



EMPOWERING COMMUNITY TOGETHER

SNAPSHOTS OF OUR SUCCESSFUL YEAR > YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT 2023

YEP engages underserved young people through community-based education, mentoring, enrichment, and employment readiness programs to help them develop skills and strengthen ties to family and **community.**





Dear Friends,

For the past 19 years, I have been continually reminded of the immense good that is possible when we come together and support one another and our community. YEP's growth has been achievable because of the young people and families who trust us to add value to their lives, our devoted and hardworking staff, our community partners, our dedicated Board Members, volunteers, and all of our financial supporters who have provided the resources to sustain and expand our work.

Together, we have built YEP into one of the largest, most comprehensive nonprofit organizations in the Greater New Orleans region supporting youth. In 2023 alone, YEP served 890 individuals from 13 parishes.

YEP is committed to meeting young people and families where they are and ensuring that our programming is accessible to individuals, no matter their circumstances. By launching programming at the New Orleans East Opportunity Center, we brought services to one of the city's most high-needs neighborhoods, with the highest concentration of young people in all of New Orleans. YEP served 146 people during our inaugural year at the New Orleans East site.

YEP also started offering HiSET en Español last year at two of our YEP Educates sites, providing high school equivalency preparation and testing for Spanish-speaking learners. In 2023, YEP reached 62 Spanish-speaking students through this program and 8 individuals earned their HiSET en Español through YEP.

YEP turns 20 in 2024, and we are excited about celebrating two decades of impact with all of you who have been a part of the journey. Thank you for your belief in YEP and for ensuring that, for nearly twenty years, we have been able to fulfill our core purpose of empowering young people to improve their lives and the lives of others. Your support means more than you know, and I am forever grateful for all of the committed, kind, and generous individuals who have made YEP, YEP.

Warmly,

Melissa Sawyer, Co-Founder & CEO

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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2023: OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

890

PARTICIPANTS SERVED

BY AGE

18% 12 and younger
10% 13 to 15
15% 16 to 17
30% 18 to 24
27% 25 and older

BY GENDER

47% male
53% female

BY RACE

88% African American
6% Hispanic
5% Caucasian
1% other

BY INCOME

56% under \$10,000
16% \$10,000-\$20,000
13% \$20,000-\$30,000
8% \$30,000-\$40,000
3% \$40,000-\$50,000
4% over \$50,000

HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

69% single female
8% single male
23% two parents

2023: OUR IMPACT

95%

of participants indicated that YEP helped them have more hope for the future

81%

of participants measurably improved their emotional well-being during participation with YEP

92%

of participants indicated that YEP helped them feel better prepared to meet their goals





WHAT WE DO

Through our four programs, YEP offers a comprehensive array of services, all free to participants, that build skills, confidence, and connection.

Every day, we see firsthand the positive impacts that our programs have on the lives of the strong, driven individuals who are engaged with us. From Wendy and Bianca, the mother-daughter duo who earned their high school equivalency diplomas together through **YEP Educates**; to Larry, who rose up from a **YEP Enriches** participant to a Program Assistant; to Kyah, who is learning to overcome challenges with the support of her Youth Advocate in **YEP Mentors**; to Cris, a young business owner who gained skills with **YEP Works**.

Enjoy learning more about our programs, their impact, and the stories of these impressive individuals on the following pages.

54

STUDENTS EARNED
THEIR HISET DIPLOMA,
TOTALING 605 SINCE
YEP EDUCATES BEGAN



74%

OF STUDENTS WHO
TESTED MADE AT LEAST
ONE GRADE LEVEL GAIN



86%

OF STUDENTS IMPROVED
THEIR EMOTIONAL
WELL-BEING

YEP EDUCATES

YEP's adult education program, which served 392 people in 2023, is one of only five programs recognized by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System as an official adult education provider in Orleans Parish. The program expands life opportunities and earning potential by providing a flexible, alternative pathway for students ages 16 and up to build literacy skills, earn their high school equivalency diploma (HiSET), and transition into postsecondary education and advanced training programs. Since its inception in 2006, the program has celebrated 605 graduates. Our new HiSET en Español option allows us to reach even more people. "The program has not only benefited the participants but also our community by providing a bridge to education and economic growth," said Angie Niepagen, a YEP HiSET en Español instructor. "Participants are broadening their social networks and creating new connections within the community."

WHY YEP EDUCATES IS IMPORTANT

In Orleans Parish, people without high school diplomas earn \$9,000 less per year than high school grads, which over a lifetime adds up to a deficit of nearly \$450,000, and the unemployment rate for those who have no high school diploma is 21 percent, nearly double what it is for those with a diploma.

WENDY AND BIANCA: A FAMILY OF GRADUATES

Graduation was doubly sweet for Wendy, 34, and Bianca, 17, in June. The mother and daughter duo earned their HiSETs together. Wendy, the owner of a small construction company and a single mother of three, discovered YEP Educates' HiSET en Español program while looking for classes to improve her math skills and strengthen her business. She was drawn to YEP's supportive approach, with no set classroom schedule and lots of teacher guidance and encouragement.

Bianca was in high school but yearned to start her work life. She joined her mother at YEP Educates because she saw the program as an efficient way to prepare for cosmetology school.

"Everything we've been through as immigrants and a new family in this country is finally paying off," said Bianca.

"I am so proud of my daughter and myself," said Wendy. "I know that our high school diplomas will help us improve our lives."



GROWTH

“I am so proud of my daughter and myself. I know that our high school diplomas will help us improve our lives.” – WENDY, 34



HOME

“When I was a kid, YEP was my home. It was a really nice environment. It felt safe.” – LARRY, 21

YEP ENRICHES

YEP Enriches provides out-of-school time programming for young people ages 7 to 18. Through YEP Enriches, young people receive academic support, physical activity, music, drama and arts instruction, and social-emotional support. YEP Enriches operates after-school, summer camp, and teen camp programs. It also runs an addiction-prevention and mentoring-focused program for young people who have been impacted by substance abuse in their families. During this past year, YEP Enriches operated out of two locations—our Youth Center in Central City, where we have provided programming since 2012, and the New Orleans East Opportunity Center, which we opened in 2022. The expansion to New Orleans East allowed us to increase our free, year-round programming. Across both sites we served 232 YEP Enriches participants last year.

WHY YEP ENRICHES IS IMPORTANT

After-school and summer programs play a critical role in supporting young people’s growth and development. Especially in the wake of COVID-19, high-quality, trauma-informed out-of-school time programming like YEP Enriches provides an important buffer to the urgent challenges young people face, including isolation, mental health issues, and community violence. YEP Enriches programming plays a critical role in transforming out-of-school hours into a time of opportunity for young people.

LARRY: FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPANT TO EMPLOYEE

Larry first came to YEP when he was 12 years old, and he has been coming ever since. Now 21, Larry works as a Program Assistant at YEP Enriches, positively impacting the lives of children who remind him so much of his younger self.

“When I was a kid, YEP was my home. It was a really nice environment. It felt safe,” Larry said.

Larry first followed his cousins and friends from his Central City neighborhood to the YEP Youth Center because he knew they would play basketball together and have fun. But once there, he also discovered homework help, healthy snacks and meals, and adults who never judged, only cared. “YEP is hands-on and open-arms. They have heart,” Larry said.

Now Larry, who was a member of the inaugural YEP Drumline in 2017, helps with drumline practice and other after-school and summer camp activities. He said, “Because of what I learned at YEP, I am able to be a strong leader for youth—both kids at YEP and in the neighborhood.”

100%

OF YOUTH CONNECTED TO A YOUTH ADVOCATE EXHIBITED IMPROVED SELF-ESTEEM



100%

OF YOUTH DEMONSTRATED GROWTH IN AN ARTISTIC CONTENT AREA (DRUMMING, DANCE, OR ART)



232

YOUTH PARTICIPATED IN YEP ENRICHES PROGRAMMING

100%

OF PARTICIPANTS ARE
SATISFIED WITH THE
PROGRAMMING



85%

IMPROVED THEIR
PERFORMANCE AT
SCHOOL AT PROGRAM
COMPLETION



93%

HAD NO FURTHER
JUSTICE SYSTEM
INVOLVEMENT AT
PROGRAM COMPLETION

YEP MENTORS

Our community-based mentoring program for young people ages 8 to 21 began in 2004 and was the first of its kind in the state. It is headquartered in Orleans and St. Charles parishes, but reaches youth in 13 parishes. YEP Mentors participants are referred by the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, local courts, and community partners. YEP Youth Advocates deliver mentoring services and intensive, culturally competent, and non-judgmental case management to these young people, as well as supplemental support to their families. During the year, YEP Mentors served 186 young people.

WHY YEP MENTORS IS IMPORTANT

Youth who regularly meet with a mentor are 52 percent less likely than their peers to skip a day of school. Also children who have a mentor-like relationship with a caring adult are less likely to have externalizing behavior problems (bullying) and internalizing problems (depression). They are more likely to complete tasks they start, remain calm in the face of challenges, show interest in learning new things, volunteer in the community, and be engaged in school.

KYAH: READY FOR THE NEXT STAGE

At 15-years-old, Kyah relishes the limelight. She is a singer and actor, performs in high school plays, and hopes to pursue a career in acting after focusing on performance studies in college. She thanks YEP for making that possible because her future didn't always seem clear.

Kyah began her engagement with YEP Mentors at age 9, after she unexpectedly lost her mother. From the start, YEP staff members were there for her consistently, from providing essential supplies for school to offering conversation and support when she was feeling down. Kyah eventually learned new and constructive ways of working through her feelings.

"YEP taught me how to be aware and conscious of my actions. Without that, there is no way I would make it in acting and singing because I wouldn't be able to express myself or be truthful with myself the way I am now," Kyah said. "Everyone makes mistakes in life, and I've made mistakes, but I feel like I am replenished."



SUPPORT

“YEP taught me how to be aware and conscious of my actions.” – KYAH, 15



SUCCESS

“Because of YEP, I am able to have options.” – CRIS, 20

YEP WORKS

YEP Works is a work-based learning program focused on employment-readiness skills and social-emotional learning for young people ages 16 to 24. Participants earn educational stipends while training and developing a range of skills, including transferable employment skills. Young people can also earn an industry-based credential in customer service through the National Retail Federation Foundation.

YEP Works runs two public-facing retail stores that offer internships and serve as training locations for young people to practice the skills they learn. YEP Bike Works is a full-service bike shop, and YEP Thrift Works accepts donations and sells gently used clothing, accessories, and home goods. During last year, YEP Works served 80 youth.

WHY YEP WORKS IS IMPORTANT

Teens who experienced adolescent disadvantages (a composite measure based on family income, parent education, and receipt of public assistance) were less likely, at 79 percent, to be employed at age 29 than their peers who did not experience such disadvantage (90 percent). Internships, apprenticeships, and job mentoring programs were found to lead to higher-quality jobs, even 10 years after the internship ended. Also, workforce exposure of all kinds for 16-18 years olds can lead to higher-quality jobs in adulthood.

CRIS: CAPITALIZING ON OPPORTUNITIES

Cris was 16 years old when he joined YEP Educates and learned about another helpful program: YEP Works. Soon after earning his HiSET through YEP, Cris joined a cohort of students in YEP Works and interned at YEP Bike Works. There, he practiced his customer service skills while learning the mechanics of bicycles. He was given a decrepit bike to work on and then keep. By the time he completed his program, the bike was a sleek, red masterpiece he was proud to ride. "Building my own bike was a great experience," he said. "Plus, it gave me a whole new sense of autonomy."

Cris went on to enroll at Tulane's School of Professional Advancement and work as a front desk agent at a high-end hotel. He believes that having the YEP Works career-training program on his resume opened doors and helped him to get his first job.

"Because of YEP, I am able to have options," he said. He knows he can get a job, but for now, he isn't looking. He is employing his customer service skills to boost his own business. At 20, Cris owns his own photography, videography, and event-planning company.

83%

OF PARTICIPANTS
DEMONSTRATED GROWTH
IN THEIR EMOTIONAL
WELL-BEING



97%

INCREASED THEIR
HIREABILITY



90%

COMPLETED AN
INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED
NATIONAL RETAIL
FOUNDATION CREDENTIAL

POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

YEP believes that mutually beneficial partnerships help individuals, organizations, and communities. Three of YEP's key partners—The 18th Ward, Educators for Quality Alternatives, and the Children's Bureau of New Orleans—share our vision of a community where all people have access to the opportunities, skills, resources, and relationships they need to actualize their potential, and we are grateful for them.

YEP contracts with **THE 18th WARD** to bring athletic programming to YEP Enriches' participants in Central City and New Orleans East. "I appreciate that YEP has invited us to increase the physical and mental health of young people," said Lowrey Crews, Founder and CEO of The 18th Ward. "We are team-oriented people, and I believe we are only scratching the surface of how this partnership can grow."

YEP opened the **NEW ORLEANS EAST OPPORTUNITY CENTER** with its long-standing partner, Educators for Quality Alternatives (EQA), in 2022. "Our students have benefited from YEP's workforce and education programs and from the official and unofficial mentorship from YEP's dedicated and talented staff," said Elizabeth Ostberg, EQA's CEO.

Through the support of Methodist Health System Foundation, YEP has brought in a full-time clinician from **CHILDREN'S BUREAU OF NEW ORLEANS** to provide mental health services to YEP participants. "We are grateful to partner with YEP because counseling can only take a young person so far; they need other positive supports to foster hope and connection," said Berre M. Burch, Clinical Director at Children's Bureau of New Orleans.

RESOURCES

“YEP has invited us to increase the physical and mental health of young people.”

– LOWREY CREWS
Founder & CEO of The 18th Ward



“Our students have benefited from YEP’s workforce and education programs.”

– ELIZABETH OSTBERG
Educators for Quality Alternatives CEO



“Counseling can only take a young person so far; they need other positive supports to foster hope.”

– BERRE M. BURCH
Clinical Director at Children’s Bureau of New Orleans





OPPORTUNITY

“YEP has given me better opportunities in life to provide for me and my son.” – MARIELL, 22

INVESTMENT & EXPANSION

INVESTED IN NEW ORLEANS EAST

In the summer of 2022, YEP opened the New Orleans East Opportunity Center (NOEOC) in partnership with Educators for Quality Alternatives (EQA). Bringing programming to New Orleans East fulfills YEP's commitment to meeting individuals where they are and reducing barriers to program access. During our first full year of operation at the NOEOC, 146 individuals benefited from YEP's comprehensive programs.

CULTIVATING SUCCESS CLOSE TO HOME

"December 16, 2022, was the date that changed everything for me," Mariell said. That was the day the 22-year-old passed the HiSET examination and earned her high school equivalency diploma through YEP Educates at the New Orleans East Opportunity Center. Mariell was one of twelve people to earn her HiSET during the first year that YEP Educates programming was offered in New Orleans East. Less than a month after graduating from YEP, in January 2023, Mariell had enrolled in an online university and was pursuing a four-year degree in social work.

In the future, Mariell plans to start a nonprofit organization that supports parents of children with special needs. She understands their particular challenges as she is a single mother raising a three-year-old boy with autism.

Before YEP opened its newest site in New Orleans East, Mariell struggled to find affordable childcare for her son and she had to take the bus from her home in New Orleans East to the heart of the city, which took upwards of an hour each way. When YEP launched HiSET instruction at the New Orleans East Opportunity Center, these challenges were eliminated. Mariell could pursue her high school equivalency diploma in her neighborhood and the on-site daycare center welcomed her son.

"I have a son that needs a lot more attention, and a lot more love. I wanted to provide a better life for him than I had growing up," Mariell said. "YEP helped me do that. YEP has given me better opportunities in life to provide for me and my son."



CELEBRATING THE FUTURE **TOGETHER**

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024, OUR 20TH YEAR

2023 FINANCIALS

ASSETS

Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,152,380
Investments	3,206,898
Promises to give	950,220
Reimbursements receivable	471,797
Inventory	46,529
Prepaid expenses and other assets	63,937

TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS **6,891,761**

Assets restricted to investment in property, furniture, and equipment at cost less

accumulated depreciation	1,208,846
Promises to give, net of current maturities	993,333
Operating lease right-of-use asset	36,414

TOTAL ASSETS **\$ 9,130,354**

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$ 190,353
Deferred revenue	753,333
Operating lease liability	<u>36,414</u>
Total current liabilities	980,100
Deferred revenue, net of current	<u>958,333</u>
Total long-term liabilities	958,333

TOTAL LIABILITIES **1,938,433**

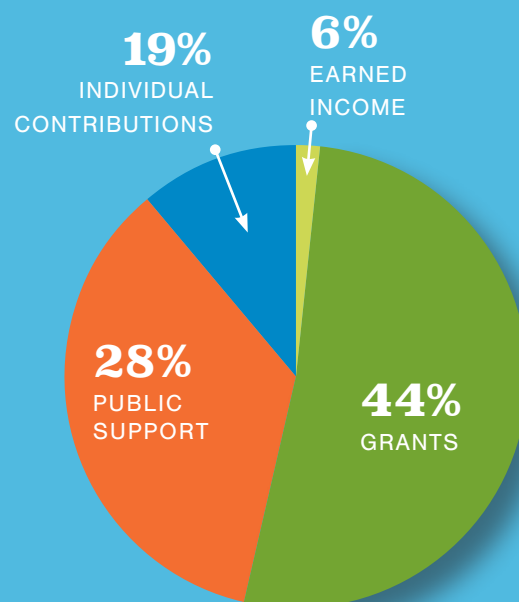
Net Assets

Without donor restrictions	6,996,921
With donor restrictions	195,000

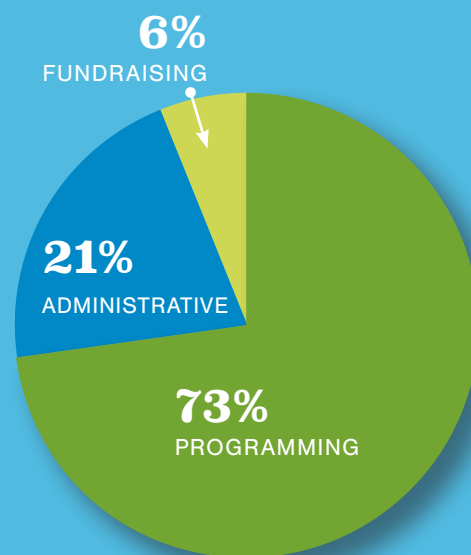
TOTAL NET ASSETS **7,191,921**

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS **\$ 9,130,354**

SOURCES OF INCOME



EXPENSES





DONATE: Our work would not be possible without generous financial support from people like you. Your gift helps us provide the opportunities, skills, resources, and relationships young people need to realize their potential.

SPONSOR: Each year, local businesses, individuals, and foundations provide essential funding and volunteer support for many of our programs and activities. Please consider becoming a sponsor and help us provide young people with the resources they need to thrive.

SHOP: Shop at or donate to YEP Thrift Works and YEP Bike Works. YEP Thrift Works accepts and resells gently used clothing, accessories, and home goods. YEP Bike Works, a full service bike shop, accepts donations of bikes and sells refurbished bikes and new accessories, and performs tune-ups. When you support our shops you also provide hands-on retail experience and work-based learning to our young people. *Find the storefronts at 1626 and 1604 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. in New Orleans.*

For more information, go to youthempowermentproject.org/get-involved

YEP + YOU
EMPOWERING COMMUNITY TOGETHER