



YEP VOICES

FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER



EMPOWERING A GENERATION



GET TO KNOW YEP YOUNG PEOPLE



KAYLA, 17
YEP EDUCATES

KAYLA graduated with the YEP Class of 2022, a week after her 17th birthday. Focused on becoming a nurse, Kayla wanted to get a jump start on her college education. She is taking her prerequisites at Delgado Community College with plans of transitioning to the Charity School of Nursing. She is still receiving support from YEP whenever she needs it.



FEL'JAHNAE, 17
YEP ENRICHES

FEL'JAHNAE has been with YEP Enriches since she was 9 years old. She has spent most afternoons and summers at the YEP Youth Center for almost a decade. For the past two years, Fel'Jahnae has worked as a Summer Camp Counselor and has enjoyed having the opportunity to mentor younger youth. She now wants to work with young people after she graduates in May.



SALIAS, 11
YEP MENTORS

SALIAS started coming to YEP last year to get some additional support at school and at home. Salias likes YEP for the experiences. Through one-on-one and group activities, he has been exposed to new foods, places, and hobbies that have helped him step out of his comfort zone. For example, this summer, he learned he is passionate about art and politics.



ROMEO, 16
YEP WORKS

ROMEO has been a regular YEP participant since 2012. Growing up, he participated in YEP's afterschool program and summer camp, alongside his siblings. As soon as he turned 16, he enrolled in YEP Works to build his resume and gain experience. He completed YEP's employment readiness training this summer and is now back in school for his junior year.



YEP'S NEW MOVE

EXPANDING TO NEW ORLEANS EAST

SINCE YEP'S INCEPTION IN 2004, WE HAVE WORKED to develop programs in response to unmet community needs. We have always believed that it's important to not only provide essential services to young people, but it is also our responsibility to bring those services to where young people and families can easily access them. This was true when we decided to expand to St. Charles Parish in 2013, and it was true when we opened YEP Educates in Algiers. We are excited to announce that YEP now offers programs in five geographic locations - Central City, Mid City, Algiers, St. Charles Parish, and as of August 2022, New Orleans East.

YEP's expansion to the New Orleans East Opportunity Center comes at a pivotal time in our city. We believe that by expanding and scaling our programs to provide more young people with the opportunities they need, we can have an even greater impact on addressing the challenges in our community.

In partnership with EQA Schools, the multi-service center will offer high quality education, mentoring, employment readiness, and enrichment programs to young people in New Orleans East neighborhoods, as well as a community pantry, early childhood center, gymnasium, and wellness clinic.

PROGRAMS OFFERED IN NEW ORLEANS EAST:

YEP ENRICHES is offering an afterschool program in New Orleans East this fall, in addition to our Central City location. Participants now have access to a large field and gymnasium for enrichment activities.

YEP EDUCATES has been offering high school equivalency instruction in English and Spanish since August. Class sizes are steadily increasing, with over 30 students now enrolled in New Orleans East.

YEP MENTORS has been hosting weekly groups with participants who reside in New Orleans East. For the past 8 weeks, mentees have been learning the basics of cooking and nutrition.

YEP WORKS will begin offering a 10-week employment readiness training, in addition to what is offered in Central City, in early 2023.



WHY THE EAST?



Over 10,000 youth currently reside in New Orleans East neighborhoods, such as Little Woods, Plum Orchards, West Lake Forest, and Village de l'Est.



In order to access many educational and economic opportunities, New Orleans East residents must commute **90 minutes or more** via public transit.

LEARNING CLOSER TO HOME

DEVANAIR'S PATH TO GRADUATION

Devanair is an 18-year-old from New Orleans East. He likes to watch movies, listen to music, and draw. He has dreams of becoming a barber or a music producer, or some other kind of artist. Whatever he does, he wants to help change the lives of others in a positive way.

Prior to the pandemic, Devanair struggled with school. He had trouble staying focused during class and didn't always get the support he needed to be successful.

When virtual learning was introduced in 2020, earning a high school diploma became even more difficult for Devanair. "Virtual learning was not for me," he says. "It was way too relaxed. I felt like I wasn't really learning. I was just trying to get through class." He knew he had to make a change.

With the support of his parents, Devanair enrolled in YEP Educates and began attending classes in Mid City. For the past four months, he has been focused on improving in reading, science, social studies, and math, and he has been touring college campuses and barber schools. He says, "Everything feels more real. It's way better than just reading off of a screen or paper." It has made him feel excited about school again. But getting to and from Mid City from New Orleans East each day hasn't always been easy for Devanair's parents, who he relies on for transportation.

When Devanair found out that YEP was expanding to New Orleans East, he was relieved and excited. "My parents don't have to go way downtown anymore," he says. "It's a lot easier to get picked up and dropped off. I can just come in and focus on what I need to do."



GOOD NEWS

WHAT WE'RE CELEBRATING THIS FALL



SUPPORT FOR NEW ORLEANS EAST

Since announcing YEP's expansion to New Orleans East, we have been grateful for the community's support of this new phase. We are so thankful to have generous supporters like Entergy and Rusovich Family Foundation, who have already made significant investments in the New Orleans East Opportunity Center.



SLEEPING UNDER THE STARS AGAIN

YEP spent the weekend at Camp Mariposa last month on our first overnight adventure since January 2020. We've been on several mentoring and addiction prevention day trips the past two years, but we're excited to get back to hosting six weekend getaways a year. Our next trip is only a few weeks away.



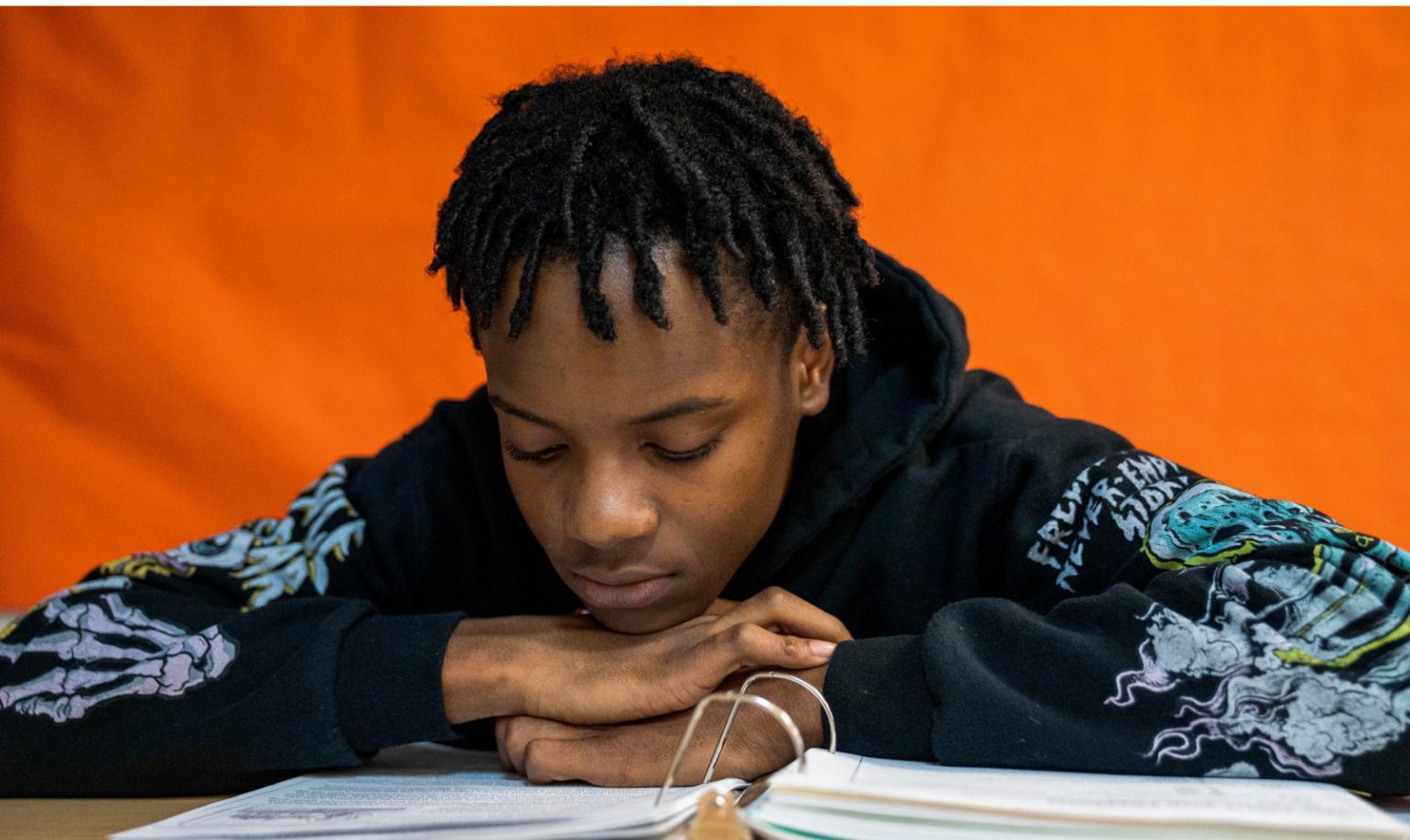
CELEBRATING OUR CEO

This month, YEP is celebrating Melissa Sawyer, YEP's Co-Founder & CEO, for being selected as an Angel Award recipient through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana. In addition to this recognition, BCBSLA is also pledging \$25,000 in support of YEP's young people.



GROWING OUR TEAM

As we continue to kick off additional programming in New Orleans East, we will be seeking several passionate individuals dedicated to youth development to join our team. Visit the Careers section of the YEP website to see what is available and share with qualified candidates.





YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

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