



# YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES

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

AUGUST 2023

## Summer Reflections from Dr. Jones



YES completed one of its most ambitious summers in its 29-year history. YES has served over 540 young people in the past 8 weeks and partnered with over 30 like-minded agencies and stakeholders. More specifically, YES has hosted a Violence Prevention Symposium, our summer P4W workforce development program, a cultural and social enrichment trip to Cleveland, and the end of summer research symposium. All of these events we believe strongly indicate one clear thing: students are back.

I predicted this at the beginning of the summer when I saw the robust interest and glow in the eyes of the students. Now that the students are back and we continue to have tremendous success with those students, we have extended ourselves to meet the excitement of these youth. Particularly in working with our violence prevention initiatives, where we are beginning to work with youth football and cheer programs to provide mental health sessions. Our FFISH program continues to expand and grow and our fall programs are looking extremely bright as we are working with several charter schools, particularly Propel, Urban Pathways, Manchester Academic Charter School. We will share some of those stories in this newsletter and we continue to invite potential funding sources, partners, collaborations as well as volunteers who would like to serve on our board and be a part of our community. More news regarding our fall programming will appear in our September newsletter. Cheers for now.



Dr. Dennis Floyd Jones

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### YES Welcomes Afghan Immigrants



Although YES is a small non-profit organization, it serves a diverse population of young people. YES is responsive to the needs of the community and is committed to serving all young people, even those finding refuge in Pittsburgh from international territories. This month, we highlight our Afghan youth who have made valuable contributions to YES.



The Afghanistan immigrant connection to YES was facilitated by Mayor Gainey's office through the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA). Feyisola Akintola, OIRA Manager, shared the Youth Civic Leadership Academy opportunity with the Welcoming Pittsburgh Communities group in 2022. Little did we know that a year later we would have a significant number of Afghan young people participating in YES programs. Coming from Afghanistan, some of the students have suffered some violence in the past, however, they have become very engaged and have

built strong friendships and relationships with the students in the YES program. In a conversation regarding the life they left behind, youth detailed the challenges and negative experiences they once endured. Their reflection is not isolated from many of the youth we serve - especially when it comes to understanding the impact of violence and its long standing effects. However, after 6 months of arriving in the US after spending a year in a detention camp waiting for their approval to leave the country, they have learned English, joined their school soccer team, become friends with YES youth and staff, obtained driver's licenses, and become very well liked and appreciated participants in our program. Truly, they are a part of the YES family.



Although there is a cultural - and in some cases a religious - difference that doesn't overshadow the fact that the kids are going to school together, the kids are playing sports together, and are learning to share cultures and history. We look forward to having a more robust and engaging relationship with the students from Afghanistan as they continue to build the YES program stronger. We will continue to learn from them and their culture and some of the things that they do. We have an Afghanistan cultural week scheduled this coming fall where we will begin to learn the culture, language, history, and some of the religious practices of the students. We hope to make them more engaged in the work that we do and the activities that we plan with this initiative.



In addition to program participants, YES has welcomed Sahar Hussaini as a staff member. Sahar has served as a leader for these youth and has improved the operations and media efforts of YES. She has become a valuable contributor here. Her work includes capturing photos alongside our media specialist and filling the void when he is unable to capture content, updating our social media pages, gathering stories for our newsletter, along with a plethora of other administrative tasks to support the flow of our office and our staff.

Violence is a common denominator between YES and Afghan immigrants. However, there is a deeper shared destiny. For today and in the future, we will travel life's journey hand-in-hand, working together, playing together, laughing together, and sharing tears of joy for this unlikely connection.

## YES Students Take On Cleveland: End of Summer Cultural Excursion





At the end of our summer programming here at Youth Enrichment Services, students were rewarded with an enriching sociocultural trip to Cleveland, Ohio. During our stay YES students engaged in a plethora of local cultural activities. The trip spanned across three days, which started on Thursday, August 3, 2023 and ended on Saturday, August 5, 2023. This trip included, but was not limited to stops at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, Great Lakes Science Center, Karamu House, Cleveland Museum of Art, and The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. There were also opportunities for students to engage in recreational time for self-guided exploration in the Gateway District, Playhouse Square, and other physical activities available at the hotel such as swimming and basketball.

Students learned about historical places and attended various cultural presentations which helped students to get more familiar with the Cleveland landscape.

## YES' End of Summer Research Symposium

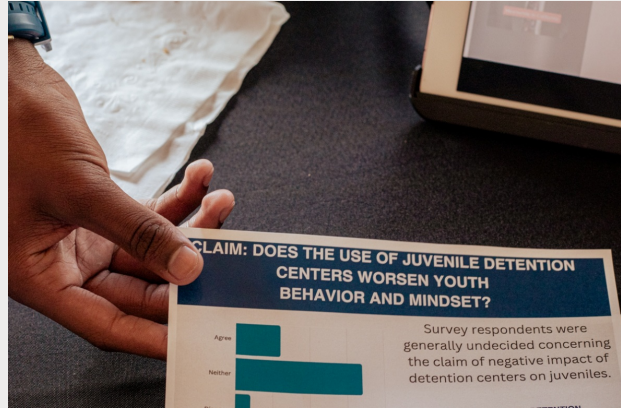


YES' Annual Research Symposium was held on August 9th, 2023 at the Heinz History Museum! Students successfully completed the Summer Learn & Earn program and had the opportunity to present their data storytelling research. Students chose topics that were important to them in which they presented difficult topics related to violence. Some topics discussed by our students include:

- Gun in Household
- Violence in Beauty
- Teen Pregnancy
- Teen Drug Abuse
- Black Girls Sexual Assault
- Juvenile Detention Centers
- Bullying of LGBTQ+ Youth
- Black Mother & Daughters
- Demographic of School Shooters
- Statistics of the Success Of African American Women
- Literacy in America
- Violence in Schools
- Teen Weed Usage

- The Relationship between Hip-Hop and Violence
- Increased Usage of Electronic Nicotine in Teens
- Teen Mental Health

Overall, young people’s projects were extremely profound and insightful and highlighted their important learnings and skill development over the summer.



## YES Participates in Back to School Events

YES held back to school events with local agencies to support a shared mission: helping youth prepare for the upcoming school year. In partnership with Duquesne Middle School, YES provided upcoming and rising middle school students with a variety of activities from face painting and nail and hair services for the young girls to fresh cuts, helping the youth look and feel good for the start of school. Similarly, YES partnered with the Kingsley Association to support their community event and had the opportunity to advertise fall programming, provide resources for families, and interact with stakeholders.



## STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

### Highlighting History: Two YES Youth Present Final Projects at Heinz History Center



We are proud of Ceazia and Noah, two YES’ Learn and Earn students, for creating awesome presentations!

Ceazia’s presentation focused on the evolution of the electric chair and various methods of the death penalty that have been used over time. She reported that she had been inspired by the electric chair exhibit at the Heinz History Center. During her research, she was surprised to discover that animals were used for testing out the electric chair.

Noah’s presentation was on George Washington. He thought it would be cool to learn about the first president. One thing that

surprised him from his research was that George Washington didn't live in the White House. It was also reported that George Washington used teeth from horses and from people that have passed on to create dentures.

After their presentations, they toured attendees around the various exhibits that inspired their research.

Great work, Ceazia and Noah!

## STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

### Olivia Kelley and Miles Porter: Three Years at YES

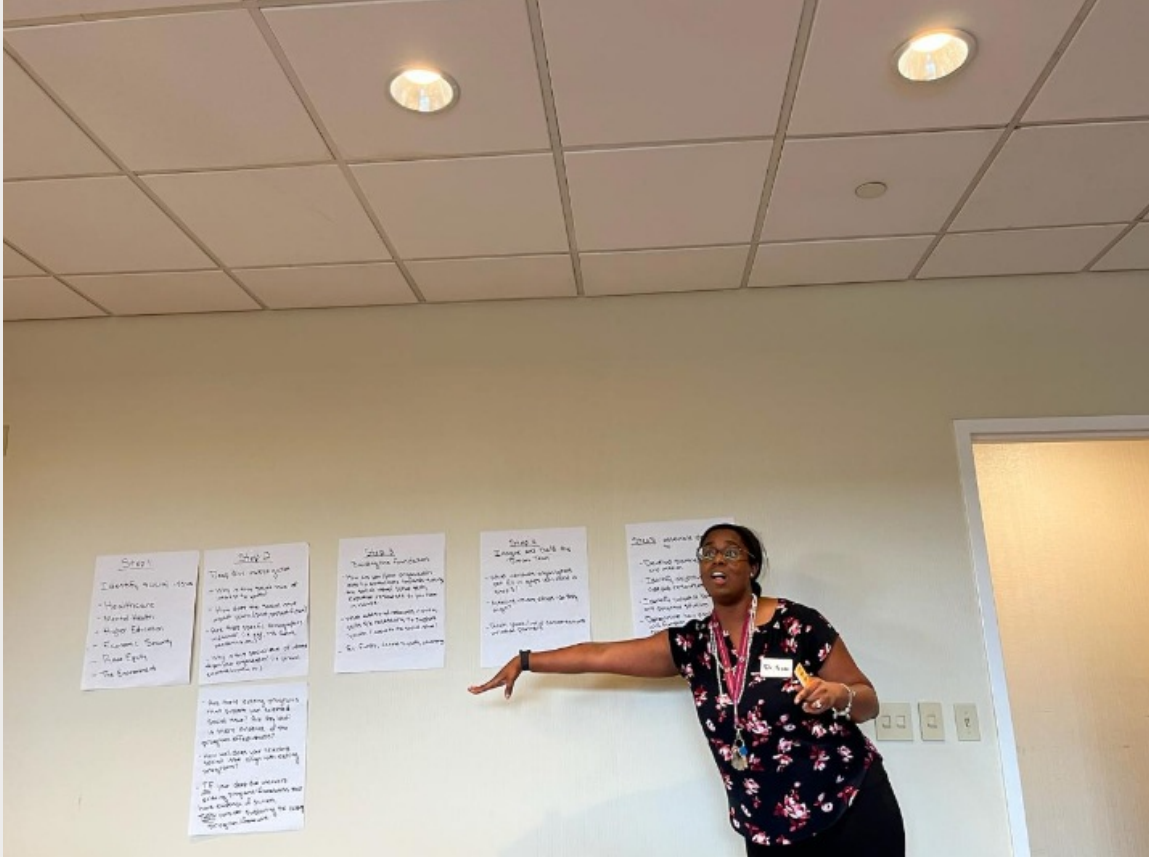


YES has worked with some excellent young professionals over the years. Joining that list are two very creative, talented, and dynamic rockstars, Olivia Kelly and Miles Porter. These professionals are steeped in their own belief of giving back and dedicated to helping young people become their own best selves. Olivia and Miles serve with loving hands and nurturing hearts and always bring a sense of calmness and steady resolve to any situation. They have been instrumental in building YES' capacity and fulfilling its missions and critical to their personal and professional growth as they are both receiving certifications and higher degrees in order to give the best of themselves. We cannot thank them enough for their contributions to our agency and service to our young people, families, and communities. We are eternally grateful. Congratulations on your three year anniversary, Miles and Olivia. Take a bow.

## GENERAL YES UPDATES

### YES Presents Conference Workshop at Gwen's Girls 8th Equity Summit

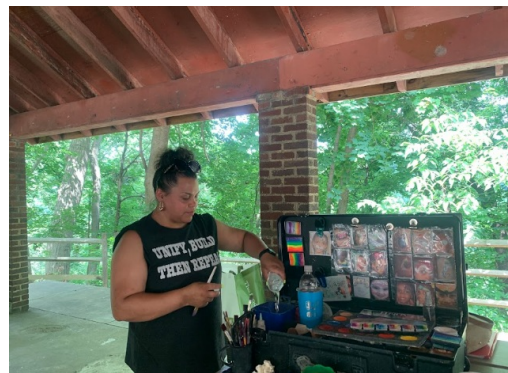




YES presented at Gwen's Girls Equity Summit on the topic of synergistic partnerships. Conference attendees included institutional partners, community-based organization leaders, and other professionals who engaged in sharing and learning about designing, forming, growing, and sustaining complex, multi-institutional partnerships. This is one of many opportunities for YES to share its approach to collective ecosystem building and bringing people together to support young people in the region.

## Join YES' Team

YES is currently looking for two qualified applicants to fulfill the positions of office administrator and juvenile justice intervention specialist. If you are interested or know someone who might be a good fit, please review the job descriptions [here](#) and email [dljones@yespgh.org](mailto:dljones@yespgh.org) for further inquiries.



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