



YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES

Community News, YES Updates, Spotlights, & more!

June 2024

Learn and Earn: The Difference that Makes a Difference!



Youth Enrichment Services (YES) has just wrapped up its ambitious spring program season and has quickly pivoted to summer planning, with the Learn & Earn program kicking off the week of June 10th. We are incredibly grateful to our stakeholders and partners for securing additional funding for the summer Learn &

Earn program, particularly Partner4Work CEO Rob Cherry. We also extend our thanks to the Grable Foundation for providing supplemental funding for our teachers and interns who will work closely with our students on their community-based research. Students will present their research projects at the Summer Symposium on August 7th at the Heinz History Center, so save the date!

We often say that the Learn & Earn program makes the most impact in the lives of our students, and it's not even close. The joy and excitement in the eyes of a 14-year-old receiving their first paycheck with their name on it is unparalleled. Sometimes, we overcomplicate things. Teaching young people just two attributes could solve many problems in our society: 1) How to think for themselves (critical thinking), and 2) how to utilize their skills to get paid (knowing they have value).

Our Learn and Earn Programming is designed to do just that - to help students engage in authentic and critical learning experiences, develop tangible work skills to build upon as they advance in their careers, and to understand their abilities.

By developing partnerships over the years, we have *over 20* small community-based organizations ready to receive more than 100 YES students. These young people have the amazing opportunity to stay active in the academic realm, work at a business, and enjoy social and cultural activities. This includes an all-expense-paid trip to Detroit and Ann Arbor, Michigan, for those who meet a criterion of excellence as reported by their worksite supervisor and academic advisor.

Learn and Earn is the *difference* that makes a difference. Watch this space.

Best wishes,

Dennis Jones, PhD

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

3rd Annual Violence Intervention Symposium - Building Ambassadors: Break the Chain, Unite for Peace



Youth Enrichment Services (YES) is proud to host our third annual Violence Intervention Symposium on July 8th and 9th at the Pitt Student Union. This event is a critical step in our mission to reduce violence in our community, especially after the heartbreaking loss of several students to gun violence.

We are grateful to be sponsored by Drs. Alison Cuylba and Elizabeth Miller and the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine Department of Pediatrics. This historic move by Pitt invites the community to bring 300 youth and community leaders to the William Pitt Student Union for a two-day short course in violence intervention strategies. The sessions will be highlighted by nationally recognized experts such as New Directions, a highly regarded team of violence intervention grassroots professionals from Newark. Their mayor, Ras Baraka, is no stranger to Pittsburgh, having recently presented a workshop at the Kelly Strayhorn Theatre about Newark's success in reducing community gun violence among gangs and young teens.

Rutgers University Gymnastics Coach, Umme Beasley, the most successful African American gymnastics coach and one of the most successful coaches in college sports, will be our lead speaker. We will also hear from Sharpened Mindz, an urban hip-hop group from New Jersey, whose founder and director Lana Whitehead has cracked the code of engaging students through music and dance. Lana is a multi-award-winning professional with a tremendous following. Other highly regarded presenters include Marlo Thomas, Associate Director of Georgetown Day School and leadership expert.

The symposium will also feature a diverse array of local leaders such as Mayor Gainey and Representative Mayes who will impart their knowledge and experiences and add to the invaluable insights and strategies shared for violence intervention.



Attending youth will gain the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary for violence prevention and intervention through strategies developed and delivered by our workshop leaders. Additionally, participants will become Certified Ambassadors of Nonviolence, empowering them to make a positive impact in their communities by sharing the knowledge and tools they have gained at the symposium.

Don't miss this opportunity to help create solutions and safer futures for our youth. **Register now** and join us at the Pitt Student Union July 8th and 9th for two days of inspiration, education, and community building. Together, we can make a difference!

Kickoff Time: Welcome to Learn & Earn 2024!



We are thrilled to announce the kick-off of our summer programming with Learn & Earn, in partnership with Partner4Work! This summer, YES is hosting approximately 120 students who will embark on a 6-week journey filled with foundation building experiences and

invaluable opportunities. Our program is designed to provide a blend of social engagement, employment exposure, cultural learning, and academic exploration, ensuring our participants have meaningful and relevant summer experiences. Our dedicated staff and mentors will guide the students through their journey, offering support and encouragement every step of the way. The goal is to help our youth build confidence, develop a strong work ethic, and cultivate a love for lifelong learning.

Over the next six weeks, students will dive into their justice learning courses that seek to educate and empower youth. They will also have the opportunity to participate in our thoughtfully curated sociocultural trips to places such as local museums and the Pittsburgh cultural district. Such opportunities allow students to explore new environments and cultures and broaden their horizons and understanding of the world around them. These trips are designed to inspire curiosity, enhance cultural awareness, and promote social engagement.



In addition to these exciting excursions, students will gain practical work experience for their future career paths. Worksites such as Green and Beautification Team, Dreamz Hair Salon, The Andy Warhol Museum, and Mount Ararat Community Activity Center, our teens will be exposed to hands-on experience that is tailored to keep their minds active and sharp, bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world application. By working on various projects and tasks, students will develop essential skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, time management, and critical thinking, all of which are invaluable in today's job market.



Our summer highlight will be an exciting concluding trip to Michigan for eligible youth, celebrating their hard work and achievements. This trip will offer a chance for celebration as we recognize our students' accomplishments. It's the perfect way to cap off a summer filled with personal and professional development!

Stay tuned for more updates and stories from our summer adventures as we share the remarkable experiences and milestones achieved by our talented and enthusiastic youth!

Celebrating Female Empowerment and Wellness



On June 3rd, we joyfully concluded our Female Empowerment Wellness Initiative (FeWi) program. This transformative initiative was designed to provide our young ladies with a safe space to be their authentic and vulnerable selves, connecting with other young women their age. FeWi aims to empower participants to find their voice and strength, recognizing their intrinsic value not only as women but also as Black women and women of color, regardless of societal expectations.



Throughout the program, our young ladies engaged in meaningful discussions and activities that emphasized the importance of healthy relationships, self-care, teamwork, trust, and self-expression. These sessions were not just about acquiring skills but about fostering a strong sense of self-worth and confidence. The young women learned vital skills that are essential for everyone, with a focus on instilling the knowledge necessary for building a strong foundation for a successful and fulfilling life. The sense of community and solidarity that developed among the young women was truly inspiring and a testament to the power of collective empowerment.



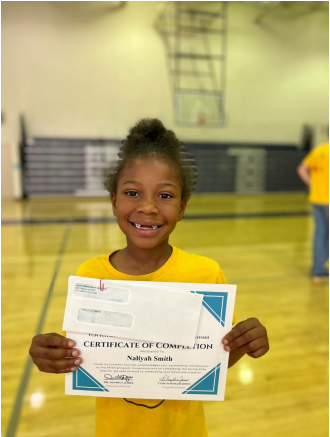
We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to making the FeWi program a success, including our very own Sahar and our phenomenal volunteer Jalissa. We look forward to continuing our mission of empowering our youth.

Spring's Finest: Honoring Our 2024 Spring FFISH Cohort



We are delighted to announce the successful conclusion of our Spring FFISH (Fun Fitness Involving Sports Health) program on May 29th! The culmination of this vibrant program

was marked by a heartwarming event where our dedicated students, accompanied by their proud families and loved ones, came together to celebrate their impressive achievements. The atmosphere was filled with joy and pride as each student received a certificate of completion, recognizing their commitment and hard work throughout the program. Additionally, they were awarded their well-deserved stipends, acknowledging their dedication and participation.



This spring season has been a fantastic journey of fitness, health, and fun. Our students engaged in a variety of activities designed to promote physical wellness, teamwork, and healthy lifestyles. From exciting sports such as swimming, golf, boxing, and basketball to engaging mental health sessions, every participant demonstrated remarkable enthusiasm and growth. The program not only helped in building physical strength but also fostered a sense of community and student camaraderie.

As we bid farewell to the spring session, we are thrilled to dive into our summer programming. This new chapter began on June 17th and will continue until August 3rd. We have an exciting lineup of activities and experiences planned that promise to be just as enriching and enjoyable, including a new opportunity with the Anglers Fishing Club of Pittsburgh on Lake Carnegie in July. Our summer program aims to provide our participants with even more opportunities for learning, growth, and fun.

We look forward to sharing more success stories and highlights from our summer session, and we can't wait to see the positive impact these experiences will have on our participants!

INTERN HIGHLIGHTS

Introducing YES' Summer Learn & Earn Intern Team



Summer programming is made possible through the support of talented and dynamic interns who invest their skills, knowledge, and expertise. These individuals hail from various institutions and are exceptional in their own right. Not only are they highly qualified and talented, but they are also important assets who make invaluable contributions to YES. Our interns support our programmatic, operational, and research functions and are tasked with developing curriculum, implementing programming, managing cases, supporting YES' research efforts, encouraging students, and so much more. These bright and brilliant interns share more about themselves below.

Ariana Henderson

"My name is Ariana Henderson. I am from Hatfield, PA (an hour from Philly). In April I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor of Science in Applied Developmental Psychology.



This coming fall, I plan on going back to Pitt for 2 years to pursue a Master's in Social Work with a direct practice focus. This summer I am looking forward to getting to know the YES staff and the Learn and Earn students!"



Kyra Simmons

"My name is Kyra Simmons, and I'm an Administrative intern at YES! I've been living in Pittsburgh since I was 7, and I am currently a junior at the University of Rochester double majoring in statistics and mathematics. I am a YES alum, and I'm so happy to be back and help behind the scenes."



Amanda Puentes

"My name is Amanda Puentes, and I am a second-year undergraduate student studying psychology at CMU. In the future, I hope to be a psychologist for children. I'm excited to be working with YES this summer and learning more about the great work that they do!"



Serena Luo

"My name is Serena Luo. I am from Wuhan, China. I am a rising sophomore at Carnegie Mellon University majoring in economics. This is my second time coming to the U.S.; last time I was 9 months old. As an international student, I am so excited to be part of YES this summer and look forward to learning and growing here!"

GENERAL HIGHLIGHTS

YES Publishes Article in the Afterschool Matters Journal



Denise Jones, Zaida Pearson, Daanna C. E. Sinek, Jeremiah Nash, Ailwen Chen, & Dennis F. Jones

Summer is a unique time for students to extend the gains made during the school year by engaging in opportunities that support their growth and development. For younger teens, students, they are particularly useful for students of color. Marginalized youth are more likely to face discriminatory hiring practices and lower wages, both of which negatively impact their ability to envision their future selves and acquire financial security (Lanning

Denise and her colleagues recently published a research article in the top-tier, practitioner-focused, scientific journal, Afterschool Matters. The article, titled "[Making Summer Count](#)," reports on the attitudes, impressions, and priorities placed on the Learn & Earn experience by 100 YES youth based on pre- and post-surveys, interviews, and comparative data. Furthermore, the article specifically examines youths' perceptions of meaningfulness and future orientation in YES' summer employment context. The findings are revealing and make important contributions to the summer workforce literature.

YES Rallies for Afterschool Programs at the State Capital



On June 6th, 2024, a group of our students and staff embarked on a journey to Harrisburg to commemorate National Afterschool Advocacy Day. This event celebrated the importance of after-school programs like YES and the vital support they provide to youth.

During the visit, we had the privilege of exploring the Pennsylvania State Capitol building, a cornerstone of our state's governance that houses our United States Senators, Governor, and the House of Representatives. This experience enriched our understanding of the political process and underscored the significance of our advocacy efforts.

Joining representatives from after-school programs across Pennsylvania, the YES team advocated for increased funding, which is critical for supporting the success of our youth and demonstrating a commitment to future generations.

A highlight of the trip was a highly productive meeting with Senator Jay Costa. Senator Costa and YES engaged in fruitful discussions about strategic plans for securing additional funding for after-school programs, including a bill that was on the floor at the time of our visit. Senator Costa's support and collaboration are integral as we move forward with initiatives aimed at further enhancing youth-provided support.

Check out this video, [here](#).

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