



YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES

Community News, YES Updates, Spotlights, & more!

MARCH 2024

Women Lead at YES: Message from Dr. Jones



Women's History Month is just one month out of the year during which we take time to accentuate the impact that women of influence have had on the world we enjoy today. As I reflected on this month's newsletter, I thought to myself, "I

need to reflect on the impact that women have in our organization." Our Deputy Director is a woman, our Director of Research and Program Strategy is a woman, our Manager of Workforce and Post-Secondary Programming is a woman, our Workforce Program Coordinator is a woman, our Creativity Curator is a woman, our Office Manager is a woman, our Data Specialist is a woman, our Senior Communications, Systems and Organization Strategy Leader is a woman, our Media and Marketing Specialist is a woman, our Client Compliance officer is a woman – of the 14 staff members here at YES, the majority is overwhelmingly composed of women.

But their titles at YES don't tell the whole story. Some of them are young mothers, managing kids of all ages of development, running from school meetings to work and back. Some of them are full-time students who still manage to show up for YES and the work we do time and time again. Some come to YES with years of education and counseling experience and have managed to find a niche here where they can lend their talents and expertise. What makes them alike is their passion for supporting our students, fostering a positive office culture and family, and upholding our mission of helping students and their families become their own best resources. So, for this Women's History month, I want to thank the women of YES and the roles they play to ensure that the agency continues to excel and set the highest possible standard.

The influence of women at YES is not limited to our full-time staff, but also reflected in our stakeholders, community partners, funders, board members, and advisors. I hope to continue to feature these voices in the future, as they have been significant. Such influencers have challenged and pushed us and our programs to seek more clarity and direction, while also showing compassion and commitment in achieving our mission. Without all of these people, YES would not be the gem hidden in plain sight that we all know it to be.

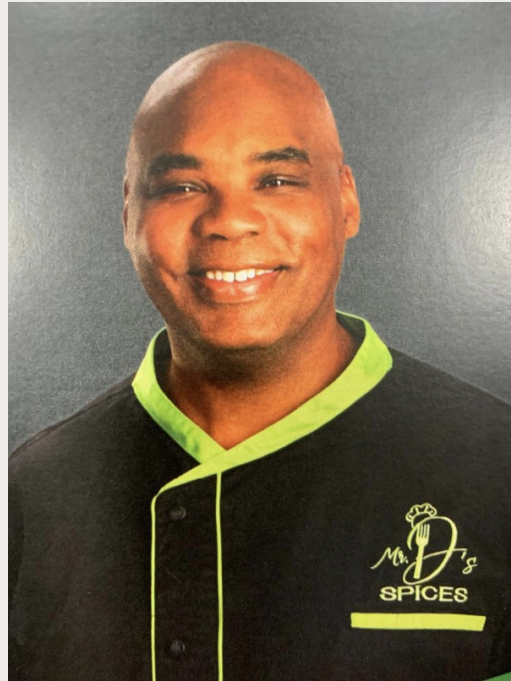
Women, if given the chance, will lead with distinction, show compassion and care, hold you accountable and push you to be the best version of yourself – whether you are a student, a co-worker, or even the Executive Director! To all women this month: we see you, recognize your contribution, and look forward to many more opportunities to celebrate you.

Best wishes,

Dennis Jones, PhD

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

YES Builds Partnership with Allegheny Forest Service led by Dale Readus



We are thrilled to shine a spotlight on Dale Readus, a remarkable individual with a wealth of experience both in the military and the kitchen. With over 20 years of service to his country, Dale brings a unique blend of discipline, dedication, and culinary expertise to everything he does.

One of our exciting initiatives involves forming a partnership with the Forest Service to provide our youth with unforgettable outdoor experiences in our Learn & Earn program this summer. Dale's extensive background makes him an invaluable asset in this endeavor, as he understands the importance of fostering connections with nature and creating lasting memories for the next generation.



In addition to his work with the Forest Service, Dale recently held a memorable cooking lesson with the students enrolled in Voices to Men. Together, they made some delicious chicken fajitas, imparting not only cooking skills but also valuable life lessons.

Dale is also the founder and owner of Mr. D's Spices, a spice company that has been delighting taste buds for nearly 12 years. His passion for flavor and quality shines through in every blend, making Mr. D's Spices a staple in kitchens across the country.

Dale Readus exemplifies the spirit of service, mentorship, and culinary excellence. We are privileged to have him as a part of our community and look forward to the many more adventures and delicious dishes that lie ahead.

YES Celebrates 10 Years of Summer Learn & Earn



This year marks a significant milestone for YES as we celebrate 10 years of partnership with Learn & Earn. Over the past decade, this collaboration has provided countless invaluable opportunities and experiences for our youth, shaping their personal and professional growth in profound ways.

At Youth Enrichment Services, our journey began in 2014 when we developed a partnership with the city, commencing our first summer by employing 15 youth. Since then, we've witnessed remarkable growth and evolution. In 2015, we increased the number of youths served by more than 500% and diversified their summer work experiences. The following years saw us repackaging summer employment in 2016 and launching initiatives like the Community Health Project in 2017, which addressed Lead(Pb) Exposure in collaboration with various stakeholders.

In 2018, we doubled worksite opportunities for youth and introduced Camp FeWi, a Female Empowerment and Wellness Initiative. We also partnered with the Health Department to tackle critical issues like Tobacco Points of Sale Marketing and Opioid Use in marginalized communities. As our journey continued, we built a three-tiered cohort model in 2019 and ventured into virtual project-based work experiences during the pandemic in 2020.



In 2021, we introduced Wellcare and Wellness Wednesdays to address the social isolation many youths faced during COVID-19. The subsequent years saw us refining our approach, holding the first teen violence summit in 2022 and focusing on violence prevention throughout all our programming aspects in 2023.

We recognize the importance of sociocultural exposure and experiences in broadening our youth's worldview. Through various initiatives and activities, we strive to provide opportunities that some of them may not have access to otherwise, fostering empathy, understanding, and appreciation for diversity.



As we prepare for Summer 2024, we anticipate a highly engaging and dynamic work experience for youth as we prepare to focus on justice, advocacy, and activism. We are committed to developing a more meaningful approach to youths' work experiences and planning for a large violence prevention symposium with an emphasis on non-violence skill-building. We hope to conclude our summer with our annual research symposium and our socio-cultural excursion to Detroit.

As we reflect on a decade of our Learn & Earn partnership, we are proud of the impact it has had on the lives of our youth. We look forward to continuing to empower and inspire the next generation, creating a brighter future for all!



YCLA Students Engage in a Dynamic Changemakers Panel



We are thrilled to share highlights from the recent Young Community Leadership Academy (YCLA) panel titled "Being a Change Maker in the Community." Hosted by CCAC at their Homewood-Brushton Center, this enlightening discussion delved into the journey of becoming a changemaker and the inevitable challenges one may encounter along the way.



The panel comprised esteemed individuals who are pillars of the Pittsburgh community, including Mayor Ed Gainey, Dr. Juel Smith, Dr. Simeon Saunders, Reed Rankin, Jonnet Solomon, Alexis Walker, Emmai Alaquiva, Dr. Johnathan White, Vernard Alexander, Weldianne Scales, Esq., and Leon Ford. Each speaker brought unique perspectives and invaluable insights to the table, offering advice and life lessons that resonate deeply with aspiring changemakers.

From Mayor Gainey's inspiring leadership to Dr. Smith's unwavering commitment to social justice, the panelists shared personal anecdotes and practical strategies for effecting positive change in our communities. Whether it's advocating for equity, fostering collaboration, or overcoming adversity, their stories serve as guiding lights for students and community members alike.



As we reflect on the invaluable wisdom shared during the YCLA panel, let us empower ourselves to embrace the challenges of changemaking with courage, compassion, and resilience. Together, we can create a brighter, more inclusive future for all!

Female Empowerment Women's Initiative (FeWi) Program Resumes After Hiatus - A Conversation with Jalissa Womack



We are thrilled to announce the long-awaited return of YES's Female Empowerment Wellness Initiative (FeWi)! After a brief hiatus, the program is back with a renewed commitment to empower young girls with essential knowledge and skills that are crucial for navigating the journey of womanhood. Not only are we back, but we're also revived with a new breath thanks to our wonderful volunteer Jalissa Womack and our very own Sahar Hussaini!

FeWi isn't just any program; it's a comprehensive initiative designed to educate and uplift girls in various aspects of their lives. From health and wellness to financial literacy and healthy relationships, FeWi covers a wide spectrum of topics that are fundamental for personal growth and empowerment.

The importance of initiatives like FeWi cannot be overstated. In a world where young girls often face societal pressures and expectations, providing them with the tools and knowledge to navigate these challenges is paramount. By focusing on areas such as self-care, self-esteem, and healthy relationships, FeWi aims to instill confidence and resilience in its participants, equipping them to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

One of the core principles of FeWi is inclusivity. The program welcomes girls from all backgrounds and strives to create a safe and supportive environment where they can learn and grow together. Through workshops, discussions, and interactive activities, participants not only gain valuable insights but also forge meaningful connections with their peers.

As we resume the FeWi program, we remain committed to its mission of empowering girls to become confident, informed, and resilient women. We are excited to embark on this journey once again and look forward to witnessing the positive impact it will undoubtedly have on the lives of countless young girls.



Jalissa Womack: Passionate, Committed, Impactful are



three terms I'll have to say describe myself when it comes to volunteering. Over the years, I've noticed the need for positive engagement & collaboration within our communities. So I started volunteering at different after school programs & holding free beauty workshops around the Pittsburgh area- teaching students & adults how to make lip gloss & how to do their own lashes at home. That was great and all, but what I would ask myself afterwards: "Did you make much of an impact, Jalissa? If so, how?" And that's when it dawned on me that I need to do more; I want to do more within our communities! And that's what brought me to YES PGH.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Staff Reflections

Melinda Jones

I love being a woman. I love being a Black woman. I love being a Black woman with Vitiligo. It is a great honor to have a month celebrating women and our contributions to not only America, but the world. Women are amazing. We push the needle further everyday. We make contributions that make the world feel safer. Women are the future and what a future it will be.

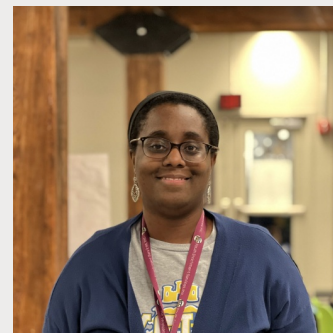


Lori Crawford

Women are the unsung heroes of humanity - as times continue to change and equity becomes a nearer reality, I hope more matriarchs and wisdom holders are heard, believed, and supported in how they show up for themselves and tend to the world in brave, loving, and restorative ways.

Dr. Deanna Sinex

Women have preserved and achieved through the millenia, in spite of the roadblocks and challenges set before them. Many of society's ancient and modern day accomplishments were made possible through the fortitude, wisdom, leadership, and grace of women. I am happy that we take time to celebrate and appreciate women!



Jaquan Brockman

Women are without a doubt the real-life superheroes of



our society. The amount of unwavering strength that I have witnessed firsthand from the women in my life truly gives me a deeper sense of appreciation and respect that I have for them. Not only have they exhibited strength when they had every reason to show weakness, but they also taught me that it is perfectly okay to show weakness and vulnerability when society has conditioned boys and men to believe the contrary. The women in my life, specifically the Black women, have also played a crucial role in me becoming more culturally aware. Malcolm X once said, “The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman.”, I couldn't agree more. Black women are victims of the intersectionality of Blackness and

womanhood under the constructs of white supremacy and the patriarchy as well as the byproducts of these with intra-community struggles such as colorism and texturism. Despite their plight, Black women still rise. Their unrelenting strength to keep fighting for their rights and even the rights of other BIPOC, both domestically and internationally is truly an inspiration and a testament to their character and will!

Dana Tuohey

It would be so hard to quantify just how much the strong, empowered women in my life have done for me. My mother has taught me kindness and patience, my aunt has taught me loyalty, my female friends help me see the world through different lenses and with a sense of humor, and my female colleagues have challenged me to grow beyond what I envision for myself. I want to lift them up as much as possible this month, and for every other day throughout the year!



Sahar Hussaini

I believe that International Women's Day is a day to stand in solidarity with women worldwide. It's a time to reflect on the progress and achievements that have been made by women throughout the ages and the strides towards gender equality in the face of oppression. From first wave feminists to modern-day activists, women continuously fight tirelessly for their rights. In my homeland, Afghanistan, women continue to fight for basic human rights despite the risks they will face. They fight because the Taliban has banned women from getting an education, having employment, are forced to get married at a younger age, and much more. On this International Women's Day, let's celebrate the strides and achievements of women all around the world

while also acknowledging the work that is necessary to ensure a future of equality for all. Happy International Women's Day!

Denise Jones

In March, we honor the selfless and sacrificial contributions of women who make a difference every day in their homes, workplaces, families, and communities. While I have a deep appreciation and reverence for all women, I am particularly proud of women of color, Black women, who have laid the foundation for our society and who continue to pave the way and give birth to new developments, societal resources, and helpful innovations. We are magical, and we are powerful.



Danielle Stewart

Women are truly magical beings and I am extremely proud to be one! Despite the countless challenges women have endured while fighting for basic freedoms, women have continued to demonstrate the necessary strength to keep pushing and fighting for equality.

The ability to nurture and grow tiny humans further demonstrates our remarkable capabilities.

On this day I honor the women who paved the way for me whether it's family, friends, or colleagues. I am inspired to embrace my femininity, creativity, and celebrate the essence of womanhood. Happy International Women's day!



Visit Website Here | Thank you for your support!



Youth Enrichment Services | 6031 Broad St. , Suite 202, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

[Unsubscribe officeadministrator@yespgh.org](mailto:officeadministrator@yespgh.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by byokelley@yespgh.org