



YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES

Community News, YES Updates, Spotlights, & more!

SEPTEMBER 2023

Message from Dr. Jones



Greetings, YES Family, Friends, and Stakeholders,

This brief note comes to you this month during a time of tremendous building for YES. We have exceeded many folk's expectations for fall programming as we continue to build out our footprint throughout the city of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. To date, the FFISH program, directed by volunteer staff, have reached over 90 youth in various sports including swimming, golf and basketball. YES' three diversionary programs are currently serving 35 young people. The Female Empowerment and Wellness Initiative kicked off again this fall and has about 12 young women participating, and it continues to grow. The Voices to Men program has close to 35 participants at its sessions twice a week. The community support work YES is doing with the Duquesne City school district reaches over 50 youth. The

Teen Council, directed by Dr. Lanise Reynolds, is approaching 30 youth participants. The Fall 2023 cohort of the Youth Civic Leadership Academy has 32 youth. Our collaborations with community football and cheer teams reaches more than 325 young people. Our partnership with City Theater's City Bridges program has 12 participants. Additionally, YES is reimagining its afterschool tutoring space. These programs are vital to help young people find their groove and return to a sense of normalcy after the COVID-19 pandemic in pursuit of academic, leadership, personal, and career development.

In total, YES is close to serving about 600 youth through its fall programming. This is no small feat. We recognize the need is there and the youth are eagerly participating. We are more than thrilled that the staff has collated around these youth and are grateful that they continue to have the skills, interest, and ability to make these programs happen at a high level. These young people deserve nothing less. We want to thank our Board of Directors, funders, thought partners, and all of the folks who support us from every avenue available because we know that the impact of the program, if done at a high level, is well worth it.

Stay tuned and, until then, take good care.

Best Wishes,

Dr. Dennis Floyd Jones

Fall Skating Party

To kick off the fall program season, YES hosted a skating party at Neville Island Roller Dome. Students enjoyed reconnecting with YES staff, spending time with their peers, cultivating new relationships, and learning about YES' fall programs. While some students were more skilled skaters than others, they all enjoyed themselves on the rink and even learned some tricks.



YCLA Meet and Greet

Our YCLA program launched in September and has been an enriching experience for students.

The program, housed at the Heinz History Center, has three phases: phase 1) toolkit building, 2) application, 3) research and solution building. So far, students are in phase 1 and have engaged in team building, civic simulations, and contextual learning experiences. They have started to broaden their research and work readiness skills and are preparing for their internships with the local City Departments. On September 28, YCLA held a meet and greet to connect students with YCLA program partners.

We were honored to have representatives from each organization in attendance, including Jamie Ursic from Heinz History Center, Dr. Jones and staff from YES, Kaleb Armstrong from P4W, Dave Manel and Assistant Dean Saunders from CCAC, and Alexis Walker from the Mayor's Office. During the event, three youth had the opportunity to speak about the program and participate in an interview with the media team. They shared what sparked their interest in YCLA and how they anticipate the program benefiting them.



YES Launches Fall Programs



YES' Fall Programs are back and officially launch in October. This fall season, YES is hosting several programs ranging from gendered mentoring and academic tutoring to college preparation and workforce development. YES' program opportunities are designed to support students' personal, academic, and professional needs.

YES' Fall Program line up includes:

Female Empowerment and Wellness Initiative (2nd & 4th Mondays, 5pm - 7pm)

A female mentoring program designed to create a safe space for sisterhood, friendship, and holistic wellness for young women.



Voices to Men (Tuesdays, 4pm - 6pm, 2nd & Fourth Thursdays)

A male mentoring program designed to support young men's health, wellness, and future aspirations.



**Power Hour
(Mondays & Wednesdays, 3pm - 5pm)**

A drop-in style tutoring program available for students seeking academic support or simply a quiet place to study.



**College and Career Preparation
(Dates and Times Vary)**

A program designed to help juniors and seniors prepare for college and career.

**Teen Council
(Wednesdays, 4:30pm - 6:30pm)**

A program designed for youth leaders interested in using their voices to improve their communities, especially around issues of violence.



**Youth Civic Leadership Program
(Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3pm - 6pm)**

A program designed to teach youth about civic responsibility and engagement and to explore local civic challenges.

If you know youth interested in these program opportunities, please contact Denise Jones at dljones@yespgh.org.

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Searching through the Waves: A Student's Journey in Her Own Words

YES has some exceptionally talented young people who express themselves in creative ways. Amira Bogan, a member of YES' YCLA program, is no different. Amira is a student writer and poetess at CAPA High School and recently composed a piece

reflecting on her journey entitled, Searching through the Waves, for MPS WPA's Magic of Mentoring Event. Check out her beautifully and masterfully written submission, below.

Searching through the Waves, Amira Bogan

Shallow water,
the lake reflecting the dimly lit sky.
A quiet blue.

Spiky trees,
surrounded by never ending green.

I walk beside you.

And stare into our youth.

Dark and murky,
the path we take never clear,
I wonder if I could really become something that the world might need,
that their hands can't reach.

When I tell these stories,
and revelations through my thoughts,
I question if the dark skin of mine,
is really enough,
to stop the ripples of time.

January 10th, 2008.
I look to myself.
Water soaking my skin,
dried and scrunched up like a raisin.

I carry soft waves of my body, swallowing the years that go by. Passing on the fragile dreams of brown palms belonging to me.

I pull along,

striding,

pressure of the everlasting blue,

pushing on this heart of mine,

down a path those with the same blood know too good.

May the flow of water carry wisdom to my years to come.



GENERAL YES UPDATES

Investiture Ceremony with YES Students



YES students, Ramin Hussaini and William Allen, joined Dr. Jones in attending the Investiture Ceremony for the Honorable Cindy K. Chung. They had an opportunity to witness her induction alongside other powerful leaders and stakeholders and connect directly with attendees. They asked questions, sought advice, and took pictures. The event, according to Ramin, was “fun, enjoyable, and informative; it was great to talk with people who have a lot of [professional] experience.” This is just one example of how YES exposes young people to opportunities to reach their goals!

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