YES has begun to understand the deeper nature of our program impacts. Young people feel compelled to write their own story. To become advocates and activists rather than victims. For the first time in our organization's existence, we are receiving funding for programs that will change the nature of what we do and how we do it.



We also feel that YES has met the moment. The surge in gun violence, especially among young people, in our community and the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have taken tolls on all of us. YES has learned that it has a choice. We can allow these challenges to consume us, overtake us, and weaken our spirit or, we can meet these challenges with a determined eye, stiff spin, attitude of defiance, and in locked arms with stakeholders, funders, youth, families, and board members. Together, we can say we are still standing tall in the belief that working together, sharing the pain and the growth, and moving past the challenges will also give every child a fair chance at a life without daily gun fire. That every child has access to careers and opportunities. That every child has the opportunity to become better citizens because they were able to engage at a young age in what it means to be informed and engaged citizens.

We thank you and we appreciate you. As long as we are able, we will be right where we belong, in the community, facing these challenges head on, and doing the best we can, because that is all we know.

We look forward to a wonderful and prosperous year.

Best wishes,

Dennis F. Jones

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### YES' Strategic Plan

During YES' Seven Springs Teen Retreat, students and families engaged in strategic planning sessions to generate solutions for addressing gun violence. As a result of these sessions, students and parents developed strategic plans that offer a blueprint for mitigating the ongoing gun violence impacting youth in the City of Pittsburgh. See their reports below and learn more about how these young people's efforts are impacting the City by clicking [here](#).



Parents Strategic Plan

Students Strategic Plan

## STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

### YES Students receive Driver's Licenses through A's Vision



For some, obtaining a driver's license is a rights of passage and for others it is a door opener. The latter is often the case for many YES youth. Given the many challenges and barriers that YES students confront, obtaining a driver's license is transformative - it reduces the consequences of driving without a license and creates opportunities for access to education, resources, and economic mobility. Through **A's Vision**, an organization that mentors young people to become responsible drivers, YES youth have developed the necessary driving skills to receive their licenses. Please join YES in celebrating these youth for becoming safe, licensed drivers.

## STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

**Lori Crawford, a Decade-Long YES Team Member**



*"My favorite YES moment was when my very first client graduated high school and gifted me a handwritten letter expressing how our time together supported her goal of graduating. Seven years after receiving that letter, it's still on my ancestral altar in my home as a reminder that our legacies and the impact we leave in the works happens while we're living." - Lori Crawford, Creativity Curator*

YES would like to wish Lori Crawford, Creativity Curator, a happy 10-year anniversary! For over a decade now, Lori has worked in bringing in resources and funding to YES to make what we do possible. Thank you, Lori for all of your hard work and efforts in making this organization flourish.

Read more about Lori Crawford by clicking [here](#).

## New Staff Join YES' Team

The continuing gun violence epidemic is zapping the joy out of too many of our young people. It has called into question so much of our youths' futures. Because of that, YES is proud to present a series of new hires that we believe come to us with a level of maturity, skills, and expertise that they can leverage to be difference makers. This is the first of two groups of new hires that we believe will be able to address some of the continued growth in program need, as well as to begin to allow YES to have a more consistent footprint so our work can be accomplished while maintaining high quality and with significant network and resource support. We also feel strongly that these new hires bring to us fresh eyes, ears, conversations, skills, and expertise that will inform not only our work but will continue to elevate the work of the young people and families we serve.

**Justin Perkins** has a good and proud history of forming strong independent young people from his coaching and youth development work. We welcome him as a staff member who will work in our Diversion and Restorative Practices Domain and allow us to work more closely with younger students, who we feel will address present issues earlier on in their lives.



**Cydney Macklin** comes to us by way of Pepperdine University. Her skillsets are absolutely phenomenal. We believe she will help YES become more effective and efficient with her management and organization skills. Her contribution will be a bellwether for the agency as we continue to move through the massive number of youth and families who need our services.

**Richard McClain** is a Pittsburgh native who grew up in the Larimer neighborhood and attended Schenley High School prior to engaging in the Military. Richard comes from a family of servant leaders and decided to join YES to help make a difference. His keen sense of community, youth, and service give him the skills to support our youth and families in moving beyond their cycle of poverty and despair. Richard will be a bright light for





so many young people to see and to follow. We welcome him and all of his energy, strength, and passion to YES.

**Sarah London**, a long-time consultant, ally, and friend was drawn to working with YES because of her interactions with the students and their families. Her understanding of YES' culture, systems changing work, and overall mission suggests she will add value and catalyze the agency's programmatic efforts. Her expertise as a mental health practitioner will also have a positive impact on the agency and the lives of the students and families whom we serve. Her youthful, focused, creative, genuine, and good old fashioned roll up your sleeves approach to work will help YES continue to change peoples' lives.



Finally, **Dr. Deanna Sinex**, who has a PhD in Bioengineering from the University of Pittsburgh. Her willingness and interest in coming to YES is incredible. It will change how we address our work, how we prepare for our work, and how we are able to multiply our efforts based on the resources, knowledge, and networks she will bring to YES. Her science-based background, engineering acumen, and body of work, with many other community agencies and Universities will give YES a platform to dig deep into the academic design for both remedial and thriving students. We know she will take them to the next level. We could not be more pleased as she begins her tenure with YES.



## YES' Dorian Laniear is Making a Difference in the lives of Justice-Involved Youth

Dorian Laniear, a former YES student and now Intervention Specialist, is doing the needful to impact the lives of justice-involved youth. His tireless commitment, above and beyond attitude, and skillful mentorship approach are the special ingredients helping youth transform their lives, both personally and academically.



# Board Members, Stakeholders Gather for YES' Annual Holiday Party

Board Members, stakeholders, staff members, funders, and friends of YES joined together at the Annual Holiday Party to recognize the organization's successes and achievements. Each year, this event signals that we made it and gives everyone the necessary time for deep reflection, celebration, and reconnection. As YES moves into its third decade of service, we are grateful and thankful for all those who attended our celebration and for those who have given their time, resources, and skills over the last year.



## GENERAL UPDATES

### YES Provides Holiday Support for Youth & Families

Because of countless donors, YES supported 40 families with household necessities, food, and gifts during this holiday season. YES achieved this through the collective effort of staff, parent council members, and selfless volunteers. These individuals purchased, wrapped, and delivered the resources and gifts and were essential in blessing some of our most vulnerable and under-resourced students and families.



### YES Receives Investments from Local, State, & Legacy Institutions to Advance Programmatic Efforts

YES received investment funding from the Pittsburgh Foundation, PCCD, and the YWCA



to further grow our organizational and programmatic efforts. The Pittsburgh Foundation offered generous operating and programming support for our truancy efforts. The YWCA provided funding to continue our work to mitigate the compounding impact that community violence and the invisible labor of womanhood have on females of color through our Female Empowerment and Wellness Initiative (FeWi). PCCD extended resources to support our teen and parent councils' community gun violence efforts which will largely be youth-led and youth-centered. YES is grateful for the financial resource support to carry out our mission and continue impacting the lives of students and families.



## YES is Hiring



YES is currently expanding. As a result of such growth, YES is hiring individuals for the: Manager of Academic and Mentoring Programming and Manager of Workforce and Postsecondary Programming positions. To inquire more about these employment opportunities, please send an email to [dlijones@yespgh.org](mailto:dlijones@yespgh.org).

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