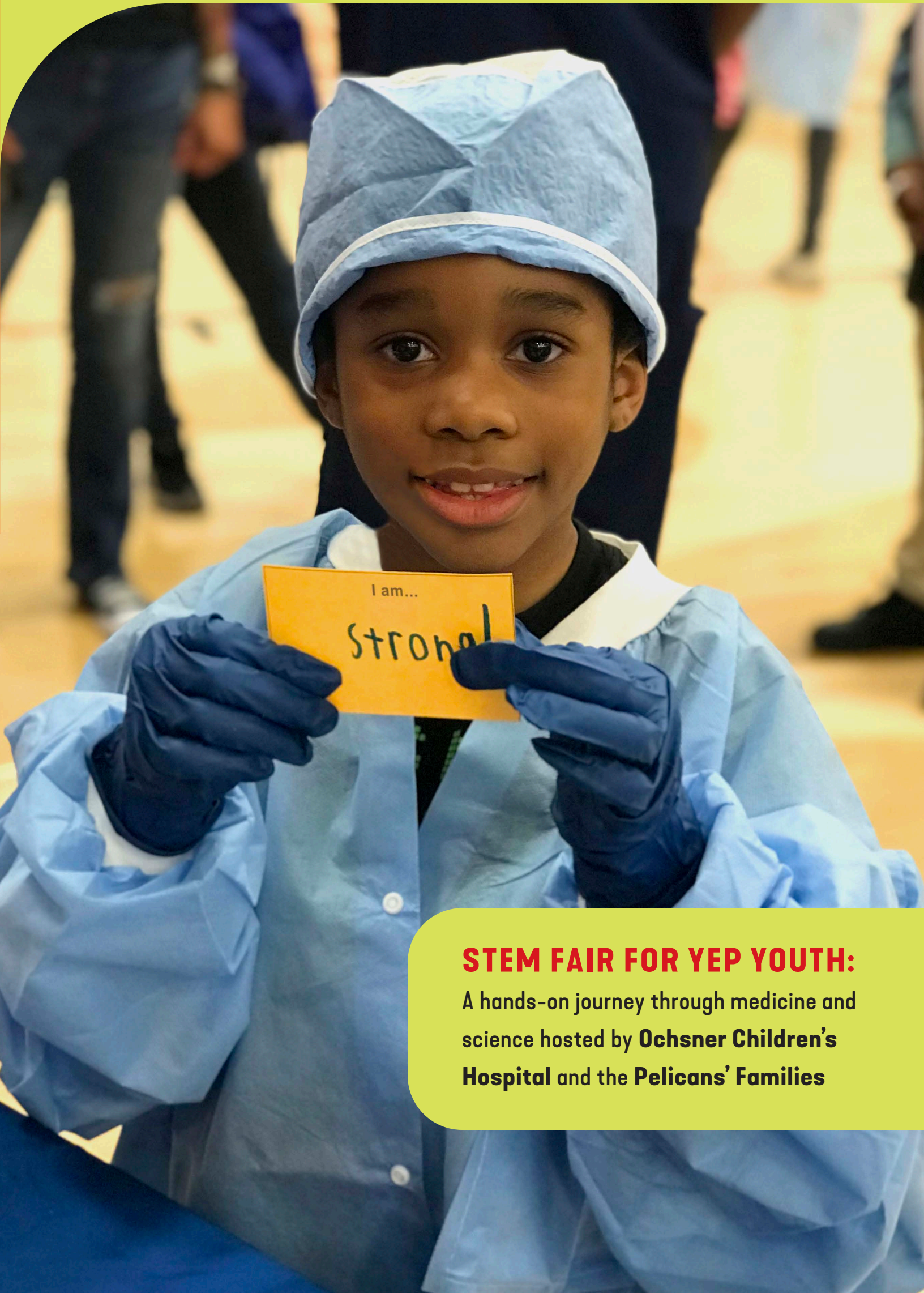


YEP CONNECTS

CONNECTING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT + OUR COMMUNITY



STEM FAIR FOR YEP YOUTH:

A hands-on journey through medicine and science hosted by **Ochsner Children's Hospital** and the **Pelicans' Families**



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

This year marks a milestone for the Youth Empowerment Project as we celebrate 20 years of impactful service. We are thrilled to announce a grand celebration scheduled for September 27, and we extend a warm invitation for you to join us. Beyond the festivities, the year has already proved meaningful, memorable, and full of opportunities for our young people – the heart of our mission.

Recently, I had the pleasure of attending a STEM Fair for YEP youth hosted by The Gayle and Tom Benson Ochsner Children’s Hospital and New Orleans Pelicans’ families. There I witnessed firsthand the excitement it ignited among our young participants.

At YEP Educates, dedicated individuals are diligently pursuing their high school equivalency diplomas. This year’s graduating class, which will be honored at a celebration in June, is poised to be one of our largest. Across all four YEP programs, participants are experiencing the transformative power of gaining new skills and building brighter futures.

I am profoundly grateful for our collective achievements and the unwavering support from many organizations and individuals that enables us to empower young people and their families. **Through this newsletter, I am delighted to highlight our recent milestones and introduce you to inspiring YEP youth.** We hope you find it enriching, and we look forward to celebrating YEP’s 20 years with you on September 27th and all year long.

Warmly,

Melissa Sawyer, Co-Founder & CEO

POSITIVELY YEP

WHAT WE’RE CELEBRATING THIS SPRING

Meeting Community Needs with ELL Instruction



YEP Educates has expanded its offerings to include English Language Learner (ELL) instruction, a program designed to enhance participants’ English language skills, community engagement, and economic opportunity. Though just a few months old, the evening class hosts nearly 30 students.

The ELL class grew from YEP Educates’ HiSET en Español adult learning program, which offers Spanish speakers a pathway to a high school equivalency diploma. Both serve the growing Latino population in the Greater New Orleans area. “Our ELL class is all about offering the community a warm, welcoming place to learn and practice English. Classes are free and open to all language backgrounds, and we work with all levels of proficiency,” said Sarah Hunko, Director of YEP Educates. “They’re led by our wonderful and experienced instructor, Kimmie, who has created a fun and engaging learning environment.”

Increasing One-on-One Support Services



YEP Mentors, YEP’s community-based mentoring program, has increased its reach and impact, providing more individuals with one-on-one mentoring and extending the time they can engage with the program. Our trained Youth Advocates meet several times a week with participants, providing

vital support for their personal and academic growth. Weekend getaways have fostered opportunities to gain skills, explore nature, and continue building a caring community of adults and peers. This expanded work in St. Charles Parish is made possible by the generous support of Valero’s Benefit for Children.

YEP Shines at Mardi Gras



YEP Enriches’ dance team and drumline showcased what determination, teamwork, and months of training can achieve during two Mardi Gras parades. Participants learned drum cadences and dance routines, gained stamina through fitness exercises, and built a talented

team. The focused work culminated in memorable performances in the Krewe of King Arthur and the Krewe of Iris parades. We are grateful to The Gayle and Tom Benson Ochsner Children’s Hospital, presenting sponsor of YEP Enriches; the Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust, sponsor of YEP Enriches Central City Afterschool Program; and the many staff members and volunteers whose support made Mardi Gras a resounding success.



STEM FAIR FOR YEP YOUTH PAIRED FUN AND LEARNING

A HANDS-ON JOURNEY THROUGH MEDICINE AND SCIENCE

At the Ochsner Sports Performance Center, the training facility for the New Orleans Pelicans and the New Orleans Saints, YEP young people experienced a hands-on journey through medicine and science. They donned high-tech imaging goggles to delve into the chambers of a human heart, played a guessing game about hidden sugar levels in foods, and learned CPR techniques while competing in ambulance races displayed on a screen, with cartoon ambulances powered by pumps on the chests of CPR mannequins.

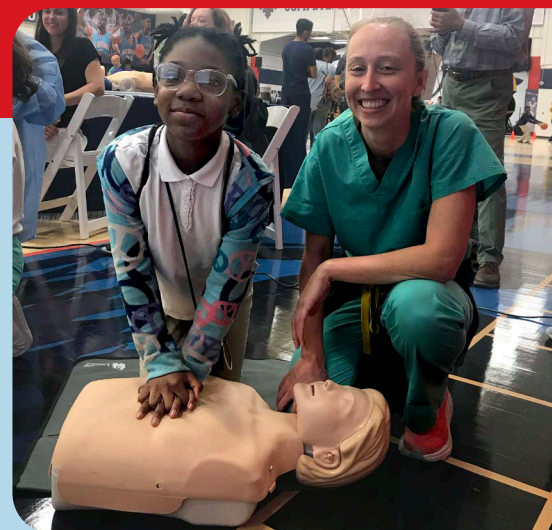


The immersive experience was part of a STEM Fair hosted by The Gayle and Tom Benson Ochsner Children's Hospital, the 2024 presenting sponsor of YEP Enriches, in collaboration with the New Orleans Pelicans' family group. Coaches from our partner The 18th Ward organized

basketball play on the indoor courts. More than 150 YEP youth, their families, and YEP staff from all five YEP sites and all four main programs participated in the event.

The fair, held exclusively for YEP youth, was the first in a series of health-focused events planned by Ochsner Children's Hospital for YEP in the upcoming year. **"Empowerment and enrichment activities contribute to the holistic development of young people, positively impacting their mental, emotional, and physical well-being,"** said Vincent Adolph, MD, Chief Medical Officer at Ochsner Children's Hospital. "Through our partnership with YEP, we aim to create a brighter, healthier future for children in our community."

As children engaged in STEM games during a great event, it was clear that Ochsner's commitment to community well-being resonates deeply with YEP's mission to empower the lives of young people.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

MEET YEP'S YOUNG PEOPLE

Janae, 17 – YEP MENTORS



When Janae first connected with her Youth Advocate, Peola, she was a reserved 14-year-old. Today, she exudes confidence, consistently earns a spot on her high school dean's list, and eagerly anticipates her upcoming graduation in May. With plans to study nursing in college, she is poised to make a positive impact on the world. Janae credits her support from Peola and YEP

Mentors with helping her set goals and achieve success. "I grew through the YEP program," said Janae. **"People at YEP are amazing. They are going to help you through it all."**

Isaiah, 19 – YEP WORKS



Isaiah came to YEP Works seeking work-readiness training when he was a high school student at The Net, next to the YEP Works classroom and the YEP Bike Works store in Central City. Even before completing his internship with YEP Bike Works, Isaiah caught the attention of people at Blue Bikes NOLA, who offered him a job. Now Isaiah plays a crucial role in maintaining the bike-

sharing organization's fleet of e-bikes, a testament to the impact of YEP in shaping career pathways for young people. Isaiah said, "I like fixing and building stuff, but **I am confident that I can pursue any work I want, thanks to YEP.**"

Ameer, 17 – YEP EDUCATES



"I am in love with learning," said Ameer, whose experience with YEP Educates has been transformative, offering an accessible pathway to follow his passion for education. With the guidance of instructor Ms. Wanda, Ameer is working toward his high school equivalency diploma and plans to attend college. "YEP Educates gives you specific testing to see your strengths and

weaknesses. They reward you for good work. They let you progress at your own pace. And it's all free," Ameer said. **"Everyone at YEP is so encouraging. YEP Educates is my anchor."**

Hailey, 8 – YEP ENRICHES

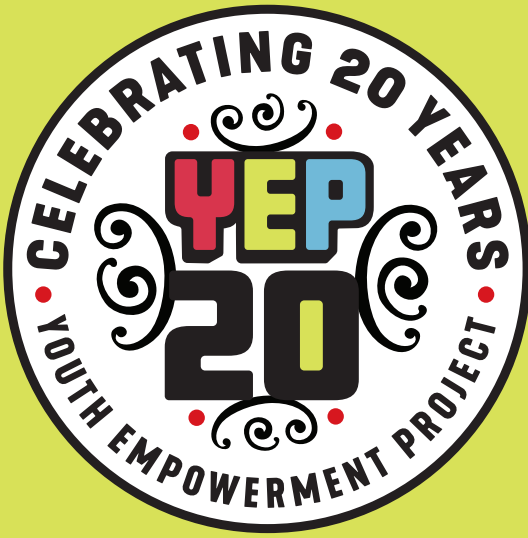


Hailey began her journey with YEP Enriches at age 7, when she became old enough to attend and join her brothers, ages 10 and 11, already in the program. Now she cherishes the nurturing environment, which includes academic support, life lessons in responsibility and teamwork, and a range of enrichment activities. "This is a fun, good place to go after school," Hailey said. "The

people here help me with my homework, and they teach me expectations like cleaning up after myself. **People at YEP have taught me so much.**" A proud drum major with the YEP drumline, Hailey is thriving amid YEP Enriches' spirit of joy and community.

This year, YEP is providing comprehensive and critical services to over 900 young people through four main program areas: community-based mentoring, work-readiness training, adult education, and out-of-school enrichment.

SAVE THE DATE



JOIN US AT A SPECIAL EVENT
CELEBRATING
20 YEARS OF YEP!

SEPTEMBER 27, 2024



CELEBRATION CO-CHAIRS:

TOP, Terrah Green

RIGHT, Stephanie November

BOTTOM, Meredith Hale-Griffin

LEARN MORE HERE

youthempowermentproject.org/20

OR SCAN HERE



SPRING 2024 > STEM FAIR FUN > CELEBRATING 20 YEARS > POSITIVELY YEP > YEP YOUTH IN THEIR OWN WORDS



GIVE NOLA DAY

GREATER NEW ORLEANS FOUNDATION



May 7, 2024

EARLY GIVING OPENS APRIL 23!

Make your impact by giving to YEP.

In honor of our
20th anniversary,
our generous board
is matching your
GiveNOLA gift up
to \$20,000!

PLEASE DONATE NOW
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