

# YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



## Student Handbook

2024 - 2025

# The Honor Code

## 7 Core Behaviors for Honorable Leadership

*Honorem Super Omnia— Honor Above All*

1. **Tell the truth, even when it's difficult.**  
Avoid duplicity and deceitful behavior.
2. **Treat others with dignity and respect.**  
Take the lead and show value to others.
3. **Keep your word and your commitments.**  
Ask for relief sooner than later if necessary.
4. **Be ethical.**  
Operate within the laws of the land, the guidelines of your profession, and the policies of your employer.
5. **Act responsibly; do your duty and be accountable.**  
Own your mistakes, and work to do better in the future.
6. **Live your values.**  
Be faithful to your spiritual core, your conscience, and your deepest intuitions.
7. **BE COURAGEOUS.**  
Courage is at the core of all honorable behavior. Without it, doubts and fears will take you out.



## **Program History and Introduction**

The Youth Leadership Development Program (YLDP)

### **Purpose**

The Youth Leadership Development Program, (YLDP) provides a leadership development program for juniors and seniors in high school chosen due to their character rather than academic standing. The basic tenet of the YLDP is that a person's character is more important than anything else in the ability to lead others, being a true leader.

### **History**

The Youth Leadership Development Program began in the Fall of 2008. Its purpose is to provide a leadership development program for juniors and seniors in high school chosen to participate because of their character rather than academic standing. The basic tenet of the YLDP is that the character of a person is more important than anything else to being a true leader. The YLDP was launched in September 2008 with seven high school partners, each selecting ten students to represent their high school in the YLDP. In November of that year Lawson State and Jefferson State Community Colleges became the first YLDP College/Operating Partners by providing volunteer leaders to assist in developing and administering the YLDP. Additionally, both Lawson State and Jefferson State provided coordinators (scholarship students) to work as facilitators for student groups and activities. Unprecedentedly, Lawson State President Dr Perry Ward and Jefferson State President Dr Judy Merritt committed two Presidential Scholarships each to the top students of "character" from the YLDP. Colleges had for many, many years provided scholarships to students who had academic achievement and those who had athletic achievement but never before to students who demonstrated the highest of character. These two special leaders, who themselves possessed the highest of character, broke new ground in higher education's goal to develop and provide the leaders of tomorrow for our society.

Wallace State Community College, Hanceville joined the YLDP as an Operating Partner in 2013 under the Leadership of President Vickie Karolewics. This partnership allowed the YLDP to expand to three new counties, providing many more high schools the opportunity to participate in the YLDP. In addition to providing personnel and scholarships, Dr Karolewics immediately brought a renewed energy to the YLDP, generating new ideas and direction to the YLDP.

At this point in time the YLDP had 95 High School Partners that each chose up to four seniors and two juniors to represent their high school, three College-Operating Partners, Lawson State, Wallace State, Jefferson State, and twenty-five College Partners, in total providing nearly \$2 million in scholarship opportunities for students of character. In its first 14 years of existence the Youth Leadership Development Program awarded \$10 million in life changing scholarships to students of character.

In 2022–2023 another expansion took place in North Alabama. Newly appointed President of Calhoun Community College Dr Jimmy Hodges decided that Calhoun would become the YLDP's fourth College Operating Partner. Under the direction of Calhoun Community College Vice President Dr Patricia Wilson this expansion added three counties and 20 new High School Partners, for a total of 125, to the YLDP. Additionally, for 2022–2023 Calhoun Community College and Georgia Highlands College became YLDP College Partners which resulted in 27 College Partners and added another \$50,000 to the already \$2 million in scholarship opportunities exclusively for YLDP students.

In 2024-2025 another major expansion took place with the creation of six new YLDP chapters. Currently the YLDP has over 200 high school partners. The YLDP presently has 9 college operating partners and 29 college partners.

## Program History and Introduction

The Youth Leadership Development Program (YLDP)

### The YLDP Experience

The Three Pillars of the YLDP— Faith— Character— Patriotism are the foundations of the YLDP Curriculum, and its instructional process and activities. Hence, the Curriculum is not limited to the monthly lessons and group discussions but is the “experiencing” of the YLDP.

Faith is up front in every meeting and activity as all meetings and activities are opened with a group prayer. These “prayers” provide a direct and reverent acknowledgment of a power higher than ourselves, God. It also allows students to experience community identity with the idea of having and expressing Faith. The January meeting is a special experience in Faith. This annual experience is held in the sanctuary of the historic 16th Street Baptist Church with Liz Huntley as the speaker. Liz is the author of “More Than A Bird”, which is her inspirational life story about how Faith not only saved her life but has guided her throughout her life.

Character is quite obviously the essence of the YLDP. Students know they have been chosen because of their demonstrated character in school. They also realize that if they excel in the YLDP, College Partners offer scholarships to them because of their demonstrated character in the YLDP. Therefore, to experience the YLDP is to come face to face with the meaning of character. To understand that character is not a nebulous term but is in fact how you live your life. The YLDP “experience” presents the true nature of character by introducing the students to the “universal morals”, and “essential morals” vital to having sound character. All YLDP lessons, activities, program service projects, and student created service projects are a constant and consistent experiencing of the meaning of character.

Patriotism is part and parcel of the entire experience of the YLDP. The “Pledge of Allegiance”, led by a student, is said at the opening of every meeting and performed in the traditional sense by all students. Whenever a YLDP meeting or activity has the capability the “National Anthem” is played, and traditional participation and respect is shown.

Patriotism, although a constant stream within the YLDP experience, is most emphasized during the first quarter of the year. At the initial meeting in September, the students are assigned to a “Company” named in honor of one of the YLDP’s special Medal of Honor recipients i.e. Thorsness, Adkins, Morris, Livingston, Rose, Donlon, Beikirch. Assignments, lessons, and activities for October are directly related to patriotism, the Medal of Honor, and Veterans. The Pillar of Patriotism comes to total fruition in the YLDP in November with the its annual “Walk For Warriors” and the annual YLDP Patriotism Program. Both of which dramatically bring to life the true meaning of Patriotism through student involvement, honored guests, special presentations, and the celebration of freedom, its cost and those who have protected our freedom and continue to do so.



# Program History and Introduction

## The Youth Leadership Development Program (YLDP)

### Description & Process:

The YLDP is designed to assist students chosen for their demonstrated character in developing leadership skills. Because of the large number of YLDP High School Partners involved, the YLDP has great diversity within the student body. The YLDP has diversity of gender, race, ethnicity, religious belief, economic background, and academic achievement. The YLDP is a model of and for tomorrow's America, where diversity is treasured as one of its greatest resources.

The YLDP is a nine-month Program that begins in September and ends in May. It conducts monthly meetings that start at 4:30pm and end no later than 7:30pm.

Typically, students sign in upon arrival. Each monthly meeting has a special guest speaker for approximately 60 minutes, which includes questions and answers. This is followed by a student group lesson focusing on faith, character, and/ or patriotism. Active student participation is a part of each lesson. The student groups are specifically designed to include all aspects of the diversity within the YLDP and are assigned for the entire year. Every meeting concludes with students coming together to discuss group ideas, conclusions, and opinions. Students sign out before leaving.

In addition to monthly meetings, the YLDP operates numerous, staff approved, student created and enacted service projects. YLDP participation projects are also available to students to assist community organizations, and when students plan a service project, they are encouraged to focus on what morals are being experienced within the project, and also identify any aspect of the Pillars of Faith and/ or Patriotism as a part of the service experience.

A major component of the YLDP is its special relationship with College Partners. These colleges actively support the belief that sound character is vital for leaders to possess. And that by supporting students of character they are helping to fulfill a major goal of higher education, preparing leaders of tomorrow. This support is shown by the scholarships they provide exclusively to the students of the YLDP. A very important component of the YLDP is to encourage students to be informed about at least several different colleges, preferably of different sizes in order to be certain of where they believe they will be most successful, both academically and socially. The YLDP conducts two College Fairs in the first quarter of the year which are only available to YLDP students, parents, and college partners. The YLDP encourages students, and parents to arrange college visits to our YLDP College Partners. Students selected for the YLDP must be legal citizens of the United States. Preference in selection of students chosen for the YLDP must be given to students who are interested in attending one of our college Partners, students who are undecided on the college they want to attend, or students who are interested in attending one of our Military Academies.

The YLDP evaluation process is based on a point system which is given to both students, and parents at Orientation. All YLDP students should understand that future success in the YLDP is entirely in their hands. All students begin equally and are informed that points are earned exclusively by active participation in the YLDP. In March, YLDP qualified students can select up to three colleges, in order of preference, that they want to compete for scholarships to attend. Scholarship recipients are determined by the highest YLDP point totals. Through the experience of the fair and equal competition of the YLDP, a final lesson the students learn is the joy found in having and successfully completing responsibility, an understanding of the work ethic needed to successfully compete, and the rewards earned for dedication, determination, and hard work.

Whether students have earned one of the many YLDP scholarships or not, the YLDP provides many valuable and rewarding lessons and experiences that help prepare students for the next phase of their lives.

The YLDP is a special experience for students that assists in heightening their awareness of the beliefs that "this nation will remain free only so long as it is the home of the brave". And an understanding that "the greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of faith, patriotism and character". In essence, the YLDP is an experiencing of what is the rightful "social inheritance" of every American child, to have faith, be given a moral foundation in order to develop good character and have a deep patriotic passion for the United States of America.

In addition to monthly meetings, the YLDP operates numerous, staff approved, student created and enacted service projects. YLDP participation projects are also available to students to assist community organizations e.g. The American Village, and the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Whenever students plan a service project, they are encouraged to focus on what morals are being experienced within the project, and also identify any aspect of the Pillars of Faith and/ or Patriotism as a part of the service experience.

A major component of the YLDP is its relationship with its College Partners. These colleges actively support the belief that sound character is vital for leaders to possess. And that by supporting students of character they are helping to fulfill a major goal of higher education, preparing leaders of tomorrow. This support is shown by the scholarships they provide exclusively to the students of the YLDP. A very important component of the YLDP is to encourage students to be informed about different colleges, preferably of different sizes in order to be certain of where they believe they will be most successful, both academically and socially. The YLDP conducts two College Fairs in the first quarter of the year, which are only available to YLDP students, parents, and College Partners. The YLDP encourages students, and parents to arrange college visits to our YLDP College Partners. The YLDP encourages all of our students to attend YLDP College Partners. Preference in the selection of students chosen for the YLDP must be given to those interested in attending college at one of our college partners, students who are undecided on the college they want to attend, or students who want to attend one of the military academies. The YLDP does encourage students to attend YLDP College Partners because the colleges have demonstrated their support for students of character.

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The YLDP is a special experience for students that assists in heightening awareness of the belief: "This nation will remain free only so long as it is the home of the brave." And an understanding that "the greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of faith and character." In essence the YLDP is an experiencing of the rightful "social inheritance" of every American child, to have faith, be given a moral foundation for good character and a patriotic passion of the United States of America.





# Tips for Success

We are delighted that you will be a part of the YLDP this year, and we look forward to working with you. The YLDP is a Leadership Program, although scholarships are awarded, it is not a scholarship program. Be prepared to grow as a leader, student and citizen through what you will learn. As you prepare for your YLDP journey, here are some tips to keep in mind.

- Establish good habits like arriving early to all events. Do not forget to sign in when you arrive!
- Networking and registration is from 4:00 pm—4:30 pm
- Listen attentively to all speakers. Listen actively by taking notes and do NOT use your phone!
- Familiarize yourself with the YLDP Honor Code and commit to following it.
- Review the YLDP's absence policy and be sure to adhere to procedures for having an absence excused.
- Participate in as many extra activities - such as YLDP Service Projects - as possible.
- Study the YLDP's point system and think about how you can achieve the most points possible.
- Remember: If you want to earn a scholarship, the time to think about points is now!

## Stay Connected

### Email

Used often as a base of communication. Keep your email updated with the YLDP office.

### Website

Find all forms and information at [www.yldp.us](http://www.yldp.us)

**Being a member of the YLDP is a rare privilege. Prepare to enjoy every moment.  
Take advantage of what is before you and have fun.**

**WWW.YLDP.US**

# YLDP 2024-2025 Points Evaluation for Scholarships

**Students must attend at least six-monthly meetings to qualify for a scholarship.**

To apply for a diploma and scholarship, students must have gained at least 75 points prior to March 12, 2025. The following items will be explained in detail in January and should be submitted with the scholarship application on or before the March meeting.

- Two letters of recommendations
- 15 possible points for a two-page essay

**Scholarships are awarded based on:**

- Total points accumulated
- College preference
- Academic requirements (as needed)

Scholarships will be awarded at our graduation ceremony in May 2025.

## Excused Absence Policy

No homework credit for meetings that are missed

The YLDP allows **one excused absence when it is school related and documented correctly**. Students receive 7 points for an excused absence, but they must submit, prior to the absence, documentation from a school official regarding their dual commitment.

Once again, students can only receive points for **one** excused absence.

School officials should submit the documentation to [emilyyldp@gmail.com](mailto:emilyyldp@gmail.com)



# YLDP 2024-2025 Points Evaluation for Scholarships

- 5 Points Arriving to a monthly meeting by 4:30 pm (Sign In)
- 5 Points Completing a Monthly Meeting Small Group (Sign out)
- 3 Points Homework Assignments
- 8 Points Running for a YLDP Office - written speech
- 8 Points Running for a YLDP Office - presentation
- 5 Points Top 2 Finalist
- 10 Points Serving as a YLDP Officer
- 5 Points Serving as Senator – October Meeting during breakout session



## **Service Project:**

- 10 Points Participating in a YLDP Service Project (Max 3 project, 30 points)

**OR**

- 5 Points Developing (approved service project, Up to 3 projects)
- 10 points overseeing a successful project start to finish (Max 45 points)

**Service projects should be a minimum of 3 hours  
and have a minimum of 5 YLDP Participants**

- 6 Points No show to a service project you have signed up for
- 10 Points Service project sign in sheet not submitted the day after project

**Service Projects must be approved by February 13  
Service Project date must be prior to March 1**

- 15 Points **\*Walk for Warriors— Mandatory Service Project**

# YLDP Service Projects

## Service Project Requirements

### Projects not following requirements will not be approved

Email all project information to [candaceyldp@gmail.com](mailto:candaceyldp@gmail.com)

- If location requires a waiver or parent permission form, must be submitted along with your flyer, proposal and steps.
- Projects must be turned in **two weeks prior** to project date for approval.
- **Projects can not involve donations or fundraising.**
- Projects must be available to all YLDP Students.
- All projects must be prior to March 1 /Projects will not be approved after February 13.
- Project flyers should always include, location address, date, time, and your contact information.
- Check in sheets not turned in the day following the project - you will not receive project credit.
- If doing more than one project, the projects can not be at the same location for the same purpose.
- Projects can not be during school hours.
- Project must be at one location, no travel from one location to another.
- No card or letter writing service projects.
- **Minimum of 3 hours and have a minimum of 5 YLDP Participants**

## Projects that will not be approved

- No project proposal
- No Project Flyer with all required information
- No waiver or parent permission form (if not needed, should state that in the proposal)
- Less than two weeks prior

## Other Information

If your project gets cancelled due to bad weather, you will receive the 5 points for Developing an approved service project.

You are responsible to follow up with your project. If your project has completed information, you will be notified that your project has been approved and added to the website. Emails will not be sent out requesting information for your project. If you do not get an email confirmation your project has not been approved. You should follow up at [candaceyldp@gmail.com](mailto:candaceyldp@gmail.com)

**IMPORTANT:** If no one registers for your project, you will get the 5 points for creation. If you attend the project, you will receive 10 points for a total of 15 points. You will need to follow-up with an email that includes a photo of you at the service project.

## YLDP Scholarships



## Running for Office - December

Each YLDP Chapter shall elect four student leaders: a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, and a Public Relations Officer. The duties of each officer are listed below.

**President:** The President shall preside over all YLDP meeting. He or she will perform duties such as leading the pledge of allegiance, introducing guest speakers, and making announcements. The president shall also work closely with the program staff to create a positive YLDP experience for all students.

**Vice President:** The Vice President shall assist the president and shall preside in his or her absence. The Vice President shall also work closely with the program staff to create a positive YLDP experience for all students.

**Secretary:** The Secretary shall take the minutes of all YLDP meetings and shall distribute the minutes before the next regularly scheduled meeting. The Secretary shall also assist the YLDP President and Vice President and shall also work closely with the program staff to create a positive YLDP experience for all students. In conjunction with the other officers, the Secretary shall prepare the chapter's Annual Report.

**Public Relations Officer:** The Public Relations Officer shall be responsible for taking and receiving (from your chapter) photos, and submitting them to [candanceyldp@gmail.com](mailto:candanceyldp@gmail.com) and generally keeping members informed of all YLDP activities. The Public Relations Officer shall also assist in publicizing upcoming YLDP events and sharing the results with the public. The Public Relations Officer shall also work closely with the program staff to create a positive YLDP experience for all students.

. Submit a completed application online at [www.yldp.us](http://www.yldp.us) by 8:00 pm on November 6, 2024.

. Deliver a speech not exceeding three minutes, on Wednesday, November 13, 2024 from 4:30 - 6:30 pm at chapter locations.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Students are NOT to deliver campaign speeches on why they are great leaders or why they would make great officers. Instead, they are to deliver speeches based upon the topic. Speeches should not rely on personal anecdotes or narratives.

**Topic:** What is the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and why is it essential in order to have a true democratic society?

The finalists shall deliver their speeches to the entire YLDP chapter during the December meeting.

## NOTES

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## **Honorem Super Omnia— Honor Above All**

**Red** - “the warm active color; suggesting passionate devotion, divine love; self— sacrifice;  
heroism and valor”

**White** - “spiritual achievement”

**Blue** - “ the cool contemplative color echoing the light of heaven;  
symbolic of divine wisdom,  
profound meditation; enduring loyalty, eternity”

The **Gold Star** represents our reverent respect for the Medal of Honor and those who have earned it

*Logo inspired by: Charles Connick*