

State Office of Volunteerism



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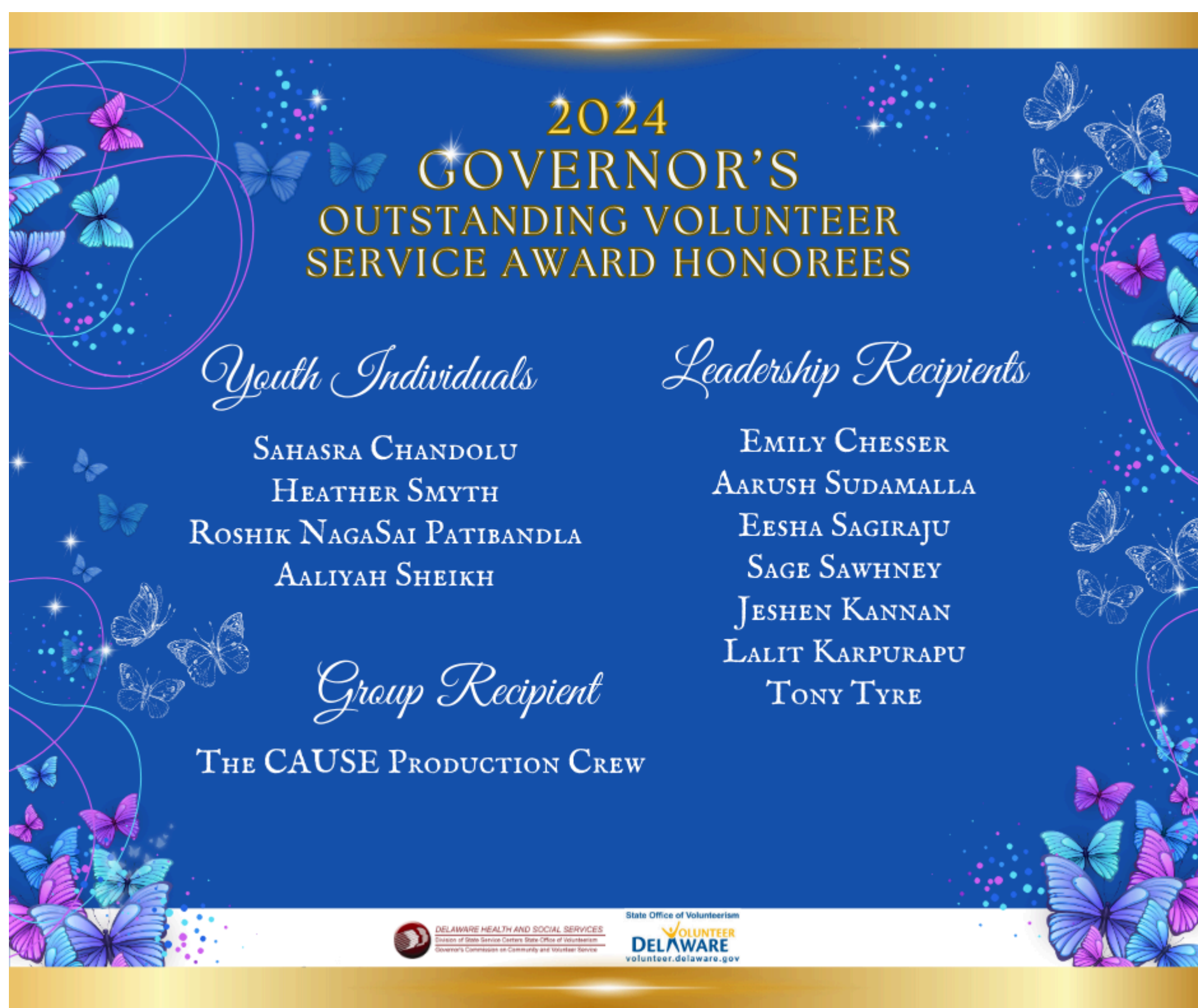
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Meet the 2024 Honorees



2024 GOVERNOR'S OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD HONOREES

Youth Individuals

SAHASRA CHANDOLU
HEATHER SMYTH
ROSHIK NAGASAI PATIBANDLA
AALIYAH SHEIKH

Leadership Recipients

EMILY CHESSER
AARUSH SUDAMALLA
EESHA SAGIRAJU
SAGE SAWHNEY
JESHEN KANNAN
LALIT KARPURAPU
TONY TYRE

Group Recipient

THE CAUSE PRODUCTION CREW

DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of State Service Centers State Office of Volunteerism
Governor's Commission on Community and Volunteer Service

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Honorees for Youth Individuals

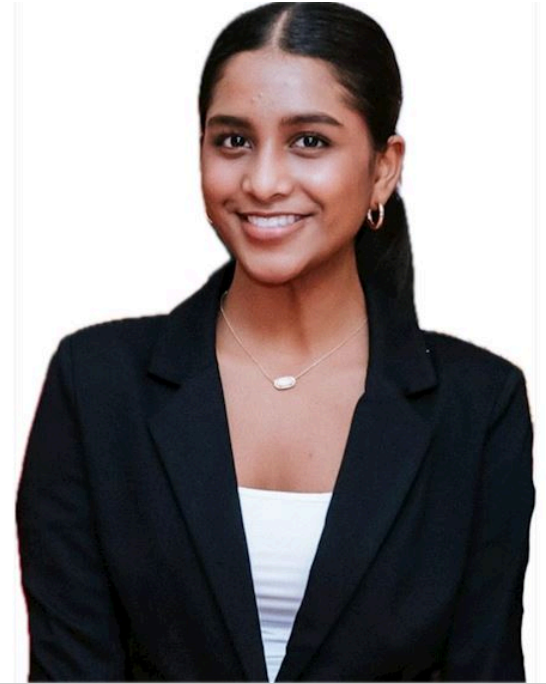
SAHASRA CHANDOLU

Category: INDIVIDUAL-YOUTH

Nominated by: Veni Jayakumar

Area: New Castle County

Biographical Information: Sahasra Chandolu, a junior at Appoquinimink High School, has exemplified extraordinary commitment to community service, amassing over 257 volunteer hours. As an integral member of Charity Crossing (CC) since 2020, Sahasra has led and participated in numerous events, including service activities at various CC locations and in warehouse operations. Her leadership extends to initiatives such as the glove drive and Stocking for Soldiers, where she coordinated donations, diverting thousands of dollars' worth of items from landfills to those in need. Sahasra's impact extends beyond direct service, as she raises awareness for CC and encourages others to join. Her exemplary dedication has earned her prestigious accolades, including three consecutive Presidential Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) Gold medals and "The 2022 Volunteer Excellence Award." Sahasra's involvement in a multitude of school activities and sports, alongside her unwavering dedication to community service, truly sets her apart as a role model and inspires others to make a difference.



ROSHIK NAGASAI PATIBANDLA

Category: INDIVIDUAL-YOUTH

Nominated by: Karthi Jayakumar

Area: New Castle County

Biographical Information: Roshik NagaSai Patibandla, a high school sophomore at MOT Charter School, has dedicated 146 hours to volunteering at Charity Crossing. At their warehouse, he sorted donations and assisted in weekly community giveaways. Roshik ensured smooth operations in his organizing of events at Glasgow Park, Trinity AME Church, and the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition. As a DYLN Scholar, he funded a project educating underprivileged kids in India, teaching math for 60 hours at his grandparents' village school. He utilized leftover grant money to provide students with essentials and modern learning kits. Back home, he maintains contact with his students, offering motivation and encouragement. Additionally, he developed a website promoting recycling and environmental preservation. Through his school's National Technical Honor Society, Technology Student Association, and FIRST Robotics, Roshik fosters STEM awareness and community engagement, inspiring others to make a difference.



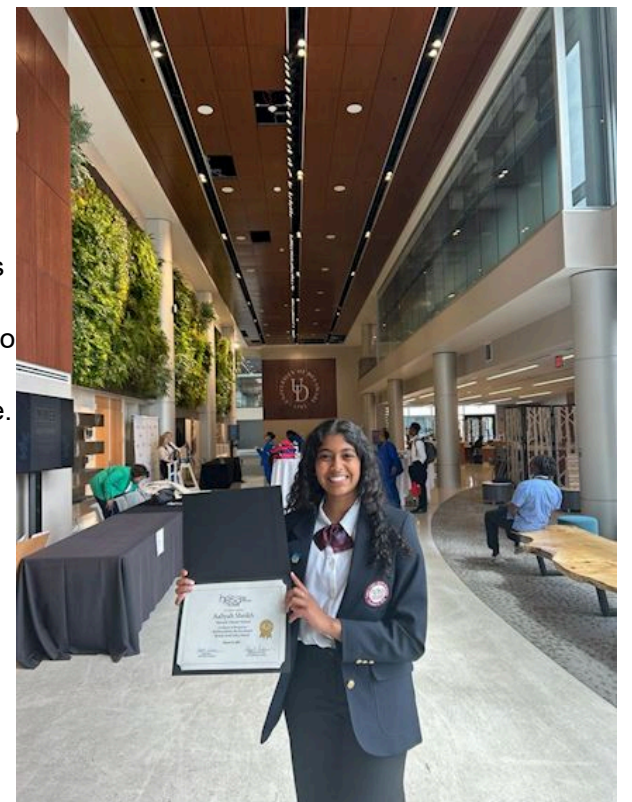
AALIYAH SHEIKH

Category: INDIVIDUAL-YOUTH

Nominated by: Narfeesa Majeed

Area: New Castle County

Biographical Information: Aaliyah Sheikh, a junior at Newark Charter School, has volunteered 132 hours, making a lasting impact on Newark's community. Passionate about giving back, she collaborates with various volunteering organizations and environmental foundations to support the people and environment of Newark. At the Zakat Foundation, Aaliyah spearheaded a fundraising event for earthquake victims in Turkey, while also creating Cold Care Kits and school supply backpacks for the less fortunate. She organized city-wide fundraisers, including ice skating events, and recently partnered with Tree-Plenish for a tree-planting initiative. Aaliyah's leadership extends to the Youth Environmental Summit (YES!), where she leads workshops on sustainability. Committed to health education, she volunteers at elementary schools, teaching kids about fitness and sports. A dual athlete in soccer and swimming, she shares her love for sports at summer camp. Aaliyah is passionate about teaching the importance of health and staying active and involved in the community with her peers and younger students.



HEATHER SMYTH

Category: INDIVIDUAL-YOUTH

Nominated by: Samantha Gardner

Area: Statewide

Biographical Information: Heather Smyth, a senior at Indian River High School, has dedicated over 300 hours to volunteering, making a remarkable impact as a volunteer for Special Olympics Delaware. Heather goes above and beyond, showing compassion and patience whether she's assisting athletes during practices, fundraisers, or competitions. She connects with individuals on a deeper level, helping them grow not just as athletes, but as individuals. Heather prioritizes people over disabilities, demonstrating kindness, consideration, and care. Her involvement spans various roles, including unified partner for swim and soccer, team assistant for basketball, and counselor at weekend camps. Heather's initiative in organizing fundraisers and her role as a volunteer youth speaker highlight her commitment and leadership. Her positive and upbeat attitude resonates with athletes, making her a cherished member of the community. Heather's dedication to serving her community extends beyond Special Olympics Delaware, as she actively seeks out opportunities to make a positive difference in the lives of others.



Honorees for Youth Leadership

EMILY CHESSER

Category: LEADERSHIP -YOUTH

Nominated by: Joy Bohn

Area: Kent County

Biographical Information: Emily Chesser, a senior at Polytech High School, serves as the Volunteer Coordinator for the National Honor Society, demonstrating exemplary leadership by actively seeking out volunteer opportunities for over 100 student participants. Emily's dedication to community service is evident with a total of over 200 volunteered hours. She has knitted over 200 hats, donating them to various causes, including adopt-a-family programs, senior citizens, and cancer patients. In addition to her academic pursuits, Emily maintains straight A grades while participating in cross country and track. She holds the First Chair position in the Kent County Honors Band reflecting her artistic talent and dedication to the arts. Emily actively contributes to the smooth functioning of various events, from wrestling matches to book fairs, highlighting her willingness to provide hands-on support and her dedication to the school community. Additionally, her involvement with the Polytech Interact Club and volunteering at her church shows her commitment to serving her local community.



JESHEN KANNA

Category: LEADERSHIP -YOUTH

Nominated by: Claire Griffiths

Area: New Castle County

Biographical Information: Jeshen Kannan, a sophomore at the Charter School of Wilmington (CSW), has demonstrated exceptional dedication to community service by volunteering over 100 hours solely with Multiplying Good. As a key member of CSW's Multiplying Good executive council, Jeshen exhibits exemplary leadership qualities, consistently striving to enhance fundraising and volunteer efforts. In 2023, she played a crucial role in organizing Charterthon, the school's main fundraising event for the B+ Foundation and volunteered at B+'s annual 5K. Additionally, Jeshen spearheaded a Powderpuff football game, raising \$1700 for FosterWell, showcasing her innovative approach to fundraising. Her impact extends beyond the school community, inspiring peers to engage in meaningful service. Jeshen's dedication to benefiting Delaware children through local nonprofits like the B+ Foundation and FosterWell reflects her genuine compassion and unwavering dedication and dedication to making a difference.



LALIT KARPURAPU

Category: LEADERSHIP -YOUTH

Nominated by: Padmaja Garlapati

Area: New Castle County

Biographical Information: Lalit Karpurapu, an Appoquinimink High School Sophomore, has dedicated a total of 166 volunteer hours to non-profit organizations and over 100 hours to for-profit organizations, without receiving financial compensation. His primary volunteering efforts are with Charity Crossing Inc., Christiana Hospital, and Elkton Indoor Tennis. Lalit's impact is evident in the support provided to low-income families, ensuring they receive essential resources and items. Through Charity Crossing, he has organized numerous giveaways at various locations, including Glasgow Park, Latin America Serve, and community centers, distributing items like festive decorations, household essentials, pet supplies, and hygiene products. Lalit has earned multiple Presidential Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) gold medals for his consistent service, particularly with Charity Crossing. Additionally, he volunteers at Christiana Hospital, assisting patients and supporting nursing staff with various tasks. Outside of volunteering, Lalit excels as a varsity tennis player and dedicates his Saturdays to coaching and mentoring players of all skill levels at Elkton Indoor Tennis.



EESHA SAGIRAJU

Category: LEADERSHIP -YOUTH

Nominated by: Stacy Walls Bartkowski

Area: Statewide

Biographical Information: Eesha Sagiraju, a junior at the Charter School of Wilmington with 230 volunteer hours, is the Founder and president of the schools Business Professionals of America (BPA) chapter and State's Vice President. She spearheaded initiatives benefitting hundreds. Her role as an Ambassador for the Parkinson's Foundation and American Red Cross Blood Donor Ambassador shows her commitment to various causes. Eesha's leadership extends to founding CSW's ACS club and serving as an American Cancer Society Youth Ambassador, organizing numerous volunteering efforts and educational campaigns. Her win in the 2023 Congressional App Challenge highlights her innovative spirit, developing a virtual diagnostic tool for COVID-19. Notably, Eesha's dedication to environmental advocacy led her to chair the YES! Workshops Committee, holding 42 workshops and educating over 500 students on sustainability. Her tireless efforts have earned her recognition as a role model in her community.



SAGE SAWHNEY

Category: LEADERSHIP -YOUTH

Nominated by: Ashley Thompson

Area: Kent County

Biographical Information: Sage Sawhney, a junior with over 200 volunteer hours at Caesar Rodney High School, is the President and Founder of the Mu Alpha Theta Math Honor Society. His dedication extends beyond academics, as he also co-founded the Junior Advisory Board of the Hope Medical Dental Clinic and serves on the Youth Philanthropy Board of Kent County. Through Mu Alpha Theta, Sage has tutored students across all grade levels, fostering a love for mathematics in our community. As a founding member of the Junior Advisory Board, he has contributed over 50 hours to improve access to healthcare at the Hope Clinic. Additionally, Sage plays a vital role in allocating grant funds to nonprofits as a member of the Youth Philanthropy Board, distributing approximately \$60,000 annually to enhance our community. With consistent volunteering at Edelman Spine, Sage demonstrates his commitment to making a positive impact through various avenues of service.



AARUSH SUDAMALLA

Category: LEADERSHIP -YOUTH

Nominated by: Maria Payan

Area: New Castle & Sussex County

Biographical Information: Aarush Sudamalla, a high school sophomore at Charter School of Wilmington, exemplifies dedication to volunteerism through his involvement with Sussex Health & Environmental Network (SHEN). He facilitates opportunities for young entrepreneurs and advocates for environmental stewardship in Sussex County by serving as a leader in coordinating events like Delaware Launch. Collaborating with SHEN and Latino Initiative on Restorative Justice, Aarush empowers marginalized communities, organizing educational events and securing grants for community development. Beyond SHEN, he founded Give with Love, supporting vulnerable families and volunteering at Sunday Breakfast Mission, providing meals and hygiene supplies to vulnerable populations. Aarush's commitment to service earned him the Presidential Volunteer Service Award and the Volunteer Excellence Award, reflecting his transformative impact. Aarush navigates diverse priorities, driven by a sense of purpose to effect positive change.



TONY TYRE

Category: LEADERSHIP -YOUTH

Nominated by: Chase Conway

Area: New Castle County

Biographical Information: Tony Tyre, a senior at Appoquinimink High School, has dedicated 803 hours to volunteering in 2023 at the Brandywine Valley SPCA. He has been volunteering at Brandywine SPCA since age 15. Tony's dedication has never wavered. Known for his strong work ethic, Tony eagerly takes on a multitude of various tasks. As a volunteer leader, Tony plays a crucial role in facilitating adoptions and ensuring animal welfare. He assists at the front desk, guides customers, and organizes adoption meetings. Tony also mentors new volunteers, teaches dog handling classes, and assists the behavior team with dog assessments. Despite his busy schedule, Tony prioritizes volunteering, even attending sessions after college preparatory classes on Saturdays. His dedication and diverse contributions make him an invaluable asset to the shelter community.



Honoree for Youth Group

THE CAUSE PRODUCTION CREW

Category: GROUP-YOUTH

Nominated by: Dennis Finocchiaro

Area: New Castle County

Biographical Information: The CAUSE Production Crew, comprising 17 youth aged 12-17, has collectively volunteered over 280 hours. Their efforts include creating more than 85 peer-to-peer messaging videos on crucial topics such as mental health, substance abuse, and human trafficking for Delaware. They also host a monthly show, The Monthly Focus, blending entertainment, activism, and prevention, covering various issues such as bullying, overdose awareness, and teen dating violence. Operating as a volunteer after-school program four days a week year-round, they strive to inspire their peers to lead healthier lives. Beyond video production, they actively engage in community service initiatives like clean-up drives, food and clothing collections, and promotion of community events. Originating as a means to provide a safe haven for Wilmington youth, this program has evolved into an amazing platform fostering positive change.

