Helping A Generation Say YES to Success

Youth Enhancement Services, Inc. (YES) is excited to introduce the inaugural issue of our quarterly newsletter. For 19 years we have provided educational and social services to over 2,000 youth through GED and literacy tutorials, supplemental educational services, mentoring programs, housing assistance, job training and placement, post-secondary enrollment, and life skills training. Our multi-faceted program model is essential to ensuring YES program participants are able to achieve self-sufficiency.

We would like for all of our current and potential supporters to feel a sense of ownership in the success of our youth. Not every child will have the opportunity to succeed in the traditional public school system. This opportunity is affected by family dynamics, housing instability, economic challenges, lack of support and other variables not reported in drop out rates. Our response is to provide effective and quality alternatives to educate and train that population.

In order to teach a generation to say YES to success, we must inspire, encourage, and nurture their hopes for a better future. Our legacy—your legacy—is built upon making a difference. When you ask yourself, — Did I make a difference in the life of a child?! If you join us and support our efforts, your answer will be YES!

YES 3rd Annual Gala: “Childhood’s Promise”

This year we celebrated 19 years of community involvement with our annual gala on September 15, 2009. The theme of the night was — Childhood’s Promise. Our keynote speaker, Mr. Deontez Wimbley, a thriving high school student, embodies the values of Generation YES. Yolanda Wimbley, the mother of Deontez, received her GED with YES 15 years ago, attended college, and has been a practicing phlebotomist for 12 years.

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Notes from the Founder
The need is great and the time is now for saving children. Everyday I receive countless calls from youth who want to enroll in our program. Too many of our young people are being failed by educational institutions, dysfunctional families, and self-doubt.

Together we can work to improve the lives of these children. It is essential to have the financial and human resources needed to continue and to expand programs, as the need is only increasing. We must invest in our community and future.

I have dedicated over 25 years to serving our community. It is with great pride that I announce that I will be stepping down as Executive Director to allow a leader and member of Generation Y.E.S. to broaden our impact. Our new Executive Director, Kai N. Williamson is a capable, passionate, and driven leader. Kai has been involved with YES since she was seven years old visiting women’s shelters around Atlanta. As her mother I know her zeal, intellect, and heart. As the founder of YES I have seen these traits in action to save children. Together, with you, we will fight for Generation YES!

Bobby Furgerson

Bobby comes from a family of 9 children. He dropped out of school in the 9th grade, citing a negative school environment as the cause for his departure. Bobby learned about YES GED tutorial on a visit to his local library. Bobby enrolled in our program as did his girlfriend. Bobby received his GED in 4 months, scoring in the 98th percentile in Reading and the 86th percentile in Science. Bobby received his GED November 2009 and will be placed in a full-time position.

Bobby continues to attend GED classes to encourage his girlfriend and to strengthen his knowledge base. After receiving his GED, Bobby stated to our Executive Director, — I just want to do something with my life. He is on the path to success, and is now helping his younger brother, a 16 year old drop out, join our pro- gram. Bobby had all of the tools, he only needed someone to say YES you can!

Kidd Garlington

When you have lived in shelters and on the streets as a child, your priorities change. Kidd dealt with unstable housing, absentee parents, and early exposure to criminal activity. Under these circumstances, survival became his top priority instead of his education and future goals.

Kidd dropped out of school at 17, and used illegal activities to support himself and his family. He said his goal was to get out of the streets so that he could better provide for his one year old son. Kidd realized that although illegal activities may support you temporarily, the legal risk, moral implications, and community impact far outweigh the benefits of quick money. Kidd received his GED in November 2009, is enrolled at Atlanta Area Tech, and works full time at Burris Logistics and weekends at an army base. Kidd and his son will be moving into their first apartment December 15.

DeAcquaneta Neeley

When DeAcquanetta began attending GED classes, she was 6 months pregnant. She received her GED four weeks after the birth of her daughter, having not missed a class for any reason, except labor and recovery.

Sadly, the father of DeAcquanetta’s daughter was killed in a car accident only 5 months after their daughter’s birth. DeAcquanetta is now a single mother, who is preparing to earn a living for her family. She is currently attending Atlanta Technical College, where she has a book scholarship provided by a Y.E.S. supporter.

DeAcquanetta referred two of her friends to the GED program at Y.E.S. She states, “I know I’m on the right track and they too should have the opportunity to get on the path to succeed. Y.E.S. always finds space in the classroom for young people and they find a place in their heart to make sure we succeed in life.”
Board Member Spotlight: Jeramy Studniski

Jeramy Studniski is a new face to the Board of Youth Enhancement Services, Inc. Originally from Minnesota, Jeramy's Midwestern upbringing distilled in him the values of hard work, commitment to family, and service to the community.

Ever in support of people who many would consider the "underdog," Jeramy was attracted to Y.E.S. Equipped with a strong moral compass, Jeramy understands the importance of investing in the health of the community, especially that community's youth. "I always believed that we live in the greatest country. In this great country, people can be anything they want as long as they are willing to persevere, work hard, and let nothing stop their dreams," Jeramy said. His life is a display of his philosophy.

Beginning in his formative years, Jeramy worked to put himself through an exclusive private school in Minnesota. He next set his sights to conquer the rigors of the United States Marine Corps. After an Honorable Discharge from the military, Jeramy worked in corporate America before setting out on his own.

Jeramy is the owner of Warehouse Cubed Consulting Group, a company that provides expert material handling systems design and material handling products for any business. He is involved in a number of civic and social groups in the Metropolitan Atlanta area, including the Christian Executive Group. Jeramy and his wife, LeAnne, are the proud parents of Taylor, 7, and Nick, 4. The family resides Newnan, Georgia.

Corporate Sponsor Profile: Stepping Into Opportunity

So often, it is easy to take the little things for granted. When a student showed up to class in cold weather with sandals, red flags went off in Executive Director Lula Gilliam's head.

"From my experience, students may not dress properly for the weather not out of ignorance, but because it may be the only clothing they have." Kai Williamson, the Associate Director, was dispatched to find the student some more appropriate shoes. Kai chose Marshalls shoe store for its wide selection and reasonable prices.

Y.E.S., Inc. came to the attention of the TJX Foundation when Ms. Gilliam spoke with TJX company regional managers about the organization and our goals. Information about our program was relayed to the TJX Foundation members who wished to know more about the work that Y.E.S. performed. The TJX Foundation was not only interested in our work, but contacted YES founder Lula Gilliam to learn more about how they could become a business partner in changing the lives of at-risk youth.

It was from this chance meeting over shoes, that resulted in a relationship that has aided students getting more than just appropriate footwear. In September of 2009, Y.E.S. Inc. was awarded a grant from the TJX Foundation.

TJX Foundation has supported close to 1200 non profit organizations in the United States, Canada, and Europe. The organization places disadvantaged families and children first. in its efforts at social equality. The TJX company umbrella encompasses such retailers as Marshalls, T.J. Maxx, and A.J. Wright.
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Deontez is an honors student boasting numerous scholastic and community achievements. Deontez plans to attend Morehouse College in the Fall of 2011.

We also honored Mrs. Beatrice Neeley for her outstanding community service. Mrs. Neeley has fostered more than 30 children. Many of the children placed in her care were either emotionally, mentally, physically, and/or behaviorally challenged. One of our students, Pierre Neeley, was adopted by Mrs. Neeley at the age of 4.

Several YES students were recognized at the gala for academic achievement. DeAcquanetta Richardson, who is now enrolled in college, received her GED in September 2009. She also referred two of her friends to our GED program. She is an example for not only her young child, but also her peers whom she encourages to improve their lives. Kidd Garlington, who was profiled earlier in the publication was also recognized for academic achievement.

This year’s gala was a great success. We are proud to have community and business persons witness the impact of YES on youth and their families. It is important to take time to celebrate youth who take initiative to transform their lives and beyond that, introduce that same opportunity to others. We are already planning for next year, a celebration of 20 years of service. We hope to see you there!