



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT



YEPP
VOICES

Spring 2021
Newsletter





WHAT'S NEW IN 2021?

YEP Works

Last fall, we developed a new approach to work-based learning. We expanded our program to provide 8 weeks of customer service and social emotional learning followed by an opportunity for a 4-month internship at YEP's bike shop or thrift store.

YEP Educates

In addition to offering online and in-person classes, YEP students are now able to take sections of the high school equivalency exam directly at YEP, getting immediate results. This year, we've already celebrated 26 new HiSET Grads!

YEP Enriches

In-person Summer Camp is back! Starting in June, we're hosting two 3-week camps, complete with swimming, field trips, sports, arts and crafts, and healthy meals. We're also offering a week-long teen camp in July, where participants will tour local universities and explore career paths.

YEP Mentors

Thanks to individual donor and foundation support, YEP Mentors is hiring additional Youth Advocates and an Education Coordinator to increase program capacity and duration of services.

THE YEP WAY: MENTORING

How can you make a positive impact in a young person's life? At YEP, mentoring is at the core of what we do, so we asked some of our experts to weigh in. Here are some tips from a few of our professional Youth Advocates on how to be a good mentor.

Lexus Says...

Keep Your Word.

"Young people need to know that a mentor is real. You can make a thousand promises, but what promises do you keep with your actions? What promises do you keep by showing up?"

Have an Open Mind.

"Don't assume a rigid role. Someone might need a big sister or a young teacher. Others might just need a minute to breathe. You allow them to decide how the relationship looks."

John Says...

Be Patient.

"We expect results, but they're not going to come at your time or pace. They're going to come when kids have built trust, when they're ready to fully open up to you. Once you build that trust with them, doors will open."

Listen First.

"The best thing to do is listen before you can give someone any advice. They need to know you're not here to fuss at them or scold them. You're here to listen to what they need."

Amanda Says...

Set Expectations.

"One of the first things I tell young people is that I'm available almost all of the time because I'm not available 24/7. It's important to be clear from the beginning what you can and can't provide."

Be Authentic.

"Be who you are with a young person because they can see through it if you're not. Be yourself, and treat them the way you wish adults had treated you when you were younger."





A Dream Come True: A Student Turned Teacher

Rogdericka always knew she wanted to be a teacher. From a young age, she loved school and was often helping other kids in her classroom. But by the time Rogdericka was supposed to enter high school, her family had begun experiencing some challenges, and she and her siblings were sent to live temporarily with a family friend. “At that time, I guess I couldn’t get into high school, or so our family friend said,” Rogdericka recalls. “If I had that option, I would’ve stayed in school.”

Rogdericka didn’t want middle school to be the end of her education, so she went out on her own to find a program where she could earn a high school equivalency diploma. Her search brought her to YEP, where she enrolled when she turned 18.

“I love YEP,” she says. “With these types of programs, you just get more – more attention, more opportunities, more of what you won’t get in a traditional setting.” After Rogdericka graduated from YEP in 2011, she began working with YEP as a para-instructor while she pursued her bachelor’s degree in Education from SUNO.

This past year, at age 28, Rogdericka achieved her dream of becoming an elementary school teacher at age 28. She now spends her days in a 5th grade classroom, hoping to be the positive influence she needed in her life at that age. “I’m someone who believes everything happens for a reason,” says Rogdericka. “Now, I get to be the teacher I didn’t always have.”

“If I had that option, I would have stayed in school. But everything happens for a reason. Now, I get to be the teacher I didn’t always have.”

A LETTER TO MY FUTURE SELF

We asked YEP Educates students what they would want their future self to remember about who they are today.

Dear Future Shawn:

The thing I want you to remember in the future is the work ethic, motivation, integrity, and respect you had in the past. Those things you carry with you show the type of person you are. I believe if you kept saying, “I quit,” then you were also going to quit on life, so that’s one of the many reasons why you should stay motivated and keep working. I hope your future is bright for you.

Dear Future Yvette:

What I like about you is that you don’t give up, and you love everyone. One day in this life, I hope you are a high school graduate and are able to help someone else.

Dear Future Lula:

I want my future self to know that you have achieved a lot. You know what you have to do to make a difference in your life. I like that you’re very consistent with your job, school, and going to church. I want you to obtain your HiSET. I also want you to become a nurse.



YEP THRIFT WORKS

YEP Thrift Works provides YEP participants with experience in customer service and sales.

Shop for or donate your gently used clothing, accessories, and household items.

1626 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.
Monday-Friday 10am-5pm



YEP BIKE WORKS

YEP Bike Works offers students an introduction to bike mechanics and customer service.

Shop for or donate your new and used bicycles, parts, and accessories.

1604 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.
Monday-Friday 10am-5pm



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