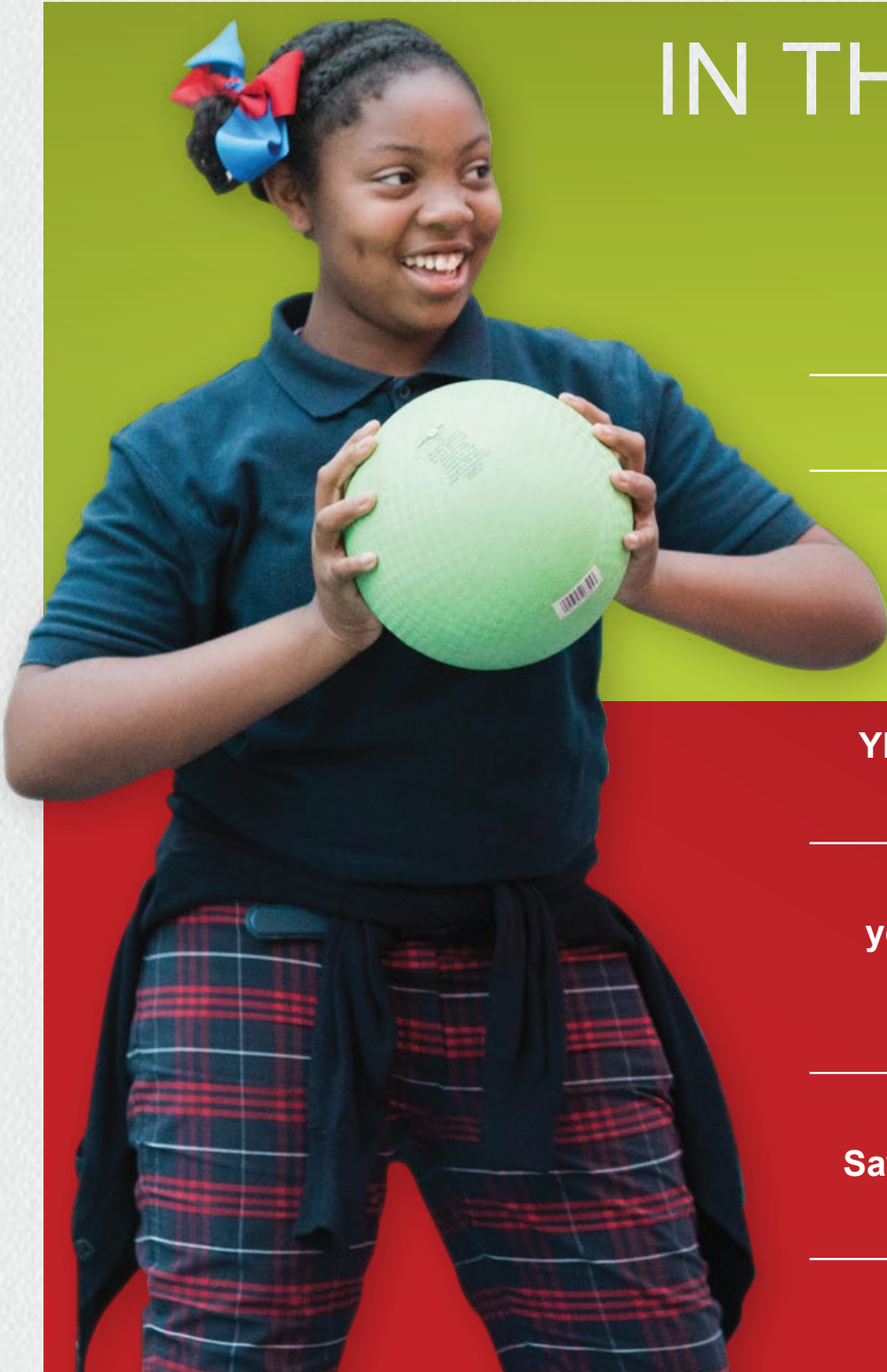


FALL/WINTER 2016  
EDITION

# YEP SPEAKS



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# UNITED STATES DEPUTY SECRETARY OF EDUCATION JAMES COLE VISITS YEP PARTICIPANTS

This summer, YEP welcomed the United States Deputy Secretary of Education, James Cole, who visited with participants at our NOPLAY Summer Scholars program, our Trufigura Work & Learn Center, and our Teen Summer Employment Training (Teen SET) Camp.

Deputy Secretary Cole was interested to learn more about YEP's young adult learning and summer employment programs. He spent time discussing his own career path with inquisitive youth at Teen SET. The Deputy Secretary was the first in his family to attend college and was very frank about the hard work and persistence that it took to be successful in the face of adversity.

Deputy Secretary Cole said about his visit, "The young people I met in New Orleans this summer were bright and resilient, and it was inspiring to see how YEP is creating new opportunities for them to succeed. From offering college course credits to launching social ventures, YEP's work is about transforming their lives, and the entire New Orleans community, for the better."



## LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

YEP co-hosted a Legislative Breakfast with Tulane University's Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives on October 13. Local lawmakers and some of their representatives visited YEP's Youth Center to learn more about Opportunity Youth (OY) and what is being done to address the challenges they face in New Orleans. The Cowen Institute presented its latest report, *No Longer Invisible: Opportunity Youth in New Orleans* to guests attending the breakfast. According to the report, more than 14 percent of 16-24 year olds in New Orleans are disconnected from employment and education. The report outlines the economic barriers facing the 6,820 opportunity youth in New Orleans, a third of whom live below the poverty line.



## YEP MODERATES NEW ORLEANS PELICANS COMMUNITY POLICING DISCUSSION

The New Orleans Pelicans invited YEP to moderate a dinner discussion on October 24 about policing and community relations in light of current tensions between law enforcement and communities of color in Louisiana and across the country. Melissa Sawyer and Darrin McCall helped guide the two-hour intimate dinner and conversation at the Pelicans training facility in Metairie, LA. Guests included YEP youth and staff; Pelicans players; Coach Gentry and other Pelicans staff; local law enforcement agencies; elected leaders; and other members of the community. We hope to connect with the NBA team again soon and to keep this very important conversation going. If you visit the Pelicans website and go to their community programs section, you can watch a video featuring the successful event moderated by YEP.



# YEP MENTORS: A SUCCESS STORY

**Name:** Leslie **Age:** 12 **YEP Program:** Community-Based Prevention (CBP)

Mentoring young people is an integral part of the work YEP does. Leslie is one of our current Community-Based Prevention (CBP) participants. He was referred to YEP by the Families in Need of Services (FINS) program in St. Charles Parish. YEP's CBP Program Coordinator, Sandra Washington and Youth Advocate, John Emery provide intensive supportive services to youth ages 8-14. The program encompasses mentoring, tutoring, counseling and other wrap-around services.



Leslie is a 6th grader who is described by YEP staff as smart and athletic. He piqued the interest of high school football coaches when he was in the 4th grade! With regular support from YEP staff, Leslie is working on being more respectful to others, focusing in class, and taking more accountability for his actions.

*“Leslie likes the things we’ve exposed him to. He likes Camp Mariposa. He has come a long way. YEP allowed him to see his potential.”* –YEP Youth Advocate John Emery

*“I like hanging out with Mr. John. We go places. I like the support I’m getting from YEP at school. I always feel good around the holidays because YEP looks out for me.”* –Leslie

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CBP is generously funded by St. Charles Parish 29th Judicial District, St. Charles United Way, and AT&T.



LIVE UNITED



## YEP EXPANDS ITS YOUTH-RUN BUSINESSES AT THE TRAFIGURA WORK & LEARN CENTER

The Triguera Work and Learn Center is a youth employment readiness program comprised of three youth-run businesses, YEP Bike Works, YEP Thrift Works, and YEP Design Works. Working alongside YEP staff, youth ages 16-24 receive an educational stipend while learning valuable employment skills. Youth also hone general life skills and build the confidence necessary to help them secure and retain employment. Over the six-week introductory class, students learn basic life and job readiness skills including goal setting, teamwork skills, building a resume, participating in a mock interview, and filling out job applications.

Design Works started in September of 2016, following a successful 15-month partnership with innovative youth design studio Young Creative Agency (YCA). YEP hired YCA founder and director, Alberta Wright to implement our own youth design studio, Design Works is managed by Alberta and taught by Design Mentor Bernie January. Design Works builds on the strength of YEP's existing job-training program by giving youth skills and experience in the growing Creative Digital Media field in New Orleans. According to GNO, Inc. more than 10,000 jobs in the field are expected to be created in our region by 2025.





Design Works is a graphic design agency catering to local and national clients to create branding and marketing campaigns and materials. While working on client jobs, professional design mentors guide and collaborate with students on every step of the design process. Youth pitch to clients, receive and implement critical feedback, and create a polished final product. So far, young people at YEP have successfully designed products for clients including Ace Hotel, Teach For America, GirlTrek, New Orleans Film Society, Link/Stryjewski Restaurant Group, TrueSchool Studio, Antenna Gallery and Educate Now!




Thrift Works opened its new retail space at 1604 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd next to Bike Works on December 1. Thrift Works provides youth with real-world customer service, point of sale, and inventory management experience in a vibrant retail environment. Thrift Works is managed by Marc Roberson and Jaleel Holmes (Jaleel is a Work and Learn Center and NOPLAY graduate).

Community support is appreciated and donations of gently used items such as shirts/blouses, suits, dresses, pants/jeans, shoes, purses, belts, furniture, small appliances, housewares, sporting goods, and toys/books/music/DVDs are welcomed. Donations can be dropped off during regular Thrift Works hours.

 Thrift Works Monday-Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Phone: 504-702-8070

 Bike Works Monday-Saturday 12:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Phone: 504-264-7090

 Both located at: 1604 Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard New Orleans, LA 70113

The Trafigura Work & Learn Center is generously funded by the following organizations:



# LETTER FROM MELISSA SAWYER, YEP CO-FOUNDER/ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of YEP,

As 2016 comes to an end, we are reflective of living in a time and space that is filled with deep divisiveness, pervasive negativity, and apprehension for the future. Given this current landscape, I firmly believe that the work we are doing at YEP is more important than ever. YEP's core values: Kindness, Respect, Accountability, Progress and Integrity guide our work and affirm our commitment to ensuring that we provide opportunities that lead to growth, success and happiness for staff, the young people we serve, and the wider community.

YEP's holistic approach focuses on four main areas: mentoring and youth advocacy; adult education and literacy; post-secondary and employment readiness; and enrichment services.

I am extremely proud of the work that we do at YEP and the impact that we have on the lives of those we serve. As we approach the new year, I hope that you will continue to believe in us and our comprehensive approach to helping young people actualize their potential. As Margaret Mead so eloquently stated, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has". By coming together and supporting YEP, we are strengthening our local community and making a significant difference in the Greater New Orleans region and beyond.

Sincerely, Melissa.



# YEP IMPACT

YEP served **600** young people through our New Orleans Providing Literacy to All Youth (NOPLAY) Program.



**75%** of these students made educational functional level gains (which are equivalent to gaining **two grade levels**) compared to the national average of 39%.

NOPLAY is one of only five adult-education programs that is recognized by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System and it is the largest program in the state dedicated to serving young people not connected to school and work.

**100%** of students enrolled in a charter school-based pilot of our Village program advanced at least one grade level in at least one subject area. On average, students in this pilot gained **two academic grade levels in one year.**



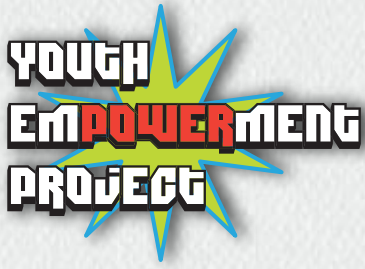
YEP served **200** children through our free out-of-school time enrichment programming (summer camp, afterschool program and Camp Mariposa).

YEP's Transition Coordinators engaged with **55** GED/HiSET graduates and helped them enroll and persist in college.



YEP graduates who were engaged in post-secondary institutions maintained a retention rate (meaning they successfully completed at least one academic year) of **87%**.


YEP's HiSET grads enter post-secondary education at a rate over two times the national average.




Youth Empowerment Project  
1600 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.  
New Orleans, LA 70113  
504-522-1316

You can help YEP to build a stronger, safer city. Give today at  
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