



YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES

Community News, YES Updates, Spotlights, & more!

NOVEMBER 2023

Message from Dr. Jones



Dear stakeholders,

YES' planning for 2024 is in high gear. To kickstart 2024, our agency partners have coalesced around four areas to implement as early as March 2024. On November 30th, members of the Collective Impact Ecosystem met with YES' technical assistance consultants from WestEd to continue working on these four areas as well as the eight youth-crafted big ideas from our Violence Prevention Strategic Planning Report-Out.

Please see below for a brief description of each of these four primary areas, or pods.

1. **Job Fair** – One of the 8 youth-created big ideas in the Youth Violence Prevention Strategic Planning Report is to host a job fair that connects young people to minority businesses. A job and career fair featuring minority small businesses, entrepreneurs, and startups where young people can meet individually and sign on as an apprentice for the business. Young investors would provide social media expertise such as website design, social media marketing, and technical support, while the small business will teach the students content and subject matter expertise. A key provision of the job fair will be salary and capital fund investment for the businesses as they train the students! This career and job fair will also bring together traditional and non-traditional businesses for as many as 250 students 13-24 who want to learn and grow their potential career options.
2. **Expansion of YES' Gender-Specific Programs** – Youth Enrichment Services has provided gender-specific programming for youth for nearly a decade. Yet, YES' East Liberty office can sometimes be difficult for youth to travel to after school. YES has been in conversation with stakeholders in McKeesport and the Mon Valley to bring its gender-specific programs to the region. YES would provide the curriculum while local organizations would provide the facilitators, space, and other resources.
3. **Summer Employment Opportunities** – Youth Enrichment Services has successfully facilitated Learn and Earn for nearly ten years. YES incorporated academic preparation and social and cultural enrichment into the traditional employment experience for youth. Included in the academic preparation component is a robust research project. YES recognizes the burden of facilitating such programs and seeks to work with smaller organizations to facilitate comprehensive summer employment experiences for youth. YES submitted an LOI to Partner4Work in early November.
4. **Funding Securement** – YES and other Ecosystem members submitted funding proposals to The POISE Foundation's Stop the Violence (STV) grant in late

November. The proposals are for funding to continue the work of the Ecosystem through an Opportunity Fund that other organizations in the Ecosystem can access. This pod will continue to build out the STV proposal as a mechanism for creating future funding proposals, namely the new round of PCCD funding that was announced in late November.

To date the violence prevention network includes over 60 like-minded agencies and institutions representing over 25,000 youth! 2024 has the potential to be a transformational year for our Collective Impact Ecosystem. Keep your eyes right here!

Peace and Blessings for you and yours throughout the holiday season and in 2024.

Best,



Dr. Dennis Floyd Jones

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

FFISH Participants Complete Fall Program Cycle



Our fall FFISH program cycle has now drawn to a close with recognition of our 72 young participants for their efforts and contributions to the FUN!

FFISH (Fun Fitness Involving Sports Health) is a program designed for youth to have a safe space to play alongside their peers and develop healthy habits while doing so. FFISH, while being a whole lot of fun for young people, is also a key program in our violence prevention efforts. YES recognizes that investing in our K-8 youth is one of the best ways to build healthy community members and empower young people to choose a healthier lifestyle.

FFISH is free for all and youth receive stipends for their participation and engagement. Youth can engage in activities such as swimming, golf, basketball, boxing, and even have access to mental wellness sessions, nutritional coaching, and healthy snacks!



While the Fall FFISH session has ended, the next session runs from November 8th - December 16th.

New Updates About Our Weekly Programs

YCLA - Youth Civic Leadership Academy Program



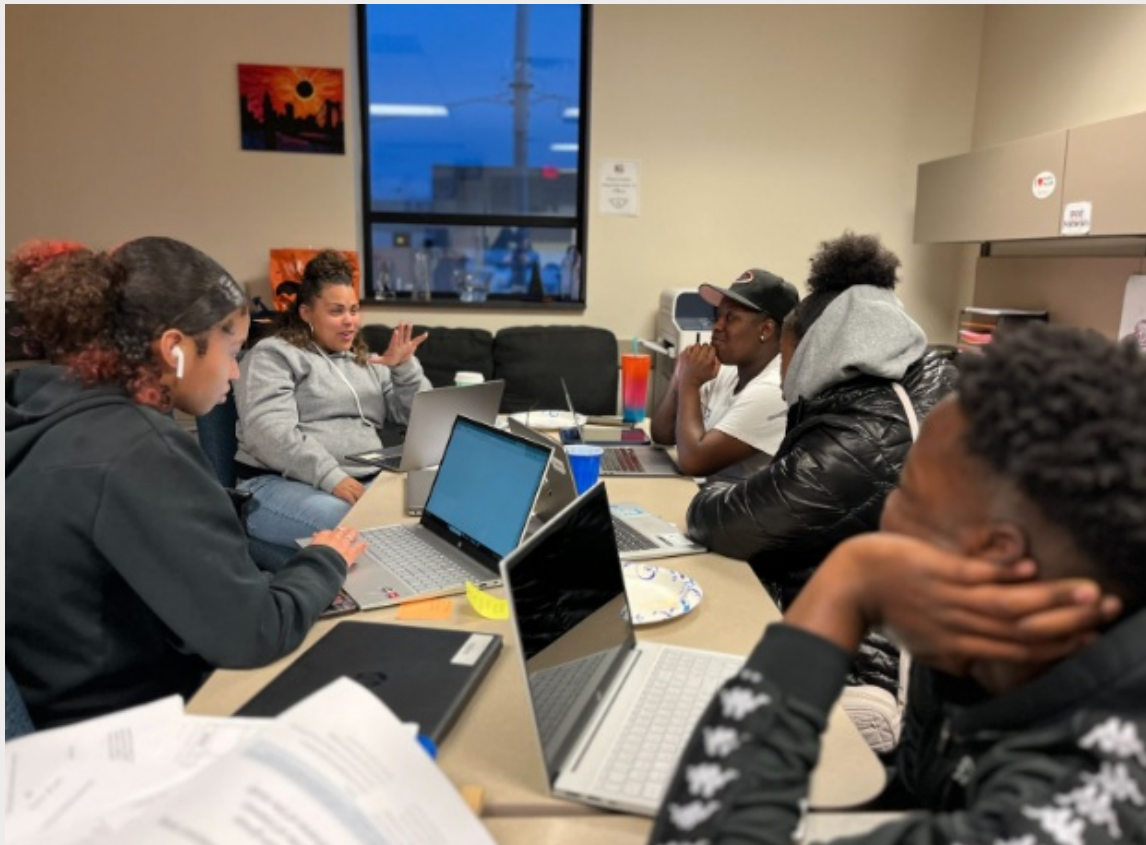
YCLA participants have been working hard on their research topics this semester. At the beginning of the semester, students were assigned to a small group with a research topic focused on a problem that youth in the City of Pittsburgh are facing.



Students are tasked with researching their respective issues and developing potential solutions. The YCLA program will culminate in a research symposium on December 12th at the Heinz History Center, during which students will present their researched solutions. Our students are working hard and our staff are working to shepherd them through this incredible experience to become civically aware and engaged youth!

YCLA Students, like Tyra and Kyree in the photo, have been placed with City Departments such as Human Resources for their experiential learning phase of the program. These youth attended the Corporate Equity and Inclusion Roundtable (CEIR) Conference hosted by the Black Political Empowerment Project (B-Pep).

Power Hour - Youth Tutoring



Every week, YES hosts Power Hour tutoring on Mondays and Wednesdays. Any student in need can show up between 3pm-5pm for help with school work from one of our knowledgeable tutors. Throughout November, Power Hour has also been a space for YCLA students to spend extra time outside of class to work and collaborate on their research projects.

VTM - Voices to Men

VTM- Voices to Men is one of our strongest programs, hosting dozens of young men from the greater Pittsburgh area every Tuesday and Thursday for programming. Topics of discussion for our Voices to Men sessions include deconstructing myths about Black male emotions and feelings,

developing accountability and positive habit forming, and remaining true to yourself. Participants also attend outings twice a month, to places like Top Golf and The Kingsley Center, as a way to enjoy fellowship with one another outside of the conventional classroom space. We are very excited for what is to come in the new year as we expand our gender-specific programs like Voices to Men which has already had such a positive impact on so many young men!



FeWi - Female Empowerment & Wellness Initiative



The fall season of our FeWi program (Female Empowerment and Wellness Initiative) was one of the most successful yet! Young women from around the city joined us on Mondays this fall for a safe and empowering space to share, create, and laugh together. Activities that students in FeWi have participated in include painting their very own works of art on canvas, moderated conversations surrounding topics relevant to young women such as how to define “safe spaces,” as well as volunteer and service projects like assembling self-care packages for the local women’s shelter. We are excited to resume programming in the new year and continue on the path to promoting positive social, emotional, and environmental wellness for young women!

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

Welcoming New Staff

YES welcomed its new Office Administrator, Dana Tuohey, at the beginning of November. Dana comes



to us with a background in Higher Education Administration, most recently serving in the Division of Student Affairs at Carnegie Mellon University. She holds both a BA and an MA in English Literature from Boston University, and hopes to apply her passions for storytelling and communication to her work with Youth Enrichment Services. She's looking forward to continuing to meet folks from the YES family over the coming weeks. Make sure to stop by the front desk to say hello the next time you are in the office, and feel free to reach out with any questions or needs that arise. Dana can be contacted at officeadministrator@yespgh.org or 412-728-1104.

GENERAL YES UPDATES

YES Presents at APHA Conference in Atlanta



On November 12-15th, Dr. Jones, Denise, and Olivia all represented YES at the APHA conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Of the 6 abstracts submitted by our team, 4 were accepted and presented under the overarching conference theme of "Creating the Healthiest Nation: Overcoming Social and Ethical Challenges." Presentation themes included grassroots organizational support at post-secondary institutions, integration of storytelling methodologies in design of summer programming, reflections on the healing power of youth programming centered around the lived experiences of black women, and ways to support black men in urban environments. Congratulations to the authors and presenters of our ongoing YES-sponsored research!



During this conference experience, YES connected with its former students who are attending College in Atlanta (Clark Atlanta, Morehouse, and Emory). YES is extremely proud of the legacy and impact it continues to have as it prepares the next generation of leaders.



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