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NBA ALL-STAR COMMUNITY CONVERSATION HELD AT YEP

YEP’s Summer Camp program participants are breaking in the Youth Center’s new basketball court (pictured below) which was installed by the NBA back in February. The new addition was a thank you from the NBA for YEP youth and staff who facilitated and participated in the 2017 NBA All-Star Weekend Community Conversation that was held at our Central City Youth Center. The NBA, NBA Players’ Association, New Orleans Pelicans and YEP hosted the “Leadership Together: Community Conversation” and dinner where YEP youth, alongside the New Orleans Pelicans’ Coach, Alvin Gentry and several players including Langston Galloway, participated in the conversation. The evening included a fabulous sit-down dinner provided by Katie’s Restaurant, interactive activities, and deep discussions between New Orleans Police Department officers, players, and young people. New Orleans City Council members Jason Williams and Jared Brossett also joined YEP for the event.
Mark your calendars for YEP’s 2nd Annual Pedal With Purpose (PWP) FUNdraiser that will take place on Sunday, March 11, 2018! After a successful debut, Pedal With Purpose, YEP’s first major fundraiser, will be back for next year. We will be inviting supporters and sponsors to take part in the fun and join us for an afternoon of pedicab races, food, drinks, music and a street fair. The action packed event will take place alongside YEP’s main campus on Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard in Central City. Teams will race up and down the Boulevard to help raise money to support YEP’s 11 programs that serve over 1,200 youth annually. Last year, event sponsors and teams helped raise $180,000 in donations that directly supported YEP’s programs. We look forward to seeing you at the races in 2018!

“A NOTE ABOUT PEDAL WITH PURPOSE FROM YEP BOARD MEMBER, SUZANNE RUSOVICH:

“The 2nd annual Pedal with Purpose will be here before we know it and I am so excited to be the YEP Board’s first Pedal With Purpose Board Liaison! Our Board is a strong one and we are committed to helping, guiding, and participating in this fun event in the spring. The wheel has been invented, and we will all work together to ensure it rolls steadily forward for years to come as it helps raise awareness and funds for our mission of engaging and empowering our city’s most important commodity –our future – our kids!”
- Suzanne
The Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) was chosen by the International Youth Foundation (IYF) to send a team to Brazil as part of a peer-to-peer learning exchange, making YEP the first U.S. organization to participate in the initiative called (Re)Connecting Youth: Exchanging Global Lessons. The purpose of the peer-to-peer exchange was to allow the YEP team an opportunity to research innovative global approaches for increasing youth connection and resilience. The YEP delegation was in Belo Horizonte, Brazil from July 10-14 visiting with our partner organization, Rede Cidadã. The leadership, staff and young people at Rede Cidadã were tremendous hosts; they were welcoming, generous, kind, insightful and thoughtful. YEP’s team had the firsthand opportunity to learn about many of the challenges facing young people in Brazil -- that were very similar to the challenges that many young people face in the U.S. -- and to experience Rede Cidadã’s innovative methodology that incorporates biocentric movement and dance into apprenticeship and employment training programming. Rede Cidadã prepares young people to enter and succeed in the workplace by helping participants to discover their personal strengths and interests and realizing how these assets are transferable to the professional world. YEP is looking forward to hosting our friends from Rede Cidadã in New Orleans at the end of August, reciprocating the hospitality that we received and introducing our partners to our city, staff, young people and programming. Special thanks to the International Youth Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Cricket Island Foundation for making this peer-to-peer learning exchange possible.
Hometown: New Orleans, LA

Occupation:
Vice-President, Ethics & Compliance, Entergy Corporation; former United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

How long have you been a supporter of YEP & why? YEP Executive Director Melissa Sawyer and I first met in late 2013, during my early months as United States Attorney. Our initial discussions were related to my potential service as a mentor. However, we quickly agreed that YEP’s message of youth empowerment through mentorship and workforce development was in many ways consistent with my message of ensuring public safety by being Smart on Crime, with an increased emphasis on crime prevention.

As YEP’s newest Board Member, why did you decide to join team YEP? YEP is one of the most important institutions in the city. I am honored to serve on YEP’s board, as this position will offer the opportunity to amplify YEP’s message and increase the organization’s reach.

What does youth empowerment mean to you? Youth empowerment means unleashing the dynamic potential of our young people. Historically, our society labels young people as being part of the problem. I sincerely believe that our young people are the primary solution to the most difficult problems confronting many urban areas - ensuring safe homes, schools, and neighborhoods for us all.

If you could go back in time, what advice would you give to your younger self? I would probably spend more time with family members, both close and distant. Frankly, it is advice that I struggle to follow, even as an adult. We should not take for granted the fact that someone (and their smile, laughter, or wisdom) will always be around.

YEP SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT:
KENNETH A. POLITE
During the week of July 5-9th, I went to Atlanta for a teen conference called The Ultimate Life Summit. During the week, we learned about the 7 Mindsets to become an effective person. My favorite Mindset was the Mindset entitled ‘Live to Give’. This mindset really struck home with me because that’s what I love to do. Especially being able to work with the kids at the Youth Empowerment Project, I want to give them as much knowledge and wisdom that I can. It was a very exciting trip and I had lots of fun.

I have been involved with the Youth Empowerment Project for a while now. I started off volunteering with tutoring and one Fall I taught an etiquette class with the boys in the group. All of this led to me being hired as an employee in February of 2017. It’s been a blast working with this group of kids that we have in the program and I can’t wait to see what the future holds for us! ” - Carez Cotton, St. Charles Parish YEP Employee
YEP recognized the achievements of 36 students who graduated from our New Orleans Providing Literacy to All Youth (NOPLAY) and Village programs. These students successfully passed their High School Equivalency (HiSET) exam (formerly known as the GED) during the year. A special brunch and recognition ceremony were held on May 12 inside of YEP’s Youth Center to honor our graduates and their accomplishments. On May 13, the 10th Annual Regional Adult Education Graduation Ceremony was held at Loyola University New Orleans. This uplifting event was sponsored by the Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans and the keynote speaker was YEP’s Board Member and former U.S. Attorney Kenneth A. Polite.

To date YEP has helped a total of 350 students earn their HiSET.

Special thanks to YEP Educates supporters:
YEP WORKS: OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH ACE HOTEL NEW ORLEANS

Book a room at the Ace Hotel New Orleans, look on the wall, and you will spot a calendar called ‘Queens of New Orleans’ designed by YEP Design Works apprentices. This calendar, that was available on the hotel’s global e-commerce site as well as in the hotel, quickly sold out of the copies available! YEP apprentices also inspired an art installation and participated in a panel discussion where youth and community members brought the calendar theme to real life.

The Ace Hotel is one of 11 current clients who are utilizing the services provided by YEP Design Works. The program is part of YEP’s Trafigura Work & Learn Center where youth ages 16-24 earn educational stipends while learning valuable foundational and employment skills and putting those skills to use in YEP’s three businesses. By producing real-world projects for local and national clients, creative young people engaged in YEP Design Works learn graphic design, introductory web design, digital photography/videography, and social media marketing. Young people learn how to use Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign and AfterEffects and they are guided by industry professionals on YEP’s staff. Young people pitch their projects to clients, give and receive feedback, and deliver work product in a timely manner. These skills are especially useful in creative careers and are applicable across industries. YEP Staff also support students by helping them to transition into higher education, externships in the creative digital media field, or freelance careers. Thanks to Design Works’ partnership with the Ace Hotel, YEP and our young people are now working on a “Queens of Preservation Hall” merchandise design for the renowned music venue in the French Quarter. If you or someone you know want to hire YEP Design Works to assist with project, please check us out at: www.yepdesignworks.org.

Special thanks to YEP Works supporters:

- Trafigura Foundation
- BCM
- CapitalOne
- United Way
- The Aspen Institute
- Greater New Orleans Foundation
Corey, Christion and Jamon have collectively been connected to YEP for 30 years! All three of these amazing young men first came to YEP as boys enrolled in our Afterschool Enrichment Program. Now, young men between the ages of 18-20, the trio decided to apply to be full-time summer camp counselors at YEP’s Kid’s X-Press Summer Camp. They interviewed, got the jobs and this summer they have enjoyed every minute of the adventure. We caught up with them on the job to hear their perspectives about starting out as YEP program participants and now years later being mentors to youth a lot like themselves.

“I want to give the kids the same experience that I had. The things I learned when I was coming up. I want to pass the same fun down to the kids so they can do the same thing when it’s my time to leave.” – Corey, age 20

“It’s great to work with the kids and see YEP progress over the years. I am happy to be here. People should support YEP because it’s a fun summer camp and YEP has great programs including the Afterschool Program. YEP has great counselors who are good role models and it’s a fun place to be.” – Christion, age 18.

“I grew up around most of the campers. They look up to me and it makes me feel good. It makes me feel like I am a leader. I’m a good role model for the kids and I try to keep them on track.” – Jamon, age 18.

Special thanks to YEP Enriches supporters:
Dear Friends of YEP,

The first half of 2017 has been momentous. In February, YEP was approached by the NBA and asked to host a community policing conversation at our Youth Center during the 2017 NBA All Star Weekend; in March, YEP had our first ever major fundraising event, Pedal With Purpose, that exceeded our fundraising goal; and in July, I, along with three other members of YEP’s leadership team had the privilege of participating in a peer learning exchange with Rede Cidada, an organization based in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

In addition to these exciting happenings, summer at YEP is always a busy time for young people and staff alike and 2017 has been no exception. This summer we successfully operated our Kid’s X-Press Summer Camp for kids ages 7-12, New Orleans Providing Literacy to All Youth (NOPLAY) Summer Scholars program for young adults between the ages of 16-24, and Teen Summer Employment Training (SET) for youth ages 13-16. Through these programs, youth gained new skills that help prepare them for success at home, in school and in the workforce. Special thanks to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for awarding YEP a grant totaling $252,000 for our extensive 2017 summer programming.

July 1, 2017 also marked the start of YEP’s 14th fiscal year! Looking back, it is hard to believe that we have been positively impacting the lives of young people in the New Orleans region for 13 years and counting.

Finally, I am delighted to share YEP’s new logo with you which is located on the front and back of this newsletter. The vision for the logo is that of our creative young people who are engaged in our YEP Design Works program. Design Works is a fully operational creative digital media studio that is one of three youth-run businesses housed within our Trafigura Work & Learn Center where young people receive educational stipends while learning valuable employment readiness skills.

Thank you for your continued belief in YEP’s work and your commitment to our young people and our mission.

We appreciate you.
OUR 2017 SUMMER PROGRAMMING IMPACT

Kid’s X-Press Summer Camp

95 campers ages 7-15 were enrolled in 6-week camp

100% of parents surveyed said the YEP program had a positive influence on their child

92% of parents said their child’s behavior improved because of summer camp

New Orleans Providing Literacy to All Youth (NOPLAY) Summer Scholars

69 young people ages 16-21 were enrolled in two, 4-week sessions

95% of participants said the program made them feel like they have control over things happening in their life

95% of participants said the knowledge & skills gained will help them achieve their educational goals

Teen Summer Employment Training (SET)

28 young people ages 13-16 were enrolled in the 2-week program

92% of participants surveyed said the YEP program has helped them to have hope for a positive future

96% of participants surveyed said Teen SET has connected them to more caring people and adults