



YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES

Community News, YES Updates, Spotlights, & more!

FEBRUARY 2024

YES Leads the Way: Message from Dr. Jones



Celebrating any anniversary is fun, but when you have something to really celebrate -- like 30 years of service to your community -- that is truly great news! As we embrace this historic milestone, we have labeled our theme for the year YES: A Gem Hidden in Plain Sight.

Let's look at some recent numbers. What story do these numbers tell? It reflects the emergence from the pandemic with so many young students

seeking, searching, and discovering YES. If it were not for local foundations, PPP loans, and the continued support of Allegheny County Juvenile Probation, YES would not have been able to grow our number of students served from 120 in 2020, to 960 in 2023, and an anticipated 2,000 students served by the end of 2024. YES is truly a hidden gem in plain sight.

Youth Program Involvement Per Fiscal Year

<i>Programs/Events</i>	<i>Cycle</i>	<i>2022-2023</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>
Voices to Men – Male Mentoring	October- June	30	45
Youth Civic Leadership Academy - Civic Engagement	August - May	30	52
Learn and Earn - Workforce Development & Education	June - August	120	130
Diversion - Juvenile Diversion	Year Round	60	80
Extended Diversion	Year Round	40	60

FFISH - Fun Fitness Involving Sports and Health	Year Round	208	250
Moonshot - Duquesne MS - Academic Support	September - June	60	60
Power Hour - Tutoring	October - June	50	75
Female Empowerment and Wellness Initiative - Female Mentoring	October - June	15	30
Football & Cheer Teams - Mental Wellness Programming	August - December	200	300
Teen Violence Prevention Symposium	July	400	300

Our theme – *A Gem Hidden in Plain Sight* – reflects not only our past success, but also our success that has not yet penetrated many of the corners of our potential stakeholders, funders, volunteers, and donors. We are set to change that with our year-long celebrations.

Lunch and Learn: This past week, we hosted PPS board members for our inaugural Lunch and Learn event, including president Gene Walker and former president Sylvia Wilson, along with Director of Community Schools LeAna Creighton, Westinghouse Community Schools Site Manager Tiara Coaston, Principal of Lincoln Pamela Parks, Principal of Sterrett Dr. Michele Holly, and Community School Site Manager at Pittsburgh Faison K-5 Tionne Street. These partners came to our office complex, shared lunch, and learned about the services we offer to their students.

Another win: YES has been awarded an Outdoor Connections Grant from the National Forest Service, designed to engage youth in activities to educate on the impact of climate change and how to be eco-conscious and global citizens. During our summer Learn and Learn program, students will spend time in Allegheny National Forest with forest service personnel, and we plan to host these folks in our office as well. Environmental justice will be the focus of this 2-year grant.

CIVPP2 is a re-branding of our Collective Impact Ecosystem. To date, we have a robust and active group of agencies from all over the county, working closely with YES to assist in carrying out three important projects based on goals designed by youth during our 2023 Violence Prevention Symposium. These goals are:

1. Violence Prevention Symposium – Summer 2024
2. Job Fair – October 2024 – with a focus on showcasing minority business owners and entrepreneurs, the tech industry, manufacturing, and trades.
3. Multigenerational community day events in various communities around town.

Finally – the 30-Year Anniversary Gala: We are in the midst of planning our 30-year Anniversary Gala for September 2024. We are looking for sponsors and donors, and always looking to connect with people who want to support who we are and what we do. This event will be the talk of the city.

Stay tuned for more monthly updates.

Best Wishes,



Dennis Jones, PhD

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Pittsburgh Public School Representatives Visit YES



Empowering futures through education! On Monday, February 20th, Youth Enrichment Services (YES) hosted our inaugural Lunch and Learn session welcoming board members and principals from Pittsburgh Public School locations right in our backyard. We had fruitful discussion, shared lunch and community, and strengthened the ever-important bond between YES and PPS. Together, we can enrich students' lives in and outside of the classroom!





Voices to Men - Creating a Safe Space for YES Youth



Twice a month, Back 2 Purpose engages in meaningful conversations with our young men in Voices To Men. Topics of conversation range from how to have healthy relationships, to goal setting and self esteem. Our students always enjoy these conversations, and we are thrilled to give them the opportunity to reflect on their social-emotional lives with us.



Voices to Men & Teen Council take a trip to the Museum of Illusions



Each month we offer students the opportunity to join our staff on cultural engagement trips to locations throughout Pittsburgh to expand their worldviews and engage them in fun and learning outside of the classroom! This past month, our students, chaperoned by Rich McClain and Miles Porter, traveled to the Museum of Illusions for a fun-filled evening. We always encourage our students to consider new perspectives, and what better place to do so than the Museum of Illusions!

A New Set of Experiences Begin with our Spring 2024 YCLA Cohort



The Spring 2024 Youth Civic Leadership Academy (YCLA) is in full swing as classes and Academy experiences began early February! Dr. Juel Smith, who is CCAC's Associate Dean of Sciences and Executive Director of CCAC's Homewood-Brushton Center, helped set the tone by providing students with an exhilarating lecture on preparing for success in college courses.





STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

YES Presents at the Extended Learning Opportunities Conference in Harrisburg

On February 28, 2024, Dr. Jones and Denise Jones presented work on YES' unique summer learning model to a group of 21st Century grantees in Harrisburg, PA. More specifically, this presentation focused on how YES has adapted its summer program model and approach to meet the post-covid needs of underserved young people. The presentation was well received and laid the foundation for a state-wide initiative.

Remixing the Learning Lab: A unique approach to summer learning for under-resourced youth of color

Denise L. Jones^{1,2}, Deanna Sinex², Zaida Pearson¹, and Dennis F. Jones²
University of Michigan¹
Youth Enrichment Services (YES)²
Extended Learning Opportunities Conference (ELO) | February 28, 2024

Black History Month - Staff Reflections

This month, we asked our staff here at YES to respond to the following questions: What does Black History Month mean to you? How does this intersect with your work here at YES? Here are some of the reflections that were shared:

Melinda Jones

As we celebrate Black History Month, I choose to honor those who have come before me. This month shines a light on the people in history who have long been overlooked, under valued, and down right dismissed. I see this month as a chance to intentionally celebrate the lives of those who sacrificed theirs so I can live with certain freedoms, luxuries, and paths. This month means visibility on otherwise hushed people. I say hushed because as hard as people try, we will not be silenced. This month connects to YES' mission because we strive to shine a light on those in the community who are supporting our young people to be the best version of themselves that they can be. We provide resources and programming that open doorways, defy stereotypes, and move our young people forward. YES has had 30 years of memorable works that connect directly to the neighborhoods they come from. I am proud to work with YES!



Denise Jones

Black History Month is a special time to honor the past, celebrate the present, and anticipate the future. Black History Month allows for deep reflection, cultural connection, and celebration. Black History Month gives me the opportunity to cherish the powerful contributions Black folks have made to society and to also see how my own work - at both Michigan and YES - is contributing to that same shared history! My work at YES allows me to help young people develop a cultural identity, a sense of belongingness, and an understanding that they are capable of accomplishing and achieving without limitations. My work uplifts the

community, inspires young people, and allows me to narrate a different ending for my students and me, for us. Ultimately, Black History Month is a month of possibility, of hope, of triumph.

Dr. Deanna Sinex

Black History Month is a time to celebrate our ability as a people to survive and thrive overtime. It is a time to reflect and appreciate the sacrifices and struggles of our ancestors, for it is their shoulders that we stand on. It is a time to pay forward what was given to us to lift up the next generation of changemakers and leaders. I am fortunate to work at YES, where I can experience what Black History Month means to me on a daily basis. Every day, I aim to uphold YES' mission, and do everything in my power to help develop and support high impact, high intensity programming that helps our youth become their own best resource. While I stand on the shoulders of giants, I aim to be a giant upon which our youth can stand upon!



Miles Porter

Black History is a very important month to me. This is a time to celebrate Black history which sometimes gets overlooked. Over the years, so many amazing people



have inspired the new generation. I am very proud to be Black and wear it as a badge of honor. This is the main reason I love the work I do. I am able to impact so many Black lives by being a role model and leader. I am also a Black father raising two Black boys. I take pride in being their protector, provider, and someone they can look up to.

Dana Tuohey

For me, Black History Month is a time to listen and learn. It's a chance to listen to stories, amplify voices, and work towards a more equitable future for all. Working for an organization in service to so many young Black students in the city of Pittsburgh like YES only further allows me to gain new insights and perspectives.



Jaquan Brockman

While I believe that Black history should be acknowledged year-round, Black History Month to me is a way to acknowledge those who came before and all their literal blood, sweat, and tears to make their America a better place for future generations. The struggle and plight of Black America is arguably the most horrific multi-generational traumas in human history, so it is important to highlight the aptitude, excellence, and contributions for a better society made by our ancestors despite living in an America with eras of Antebellum, Jim Crow, Mass Incarceration, and the War on Drugs being at the forefront of our people's oppression. Yet, our people continuously defied the odds and still we rise in the face of oppression

with our unwavering spirit and strength. I embrace my Blackness unapologetically year-round because I experienced a dark period of my life where I had internalized anti-Blackness and self-hatred during my adolescence. As a Black man, I feel as though Black History connects particularly well at YES because I am a part of our male mentoring program, VoicesToMen, where I am able to make a positive impact in the lives of predominantly Black men and having the opportunity to connect with them having come from the same environments and struggles, they came from and lived through is truly an invaluable experience to me.

Sahar Hussaini

I am originally from Afghanistan, and upon joining YES, I was introduced to the vibrant world of Black culture and history. Interacting with amazing Black individuals, I delved into Black history, especially during our visit to Cleveland last summer, where I learned about significant landmarks like the Karamu House, the oldest Black Theatre in America. As Women's History Month approaches, I reflect on the remarkable contributions of Black women, including the invention of menstrual pads. In my role at YES, which serves a predominantly Black student population, I see firsthand how our organization embodies and celebrates Black History, providing invaluable resources and opportunities to our students.



Danielle Stewart



Black History Month holds a special significance for me as it sparks conversations about individuals who often go unnoticed in our daily lives. I strongly believe that the celebration of Black history should not be confined to just one month but should be a continuous source of empowerment. It is essential to acknowledge the contributions made by Black individuals that have paved the way for us. While history often focuses on the hardships and oppression faced by the Black community, Black History Month, to me, symbolizes resilience and the

ability to achieve greatness in the face of adversity. Recognizing all the trials and tribulations that the past and present Black leaders have gone through serve as motivation for me, inspiring me to persevere and move forward in the face of challenges. This sentiment also resonates with my work at YES, where I am dedicated to empowering our youth to overcome obstacles and pursue their aspirations and instilling the same sense of perseverance seen in our Black leaders.

Celebrating Love & Family: Valentine's Day at YES



YES celebrated Valentine's Day in style and on theme this year! On the left is Office Administrator Dana Tuohey donning red to fit the holiday spirit, and on the right is Danielle Stewart, Manager of Workforce and Post-Secondary Programs, with her two children.

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