



YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES

Community News, YES Updates, Spotlights, & more!

JULY 2022

A Message from YES' Executive Director

The theme “One Team, One Dream” seemed appropriate during the Teen Public Safety and Violence Prevention Summit planning. However, when months of planning went live, “One Team, One Dream” echoed through the vast edifice of Mount Ararat Baptist Church. Teens and adults from all over the city and county witnessed what it was like to convene a group of stakeholders to help young people build resilience, understand the complexities of violence, and most importantly, listen to and engage in genuine, constructive, and informative dialogue.



We express a tremendous amount of thanks and appreciation for those who supported our Summit in any way, shape, or form. There are too many to list on this note, but they know who they are, and they have our deepest gratitude.

Everyone in the room knew this was just the beginning of what we believe to be a long journey. Our next task is to retrieve the evaluations, both interview and survey, and begin planning the next steps. So far, we have follow-up meetings with folks in the Mon Valley, Jacqueline Smith of GVCS and Brandy Daye, and U.S. Attorney Chung to continue building the foundation for our violence prevention efforts.

In other news, we are excited to welcome in August as we wrap up this summer's programs. Stay tuned.

Best wishes,

Dr. Jones

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

De-escalating Gun Violence with Partners

We held a productive meeting with Dr. Melissa Pearlman at CAPA, where she introduced the Youth Community Action Plans for Kids by Kids. Through this, we will delve into planning a neighborhood Summit for youth to mirror some of the work that Tamara Collier, U.S Attorney's Office, is doing with the Downtown Safety Coalition, a model we would like to spread throughout the county. We are also developing a noteworthy plan to take all youth who participate in the Summit to Seven Springs over Veteran's Day weekend where presenters can have time to teach strategies in non-violence, de-escalation, mindfulness, and stress reduction strategies. This will accompany a subset of individuals to create a strategic plan useful for our next steps and direction. We are going to be bold, deliberate, and most importantly, youth driven. More to come, watch this space.

McKeesport School District Partners with YES



Tough times demand tough action! Our new partners from the McKeesport School District are joining forces with YES. We will address a wide range of mental health issues with a teen-centered approach to stopping the rampant gun violence and its devastating societal impact. YES looks forward to working with McKeesport!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Summer Learn and Earn Program

After one month of hard work and engagement, students have engaged in transformative and meaningful work experiences. Students have learned valuable life and employability skills that will transcend beyond the summer program. [Keep up with the latest worksite updates on our Instagram; click here to follow us!](#)



August Preview

We are looking forward to our final month of our Summer 2022 programs. Our Research Symposiums will occur on August 4th and 9th from 5-7PM at the



Carnegie Library in East Liberty. After we honor everyone's research, we will celebrate our students at our End of Summer event from 4-7PM on August 10th at the Rhododendron Pavilion in Highland Park. We will have food, awards, raffles, and music from BAQ II BAQ. We are so excited to end off this summer on a high note and to celebrate all of the incredible hard work students have accomplished. If you are interested in attending any of

these events, please contact Olivia Kelley at okelley@yespgh.org or 412-661-7834.

In addition to our annual end of summer events, YES is also taking a group of young people on a cultural excursion to Washington D.C. from August 5th - 7th. Youth participating are exemplary performers at their job site and master researchers. We will spend significant time at the National Museum for African American History and Culture, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, National Museum of the American Indian, and the Anacostia Community Museum. Additionally, we will meet with local representatives in D.C. with a visit to the Lincoln Memorial. We plan to post regularly on our social media channels so that everyone can follow along on our trip!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Cierra Guest: Summit Panelist, Gun Violence Prevention Advocate, Student, & Inspiration



Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, rising Senior at Woodland Hills High School, Cierra Guest started advocating for gun violence prevention after losing her sister to gun violence in 2021. Cierra took the pain from her loss and turned it into inspiration and motivation for change. Since then, Cierra has started The Guest Resiliency Room as a way to help students cope with their emotions, from anger to sadness. [For a full length feature on Cierra, click here to visit our blog!](#)

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Meet Olivia Kelley, our Office Administrator



We want to acknowledge that everyone's favorite staff person, Olivia Kelley, is transitioning to DePaul University in Chicago, IL to further her education at the end of the summer. She has been a light and comfort to so many of our students and such a friend and colleague to everyone. She has also been a tremendous lifeline to YES' Executive Director. During the stressful times when multiple programs were operating, Olivia helped actualize and align the vision, and structured them effectively. For that, we are so grateful and want to wish her well as she moves on to her next phase in life. We know she will accomplish great things with her career, and we wish her well.

Dr. Jones Graduates from Leadership Pittsburgh

Leadership Pittsburgh Inc. (LP Inc.) is the foremost multi-disciplinary leadership identification, enrichment, and networking organization in Southwestern Pennsylvania, dedicated to developing a robust pipeline of diverse civic leaders to serve the region. The impact of their programs is felt in all areas of the community and serve as a benchmark across the country. LP Inc. graduates and participants are not afraid to tackle difficult issues or take unpopular stands in order to act as catalysts for positive change in our region.

YES' Founder & Executive Director, Dr. Dennis Jones, graduated from the 10-month program and was fortunate enough out of the 60-person cohort in Leadership Pittsburgh XIII to be selected to give the commencement address, aptly titled "Extraordinary You Are." [Check out his presentation here.](#)

GENERAL UPDATES

Summit Recap

This past month, we held our first ever Teen Gun Violence Prevention Summit. With Mayor Ed Gainey in presence, we worked with students to strategize solutions to the gun violence crisis. We heard from moms who have lost loved ones to gun violence, and from police officers working towards protecting the PGH area. We are excited to use this summit as a launch pad to create a 2 year strategic plan for how YES will approach gun violence and to create a more normal childhood in Pittsburgh.



[Click here to read Willie Knight's full-length summit recap!](#)

Thank You to the RK Mellon Foundation

As Executive Director, there are rare occasions where you can share that your program, that is constantly evolving and expanding as the need from the community continues to press for the needs of youth and families we pledged to serve, has received such a meaningful investment. The recent news of the Richard King Mellon Foundation awarding Youth Enrichment Services a \$400,000 grant to support our programs is absolutely the best news. There's no question that all that our costs continue to increase but the need for our services continues to increase as well.



So, the investment by the Richard King Mellon Foundation in YES is absolutely a blessing. These funds are designated to be used for general support for the agency, which allows us to reach more students and families who have more unique needs. On behalf of our agency, our youth and their families, and our Board of Directors, we want to sincerely thank the Richard King Mellon Foundation for their continued investment in the quality of life of all of the residents of the Pittsburgh region.

[Visit Website Here!](#) Thank you for your support!

