

The Times

Leaving a legacy of positive experiences

Young Scholars' Institute alumni form common bond in extraordinary program

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SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

The phrase "giving back to the community" has become an overused cliché for many, but for a dedicated group of Young Scholars' Institute (YSI) alumni the concept is one they have fully embraced and are putting into action.

Over the last two years YSI has effectively reached out to past participants living in the greater Trenton area and formed an Alumni Association Steering Committee. The committee is charged with the responsibilities of locating and engaging other YSI alumni, assisting with fundraising efforts and sharing their personal stories on the impact YSI has had on their lives.

As YSI enters its 19th year of service and outreach to at-risk students and their families, the number of alumni continues to grow. The young professionals who make up the steering committee grew up in different wards in the city, attended high schools inside and outside Trenton, enjoyed college careers in Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey, and embarked on an array of careers in both the public and private sectors.

They do share a common bond, however: their positive experience at YSI. As a result, they are committed to ensuring current and future generations of inner-city children have access to the same educational, cultural and recreational enrichment opportunities that they enjoyed.

Committee members Hans Goff, a graduate of The College of William and Mary; Valerie Hedgpeth, William Paterson University; Nykeya Bingham-Tibbs, Clark Atlanta University; Zoelene Hill, Princeton University; and Aingyea Kellom, Rutgers University, understand the need for others to support the organization that has been a staple in the Trenton community since 1990.

The vitality and continued success of any organization like YSI is dependent, in part, on its ability to re-engage alumni and keep them active in the mission. In many ways, the alumni are the best advocates for "selling" the YSI experience.

"My passion for creating systematic change originated with my involvement at Young Scholars' Institute," said Hans Goff. "For so many children, including me, YSI functioned as a bridge that closed the educational divide between teaching and education."

Goff works as an outreach coordinator in the constituent relations department for the New Jersey State Assembly Majority Office.

Nykeya Bingham-Tibbs, now a financial and compliance analyst for Tommy Hilfiger USA Inc., added, "It's hard to imagine an organization of people who have such a passionate dedication to serving youth, but YSI truly is that organization."

Funds from this year's Holiday Appeal will be used to support the programs of Young Scholars' Institute and the more than 1,200 area school children it serves year-round.

To make a donation in support of Young Scholars' Institute, make your check payable to The Times Holiday Appeal and mail it to: Times Charities Inc., P.O. Box 24178, Newark, NJ 07189-0001.

All gifts will be acknowledged in The Times. Anonymity will be granted if requested.

For information about Young Scholars' Institute, go to www.youngscholarsoftrenton.org or call (609) 393-3220.

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