



YOUTH
EMPOWERMENT
PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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THE PAST TWO YEARS HAVE BEEN challenging for all of us. And as the pandemic stretched on and Hurricane Ida battered Louisiana, we rightfully shared moments of deep concern for our region, our children, and our future. Yet, through it all, we believed that better days were ahead. We stood together, doing our part to support one another and our communities.

At YEP, as we look to 2022 and beyond, we know that our young people will face new and exacerbated challenges that were brought on by the constant disruptions of the past years. We also know that our young people are strong and determined, and they will embrace opportunities provided to them so they can improve their lives and the lives of others.

For the past 17 years, I have had the honor of leading YEP and seeing firsthand the positive impact the organization has had on the lives of thousands of young people. Since its inception, YEP has remained mission-focused, while expanding programming to better meet the needs of participants. Throughout the years, YEP has overcome obstacles with resolve, ingenuity and flexibility. And today, we

are standing strong – financially solvent and organizationally sound.

I hope that when you read YEP's 2021 Annual Report that you feel a sense of pride and encouragement. It is because of you and your unwavering belief in young people and YEP that our sustained success has been possible. Your investment in YEP helped hundreds of young people learn, grow and succeed last year, despite the myriad of challenges they faced. Your support added value to young people's lives by providing them with access to opportunities, skills, resources and relationships that helped them actualize their potential.

Thank you for being an integral part of YEP's success. We wouldn't be here without you.

With gratitude,



Melissa Sawyer
Co-Founder & CEO





YEP EDUCATES

YEP EDUCATES is an adult education program that provides high school equivalency test preparation and basic instruction to individuals ages 16 and older. The YEP Educates team also helps students enroll in postsecondary education and training programs, and secure financial aid.

In 2021, YEP was approved to offer the official HiSET exam to students onsite at YEP.



YEP ENRICHES

YEP ENRICHES is a year-round program that supports youth, ages 7-17, during out-of-school time. We operate an afterschool program and summer camp, and we also operate Louisiana's only Camp Mariposa, a national substance abuse mentoring and prevention program for youth who have been impacted by substance abuse in their families.

In 2021, YEP created an afterschool tutoring program staffed with volunteers. This program helps address increased educational needs caused by learning disruptions related to COVID-19.



YEP MENTORS

YEP MENTORS is a community-based mentoring program for young people who are referred to YEP by various juvenile justice stakeholders. Participants receive individualized wraparound supportive services provided by YEP Youth Advocates.

In 2021, YEP hired an Education Coordinator who works closely with young people, families, and schools to address the academic needs of participants.



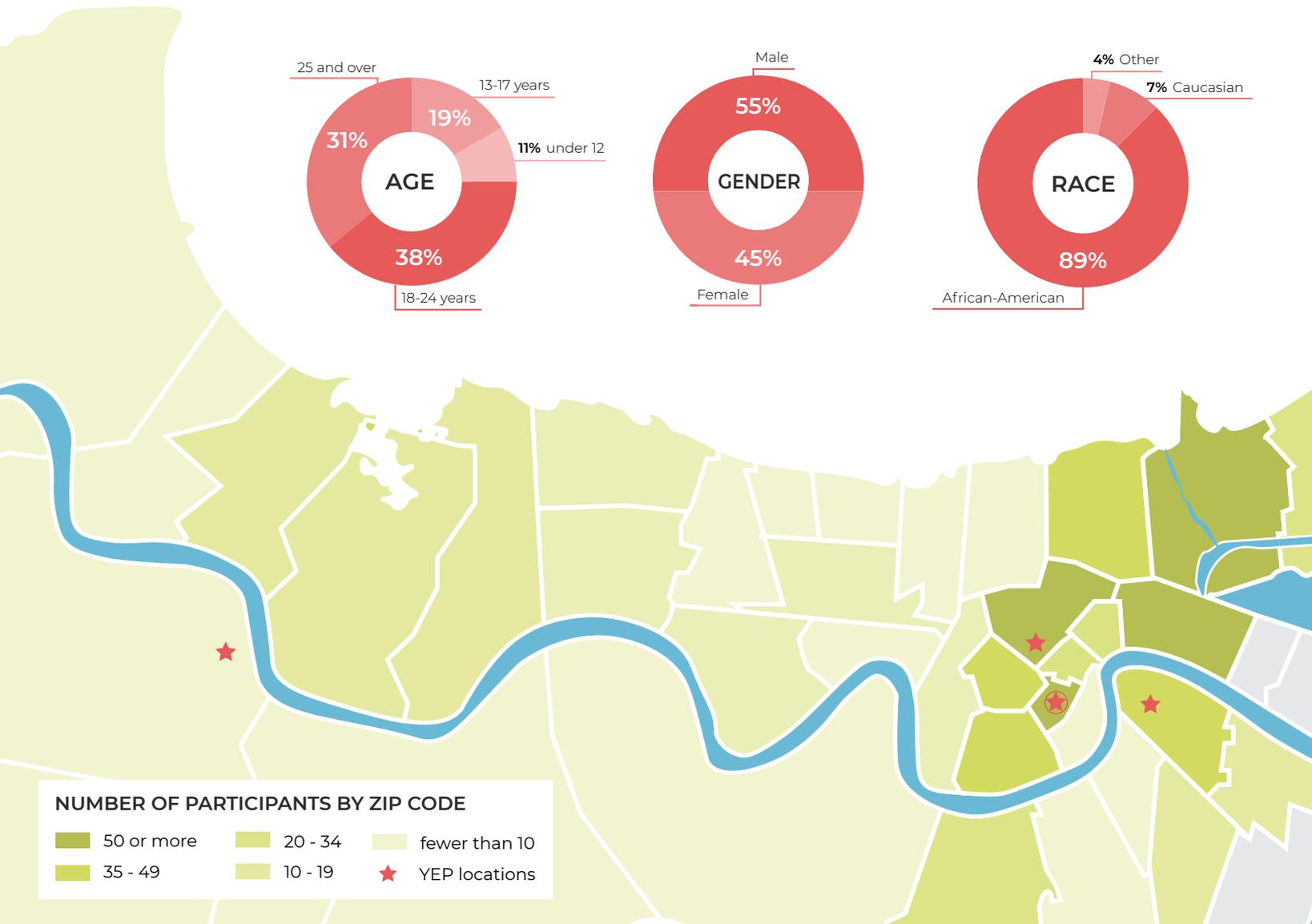
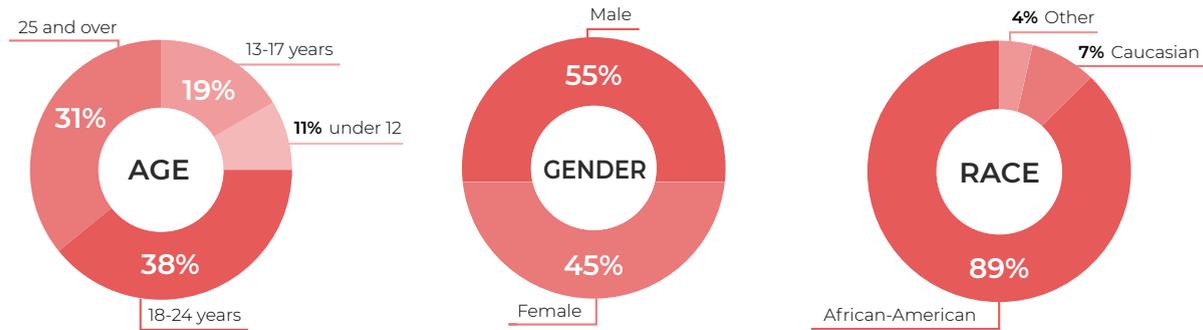
YEP WORKS

YEP WORKS is a work-based learning program for youth, ages 16-24. Young people earn stipends while gaining experience in customer service and social emotional skills. The YEP Works team also helps participants gain employment and enroll in advanced training and postsecondary programs.

In 2021, YEP enhanced our customer service curriculum to offer participants the option to earn a customer service credential through the National Retail Federation.

OUR PARTICIPANTS IN 2021

IN 2021, YEP PROVIDED OVER 700 INDIVIDUALS WITH SKILLS, resources, and supportive services. YEP participants reside in neighborhoods across the Greater New Orleans region. This year, 77% of YEP participants reported an annual household income below \$20,000.



32

YEP participants earned their high school equivalency diploma

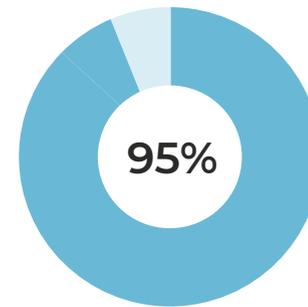
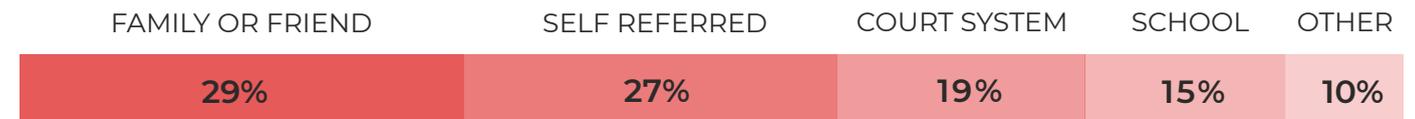
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YEP participants gained formal employment

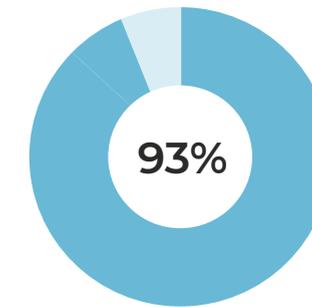
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YEP participants received one-on-one mentoring and case management services

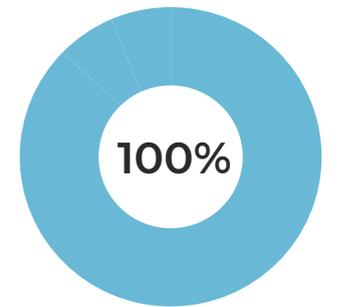
HOW PARTICIPANTS HEAR ABOUT YEP



of YEP participants said the program gave them hope for a positive future



of YEP participants said the program connected them to caring adults



of YEP parents said their family benefitted from the program

WHEN AUGUST J. COLLINS SR. joined the YEP team in 2006, the organization was only two years old. August has seen YEP go through a lot of changes in the past 15 years, and, through it all, he has remained a steady, compassionate, and consistent presence in the lives of hundreds of young people and their families. We asked August to share some of his insights and wisdom about how we can all make a positive impact in the lives of young people.

Q: What do you think young people need in order to be successful?

A: Young people need access to resources. We're living in a world that's unbalanced, and that's just the reality of it. So many young people are growing up in poverty and lacking mental health, educational, and recreational resources. When the family dynamic is not changing, it's our responsibility to try and create some change for young people, or at least expose them to things that might help them break the cycle of poverty.

Q: What is your approach to supporting someone in their time of need?

A: First of all, I show up. That's what's most important. If I can't help them, I may try to refer them to somebody else, or to another agency. Maybe there's someone they need

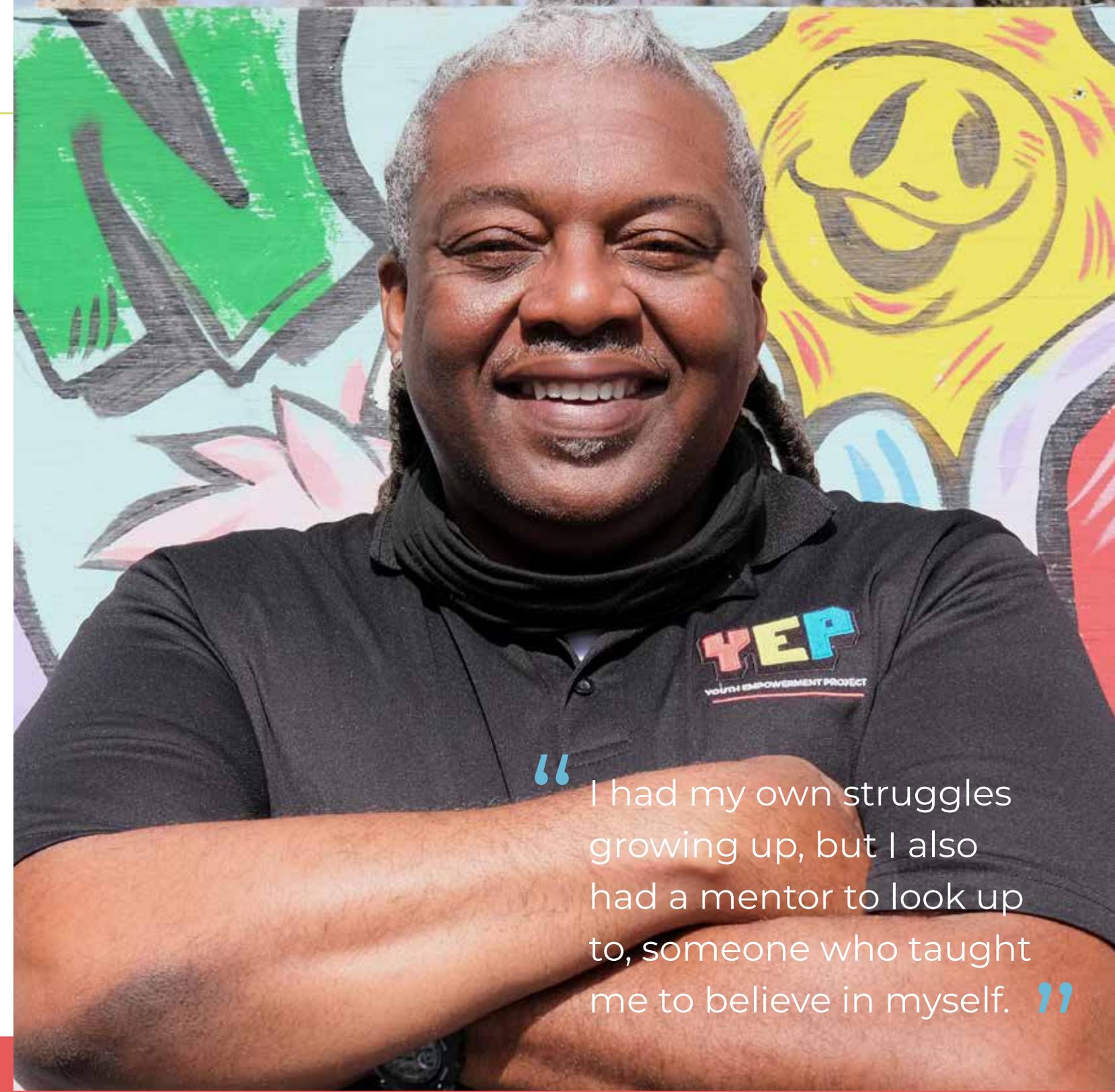
me to reach out to. I just try to listen and be there because in times of need, emotions are high and people are vulnerable, and that's when mistakes are likely to be made.

Q: What is the most important lesson you've learned working at YEP?

A: Over the past 15 years, I've worked with hundreds of young people at risk of entering or already in the juvenile justice system. I've arrived at crime scenes to see some of our participants in handcuffs or even laying on the ground, not getting up. I don't even remember the number of funerals I've been to, but it has been hundreds. But despite all of this, our work has taught me that if young people have the opportunities and support they need, they will make positive choices. They just want to be happy and successful.

Q: How can someone impact a young person in a positive way?

A: At YEP, we don't always know what the solution is, but we listen with empathy and try to understand how we can help. It's important to be involved in a young person's life on a day to day basis. I had my own struggles growing up, but I also had a mentor to look up to, someone who taught me to believe in myself. That's what young people need.



“ I had my own struggles growing up, but I also had a mentor to look up to, someone who taught me to believe in myself. ”

BRIA, 14

BRIA HAS BEEN COMING TO YEP SINCE SHE WAS FIVE years old, almost longer than she can remember. She was at YEP long before we created a drumline and dance team and started taking Camp Mariposa trips. Bria accompanied her cousin one afternoon to our afterschool program, and she had so much fun that she kept coming.

“The people were so fun and respectful, so I kept coming more often,” she says. “Then YEP kept growing, and so did I.”

Over the years, Bria has participated in a variety of YEP programs. As we introduced new opportunities, Bria was eager to participate. “I’m a YEP dancer,” says Bria. “I’ve been doing dance since they first started the program. I do art here, I do my homework here, and I’ve learned a lot about myself.”

There was one activity in particular related to college and careers that really stuck with Bria. “At first, I wasn’t going to think about going to college,” she says. “But then we did this project about what we wanted our career to be. We took pictures out of a magazine and suddenly I knew - I was going to cosmetology school. The projects we do help with a lot of things. YEP will bring you closer to the things you want to do.”

Bria is excited for her next step. She is committed to her dream of being a cosmetologist and has her sights set on going to college after she graduates in a few years. In the meantime, she’ll continue to spend her afternoons and summers at YEP.



“ At first, I wasn’t going to think about going to college. YEP will bring you closer to the things you want to do. ”

JONQUIL, 17

JONQUIL HAS HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR HIMSELF AND HIS future. He started coming to YEP earlier this year in pursuit of new skills to put on his college applications and his resume. With dreams of being an engineer, Jonquil wanted an opportunity to learn bike mechanics in YEP Bike Works, so he enrolled in YEP Works' employment readiness program.

"I really want to be a mechanical engineer," says Jonquil. "I want to work on military tanks. I chose to do YEP because they have a pathway to engineering if you look at the bike shop from a certain perspective."

Jonquil participated in YEP's 10-week customer service certification program, where he gained on-the-job training in YEP Bike Works and YEP Thrift Works in addition to having an opportunity to learn about bicycle mechanics.

The program also helped Jonquil learn more about personal responsibility. Prior to YEP, he was having trouble staying in school due to family challenges, but that quickly changed once he enrolled in YEP Works. "I was kind of getting in trouble at school," he says. "I would go to school for attendance and then ditch out the rest of the day. But school and YEP are kind of like the same thing, so it helped me put my priorities back on track."

Before the program even ended, Jonquil was hired as a cook, where he now works part-time. He is continuing to work with YEP to apply to colleges and become an engineer.



“ I was kind of getting in trouble at school, but YEP helped me put my priorities back on track. ”

“ I’ve been coming to YEP every day of every year since I was 10 years old. It really is like a second home. ”



2021

FOR THE PAST THIRTEEN YEARS, YEP has been a second home to Jay. After relocating to Central City following Hurricane Katrina, Jay was looking for a place to play sports and make new friends. Then he found YEP.

“It’s one of those places where you can be yourself,” says Jay, now 23 years old. “Everyone feels welcome when they walk through YEP’s doors. I’ve been coming here almost every day of every year since I was 10. If YEP was open, I was always here. On the weekends, if we had extra field trips, I was here. It really is like a second home.”



2017

After graduating high school, Jay accepted employment with YEP and became our first basketball coach, helping to start the program he wanted to have at YEP when he was growing up. Jay loves having the opportunity to impact the lives of young people the way YEP staff helped him.

“I like giving back to my neighborhood,” Jay says. “I know where half of these kids come from, and I connect with them. They look at me as a big brother, and I look at them like my little siblings. A lot of young people just don’t have that.”



2019



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR CLASS OF 2021 GRADUATES

ATTAINING A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IS A CRITICAL MILESTONE in a person's life. It can lead to better jobs, higher wages, and more confidence to learn new skills. At YEP, we believe it's never too late to return to school and achieve this goal. YEP supports hundreds of students each year as they work to earn their high school equivalency diploma. This past year, 32 students earned their diplomas through YEP, despite all the continued challenges posed by COVID-19.

Joshua Allen
Jerald Anderson
Marcus Bufford
Gordon Buhler
Christopher Cancienne
I'Keem Davis
Phil Dees
Aaqil Dennis

Ashley Flot
Edward Freid
Angel Ganes
Demi Guidry
Alyssa Henderson
Thomas Hyde
Destiny Jones
Anastaja Jones

Caleb Keller
Kalyb Lemoine
Remi McCarter
Rhys McLellan
Brice Petite
Ishmael Ra'oof
Maryam Rising-Walker
Lio Schaefer

Jordan Strawhorn
Shebria Turner
Gianna Tutrone
Karla Valdez
Dennis Warren
Savoy Wiggins
Joel Winderweedle
Elijah Young

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash & Cash equivalents	\$4,783,067
Cash & Cash equivalents restricted	\$196,488
Investments	\$62,413
Promises to give, net	\$512,305
Reimbursements receivable	\$288,216
Inventory	\$42,957
Prepaid expenses and other assets	\$43,695

TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS **\$5,929,141**

Assets restricted to investment in property, furniture, and equipment cost less accumulated depreciation	\$1,270,860
Promises to give, net	\$296,618
Operating lease right-of-use asset	\$93,080

TOTAL ASSETS **\$7,589,699**

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts payable	\$80,497
Deferred revenue	\$615,000
Operating lease liability	\$36,414
Mortgage payable	\$175,799

TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES **\$907,710**

Operating lease liability, net of current maturities	\$56,666
SBA CARES Loan	\$560,447

TOTAL LONG-TERM LIABILITIES **\$617,113**

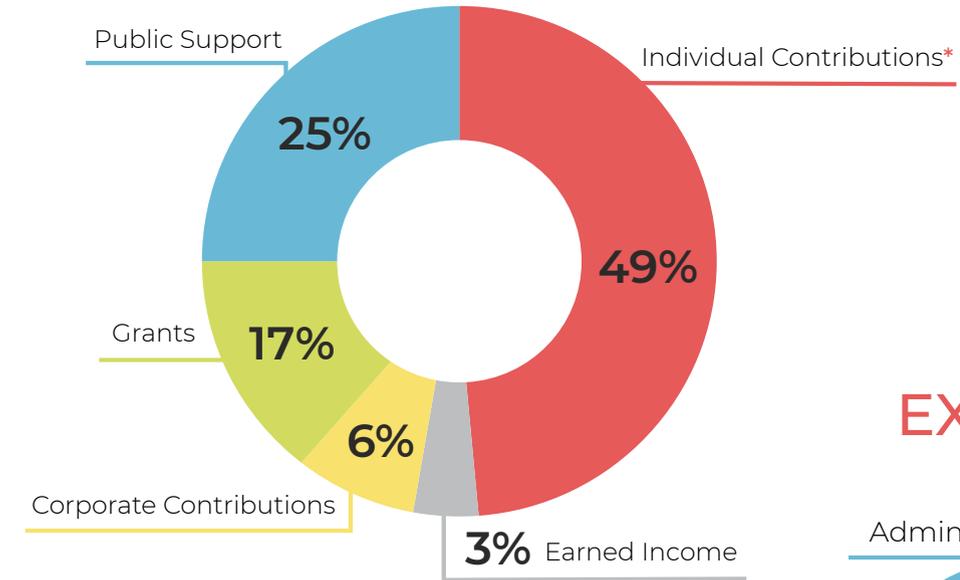
TOTAL LIABILITIES **\$1,524,823**

Without donor restrictions	\$6,020,071
With donor restrictions	\$44,805

TOTAL NET ASSETS **\$6,064,876**

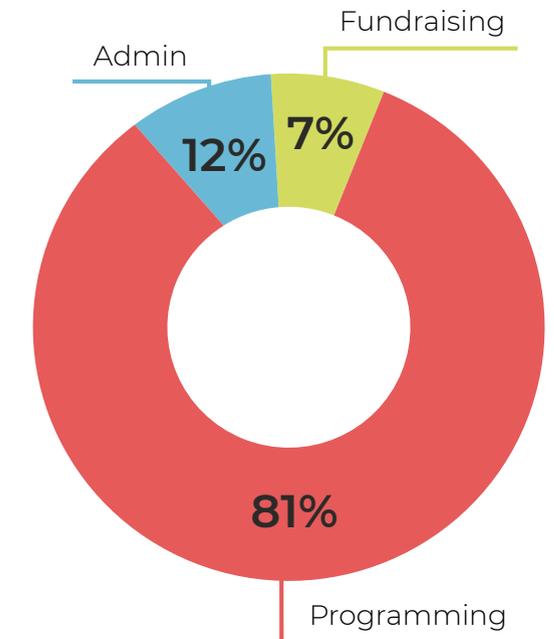
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS **\$7,589,699**

SOURCES OF INCOME



* One of YEP's five-year strategic plan goals was to establish a six month cash reserve, which is regarded as a best practice for nonprofits. Thanks to the incredible generosity of Mackenzie Scott, YEP received a one-time, unrestricted grant in 2021 that allowed us to achieve this goal. We are beyond grateful for this gift and how it positions the organization for a strong and solvent future.

EXPENSES



GET INVOLVED



Pictured: YEP staff and Advantage Capital volunteers, who provided ingredients for YEP's 2021 holiday food baskets

DONATE

Our work would not be possible without your generous financial support. By donating to YEP, you become a critical partner in our mission to empower young people to improve their lives and the lives of others.

SPONSOR

Each year, local businesses, individuals, and foundations provide funding and volunteer support for many of the events we host for young people and families. We hope you'll consider sponsoring one of our special events in 2022.

VOLUNTEER

We are excited to move forward from COVID-19 and are welcoming volunteers back to YEP! If you are interested in volunteering with us, visit our website to sign up today.

SHOP

YEP operates a full-service bike shop and thrift store on Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. that provide young people with work-based learning opportunities. Come shop with us or donate your gently used items.

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Photo by Akasha Rabut