

Motivating Youth thru Social Entrepreneurship

Yuniverse Foundation (www.yuniversefoundation.org) is Reston's newest youth empowerment social entrepreneurship spreading positivity and inspiration throughout the community. Their mission is to use creativity and connection to help youth develop their talents through music, camps, events and projects.

Three South Lakes High School students founded Yuniverse Foundation: Joseph Dagbe, David Gonzalez and Brian Adams. Joseph, also known as "ShowJoe," believes that he can turn his local recognition as a musician to help pursue his goals and give back to the Reston community. David Gonzalez (aka UnoDavid), Yuniverse's Chief Creative Officer, has over 25,000 Instagram followers and uses his online reach to inspire and help youth realize their creative potential. Brian Adams rounds out the leadership team with his business acumen, leadership, organization, and entrepreneurship skills. He is an impressive consensus builder and is passionate about bringing people together, especially in the Muslim community.

In August 2018, Joseph watched his two younger brothers participate in the "Superhero Splash and Dash" event sponsored by CORE Foundation (www.corefoundation.org) and was energized to create similar programs to motivate youth. He approached Terry Redican, a 2018 Best of Reston winner, also known as Coach "T" to serve as the team's mentor. CORE Foundation, a 501(c)3, was proud to fiscally sponsor the team's plan for social good providing business tools and the administrative backbone and additional mentoring to support the entrepreneurship.

Yuniverse hit a home run with their kick-off event, "Endless Energy," which brought together 300 middle and high schoolers for a basketball tournament and amateur music concert. The event featured twenty-four top local 7th-9th-grade basketball players who participated in a 1:1 competition and ten teen amateur musical artists including ShowJoe and UnoDavid. \$2000.00 in donations from generous supporters was raised to cover event costs. Proceeds were used to



send local kids in need to basketball camp this past summer. Many of the teens who participated in "Endless Energy" are in the free and reduced lunch program; Joseph Dagbe says that "Yuniverse Foundation offers kids hope and gives them something to look forward to."

The Yuniverse team has qualified to earn the Gold President's Volunteer Service Award for achieving over 1200 hours collectively of community service. They accomplished this while juggling basketball practice, school and many other activities in the after school hours. The Yuniverse team has also been nominated for the "2019 Creating a World of Their Own Inspired Youth Award" and fulfilled a significant role in producing "Reston Live" held at Lake Anne Plaza on Memorial Day weekend.

One of the group's goals is to revitalize the outdoor basketball at the South Gate Community Center that will serve to keep kids out of trouble and allow them to be productive. By doing this, Yuniverse will also facilitate a location to host basketball clinics, entrepreneur workshops, and digital music courses. Yuniverse has "Fun Day" type events in the works which will take place in low-income neighborhoods in Reston. These events will feature food, fellowship, fun, and positivity for the youth in our community.