



YOUTH  
EMPOWERMENT  
PROJECT

---

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



**2020 Board of Directors**

- Chris LeBato (*President*)
- Lynne Burkart, CPA (*Co-Vice President*)
- Suzanne Rusovich (*Co-Vice President*)
- Helene Cerise, CPA (*Treasurer*)
- Laura Politz (*Secretary*)
- Ben Allen
- Elizabeth A. Boh
- Chef Scot Craig
- Jay C. Dumas, D.M.D.
- Elijah Feinstein
- Amanda Hammack
- Judge Calvin Johnson (Ret.)
- Franchesca B. Lorio
- Kenneth Polite, Esq.
- Leroy Prout
- Elicia Broussard Sheridan
- Jackie Weill

LETTER FROM THE CEO — 2-3

OUR WORK — 4-5

OUR PARTICIPANTS — 6-7

YOUTH STORIES — 8-11

THE CLASS OF 2020 — 12-13

FINANCIALS — 14-15

GET INVOLVED — 16-17

## DEAR FRIEND OF YEP

Let me first say thank you. Thank you for sticking with us over the past year as we adjusted our programming to keep participants and staff safe. Thank you for ensuring we had the resources to adapt to an uncertain present and prepare for an even less certain future. And thank you for making it possible for us to continue, without interruption, helping young people to improve their lives and the lives of others.

During this past year, I have consistently sought guidance from YEP's core values. And while all of our values have been central to the many decisions that we have made over the past twelve months, the one that I have relied most heavily on is kindness. At its core, YEP is an organization based on the principle of caring for one another. And this past year, more than perhaps any other in our 17-year history, has required us to be patient, thoughtful, and kind.

The strength of our work is grounded in our ability to build strong relationships with young people and their families, and this requires us to prioritize the mental, physical, and emotional health of our staff. Just as I am thankful to all of you who have made it possible for YEP to continue to fulfill our mission during this difficult year, I am beyond grateful for YEP's staff, who have demonstrated remarkable dedication, care, and commitment to YEP's mission, despite the personal challenges and hardships that they have faced.

As we look to brighter days ahead, we must remember that just as the issues that affect young people in our city and state predate the pandemic, they will also persist after the pandemic is over. These challenges will only be solved if we continue to work together with the shared determination to create opportunities for all to thrive.

With gratitude,



Melissa Sawyer  
Co-Founder & CEO



## OUR WORK



### YEP MENTORS

YEP Mentors is a community-based mentoring program for young people who are referred to YEP by the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice or by our juvenile justice partners in Orleans, St. Charles, and St. John the Baptist Parish. YEP youth advocates provide participants with supportive services, individualized goal setting, and case management.

In 2020, we modified our programs to include virtual activities and deliveries of supplies, such as food and household items.

### YEP WORKS

YEP Works is a work-based learning program for youth, ages 16 to 24. Young people earn stipends while gaining skills in customer service and work with YEP to seek employment, postsecondary education, and advanced training programs.

In 2020, we developed a new approach to work-based learning. We expanded our program to provide 8 weeks of customer service and social emotional training followed by a 4-month internship with YEP's communications team, bike shop, or thrift store.

### YEP EDUCATES

YEP Educates is an adult education program that provides high school equivalency test preparation and adult basic instruction to individuals ages 16 and up. Graduates work with YEP to enroll in postsecondary education and secure financial aid.

In 2020, we introduced a mix of online and in-person learning, donors provided Chromebooks and hotspots to students in need, and we became an official remote HiSET testing site.

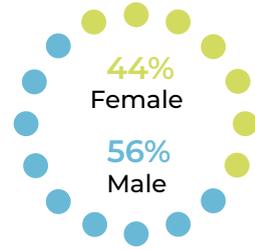
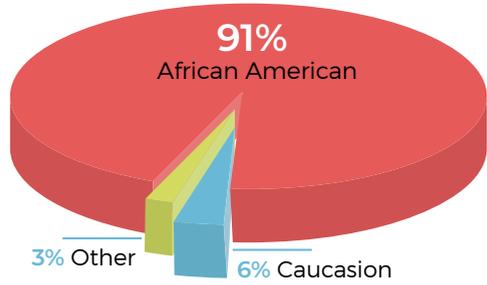
### YEP ENRICHES

YEP Enriches is an out-of-school time enrichment program for young people, ages 7 to 18. YEP's Afterschool Program and Summer Camp offer a range of activities, including a basketball team, drumline and dance team, and homework help. YEP also runs Camp Mariposa, a national addiction prevention and mentoring program for youth who have been impacted by substance abuse in their families.

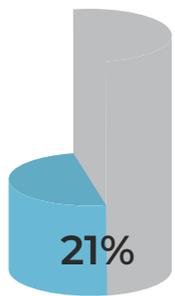
In 2020, we held an all virtual summer camp for children and teens, and added one-on-one mentorship and supportive services to our enrichment programming.



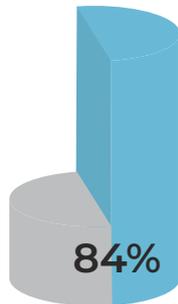
# YEP PARTICIPANTS



## How did participants hear about YEP?



of YEP participants were previously involved in the justice system



of YEP participants live below the poverty line



of YEP participants live with a single parent





## JOEL, 20

*YEP Educates*

“ I didn’t feel like I was learning anything in school. I started with YEP around January or February of 2020. I was taking education classes, and then coronavirus took it all over. It was months before I had the chance to take the HiSET test online. After YEP said I could take the test online with them, I was so excited. ”

Joel passed the HiSET in July 2020 and is now enrolled at Delgado Community College as a Pre-Biotech major.

## KEY’I, 12

*YEP Enriches*

“ I was with my auntie one day, and she told us she found this cool camp. Then, Ms. Shana (Director of YEP Enriches) came and told us all about Camp Mariposa. The thing I love about Camp Mariposa is that if you have a problem, you don’t have to be scared to tell it to someone. When I’m at camp, I love to sing and I love to dance. ”

Key’I performed in the virtual celebration of the 2020 Presidential Inauguration with the YEP Drumline & Dance Team.

## DONTAYE, 19

*YEP Works*

“ I didn’t know anything about bikes, but I like hands on things. I’m interested in car mechanics, so I started with bikes to get familiar with the tools. When I first started as a student in Bike Works, I was only worrying about money, but over the years, my mindset has changed. I’m not worrying about money anymore. Now, I’m worrying about my career. ”

Dontaye is now a part-time mechanic with YEP Bike Works and trains new students in bike repair.

## KYAH, 13

*YEP Mentors*

“ At YEP, I’ve learned how to be responsible and look at my surroundings, and how to be a leader instead of a follower. At the end of the day, you can’t worry about what everyone else does. That’s what YEP is all about – helping people think about the future for themselves. ”

Kyah loves to read and write, and she recently won a student author’s competition for one of her poems.



## SHANTELL

YEP Educates

**S**hantell learned about YEP from another YEP student. After overcoming obstacles that made earning her high school diploma difficult, she decided to dedicate herself to her education and enroll in YEP Educates. Since then, she has persevered through additional life challenges to regularly attend classes and stay on track. And now, she has some additional motivation.

When the pandemic began, two of Shantell's children began falling behind in virtual school. She didn't want them to get held back, so to keep them motivated, Shantell enrolled them at YEP too. "I thought this was the best choice for them - this school right here." Now, the three of them attend classes together, and Shantell models every day what perseverance and commitment to education looks like. With her sons by her side, Shantell passed the first section of the HiSET exam after 7 years of working towards her diploma. She says, "For my sons to see me really work hard, that's going to push them to a better future, a brighter future."

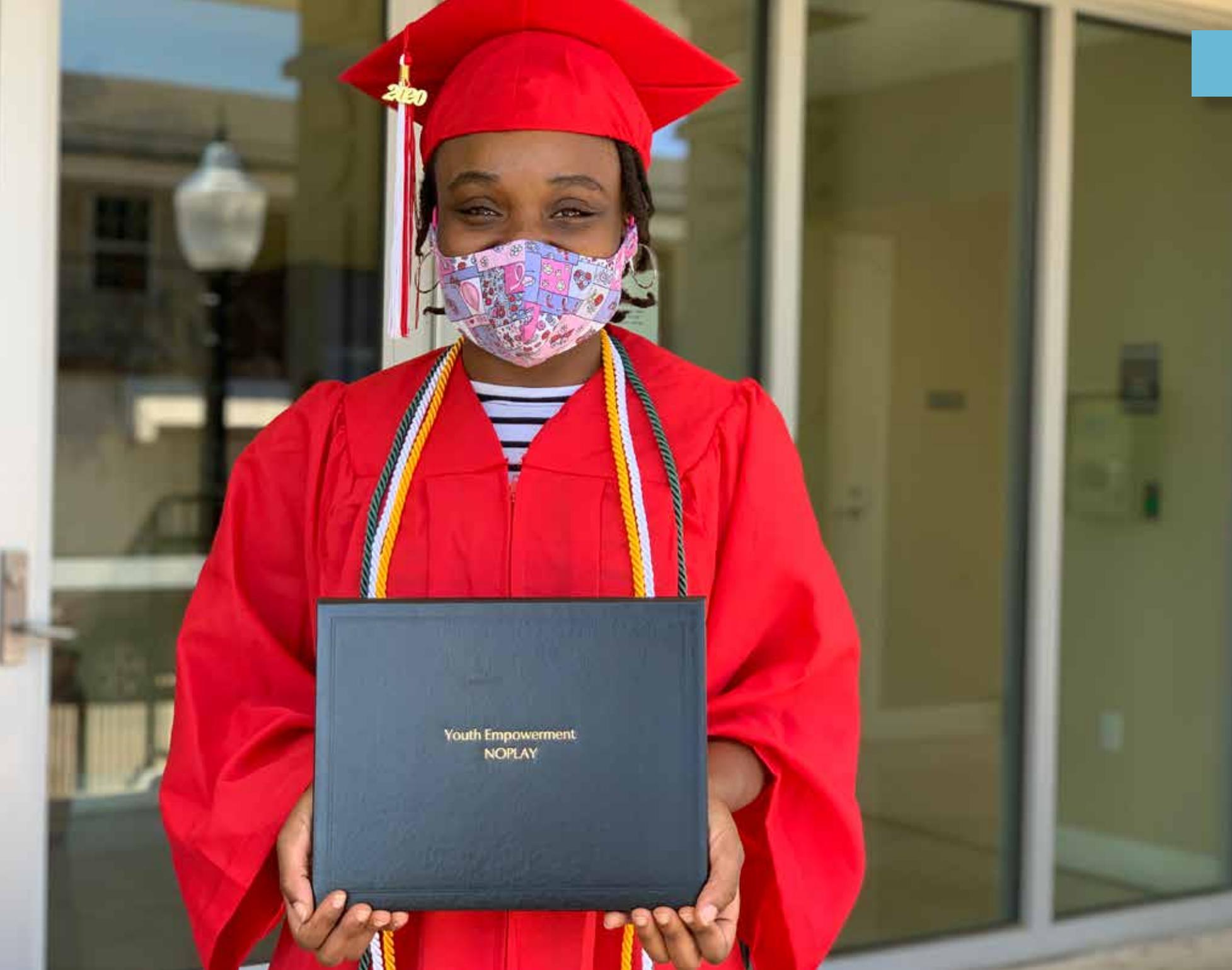


## DAVID

YEP Works

**D**avid enrolled in YEP's employment readiness training program as a student in 2016. He first received customer service training in Thrift Works, where he learned about inventory, working with customers, and operating a point of sale system. After completing the Thrift Works training, David decided he wanted to explore YEP's graphic design program, where he learned how to use Adobe programs and work on real client projects. Upon his graduation from the design program, David was offered formal employment as the YEP Thrift Works Assistant Manager and has become an integral part of our team.

"When I was in high school, I didn't have any sort of goal in mind. My only goal then would've been to get a diploma, but then what comes next after that? I feel like YEP has given me a lot of confidence in myself. I've managed to finally get calm and collected and not have to worry so much, so I can grow as a person, learn more, and try to do as much as possible with the time I have."



## YEP EDUCATES CLASS OF 2020

**T**hroughout the pandemic, our students' dedication, flexibility, and patience were tested time and time again. When everything shut down last spring, they were forced to continue their classes online. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we provided hotspots, Chromebooks, and the support services students required to make this transition.

Our students persevered over the past year, overcoming challenges with technology, childcare, employment interruptions, and medical concerns to finish high school and begin a new chapter of their lives.

And while we may not have been able to see our graduates walk across the stage this year, we still delivered celebratory packages to each of our students and hosted a virtual graduation with a guest appearance from our friend, Cam Jordan of the New Orleans Saints!

### Congratulations to the YEP Educates Class of 2020!

Arnika J. Arbuthnot

Brent Blackmon

Perry Cowart

Khistina Davis

Tyranika Dixon

Rachel D. Floyd

Patricia Green

Cristopher Guidry

Delester Henderson

Tatiana Jackson

Keenan Jordan

Bianca Knight

Kentrell McDonald

Elizabeth McSpadden

Alanna Merle

John Nazareth

Lakeisha Neitzel

Caira Paul

David Porretto

Derrion Robinson

Tyrell Washington

## ASSETS

### CURRENT ASSETS

Cash & Cash equivalents	\$1,030,829
Cash & Cash equivalents restricted	\$135,643
Investments	\$49,801
Promises to give, net	\$610,760
Reimbursements receivable	\$187,203
Inventory	\$53,340
Prepaid expenses and other assets	\$78,117

**TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS** **\$2,145,693**

Assets restricted to investment in property, furniture, and equipment cost less accumulated depreciation	\$1,283,584
Promises to give, net	\$186,702
Operating lease right-of-use asset	\$120,783

**TOTAL ASSETS** **\$3,736,762**

## LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

### CURRENT ASSETS

Accounts payable	\$24,913
Deferred revenue	\$270,000
Operating lease liability	\$39,076
Mortgage payable	\$308,763

**TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES** **\$642,752**

Operating lease liability, net of current maturities	\$81,707
SBA CARES Loan	\$560,447
Total long-term liabilities	\$642,154

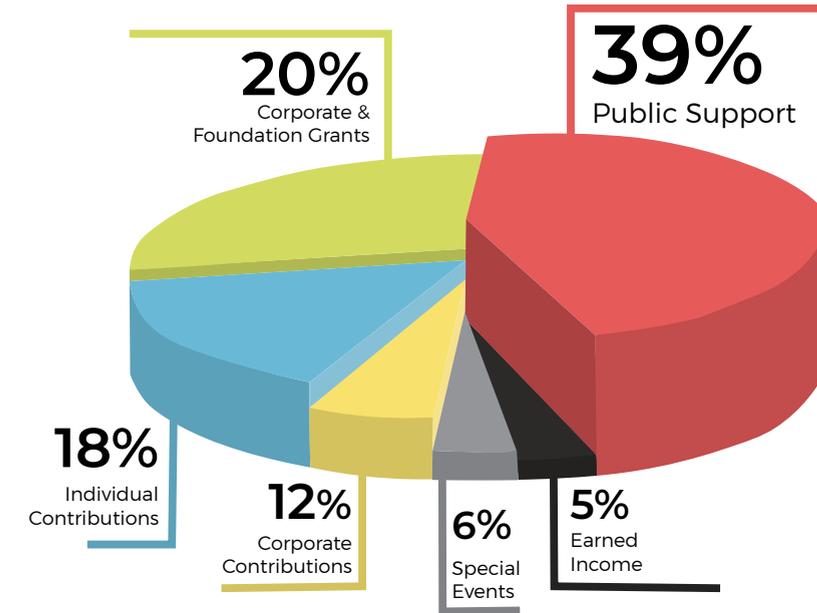
**TOTAL LIABILITIES** **\$1,284,906**

Without donor restrictions	\$2,337,152
With donor restrictions	\$114,704

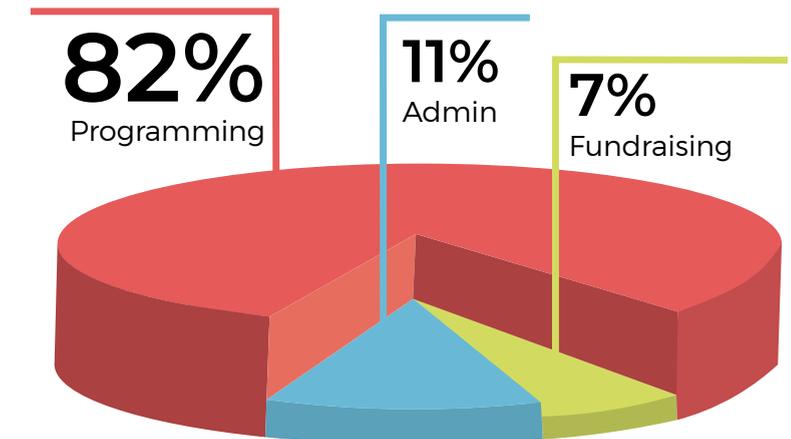
**TOTAL NET ASSETS** **\$2,451,856**

**TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS** **\$3,736,762**

## SOURCES OF REVENUE



## EXPENSES



# EMPOWER A GENERATION



## 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 for some of our most essential community services and events. We hope you'll consider partnering with us in 2021.

## VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are an important part of YEP, from career exploration to events and beautification projects. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are not accepting volunteers at this time, but check back with us soon.

## SHOP

YEP operates a full-service bike shop and a thrift store located on Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. These shops provide young people with work-based learning opportunities while also offering essential retail services to the community.



1600 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. | New Orleans, LA 70113 | (504) 522-1316

[www.youthempowermentproject.org](http://www.youthempowermentproject.org) | Follow us: @yepnola