

# 2023 HARRISBURG HOUSING AUTHORITY'S SUMMER GROWTH PROGRAM REPORT

The Harrisburg Housing Authority's Summer Growth Program, affectionately referred to as our Environmental Teen Corps or ETC, completed its 9<sup>th</sup> year (actually its 8<sup>th</sup> year because of COVID, but started nine years ago) of continuous growth and success. This past year was actually our most productive year so far.

Under the direction of Mr. Clarence Watson, we have grown from 25 teens back in 2014 (our first year) to 100 teens in our ninth year. For the seventh consecutive year, we have had over 250 applicants apply for the program. Because of the continued success and popularity of the program, it has become an expected and signature source of employment for our inner city teens. The demand for the program remains extraordinarily strong.

Over the past nine years, our core values have remained the same, but our relationships with different entities in our community continues to evolve and grow.

## PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE PROGRAM

*"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education."*

*~Martin Luther King, Jr.*

The program was designed to strike multiple chords all at the same time. We are building in our teens higher expectations for themselves; get them to understand the significance of environmental issues within their community and abroad; have them embrace the importance of responsibility and accountability; show them how to achieve through action, etc...

One of the key ingredients this year was to get the teens to understand the importance of enjoying their job. In our current work environment, 75% of adults are unhappy with their current job. A survey was given to our teens asking how many of them enjoyed their job with the Summer Growth Program. All of the teen responses were that they enjoyed their "work" experience with the Program. How did we create such a pleasant and enjoyable "work" environment? This summer we implemented the value of hard-work into the six areas of a healthy life. The six areas of a healthy life – "emotional", "intellectual", "financial", "spiritual", "social" and "physical", were infused into their "work" environment. In every aspect of the program we tried to involve a combination or all of these six areas of a healthy lifestyle. Along with memorizing and applying the 7 Habits for Highly Effective Teens, which has been a staple of the program curriculum, we strive to help our teens develop a high level of emotional intelligence.

## WHY EVERY TEEN IN OUR PROGRAM ENJOYED THEIR EXPERIENCE

- **Social Health** – We are social beings, and the Summer Growth Program provided the perfect opportunity for our teens to meet new friends from different areas of town, to work with mentors and new team members, and to learn how to bond and create synergy within their team.

- **Spiritual Health** – Once a week, the teens took a three mile nature walk at Wildwood Park behind HACC. Most people miss work because of some type of health reason, so the nature walk was designed to help the teens renew themselves. Also, the teens engaged in meditative coloring, which taught them how to be patient and thorough.
- **Physical Health** – The teens learned how to work from the neck up and the neck down. From picking up trash to gardening, the teens understood that their job enhanced their physically healthy. The teens didn't realize that they walk between 1-3 miles while picking up trash.
- **Intellectual Health** – Along with teaching the 7 Habits, we had a lunch time chess club where some of the teens would engage in the game of chess during their learning lunch period. We would also encourage teens to write journals in order to learn or develop how to express their thoughts.
- **Emotional Health** – We stressed emotional intelligence on a daily basis. The lagging indicator of being emotionally intelligent is the display of good character and behavior; which is the primary reason for the continued success of our program.
- **Financial Health** – Providing a stipend for a summer of hard work, we taught the teens how to manage and handle their money through our financial literacy program. We taught our teens about how money works, how to save and how to spend properly.

Like previous years, it was imperative to make sure the investment from HHA continued to produce life changing results for our teens. The program has proven and continues to demonstrate that with the right environment and proper leadership, our teens can excel. The success of our teens and the clear desire for more life-affirming programs and engagements, leads us to conclude that there is a need and demand for a youth-oriented Urban Leadership Academy.

### THE START OF THE PROGRAM

Through Mr. Watson's leadership over the past nine years, at the end of April and the beginning of May, HHA begins each year by sending a mass email message to the teens who are eligible to return, a mass email flyer to parents and then distribute flyers out to all HHA residents. In addition, the program information is promoted via social media. As far as recruiting mentors, we sent out flyers and use social media to all local schools and colleges. This year we had over 250 applications for teens and over 20 applications for mentors.

HHA kicked off the program with a mandatory two day orientation with all teens and their parents. Because of the number of teens in the program this year, we held orientations on multiple days with multiple sessions. **Note:** If the selected teen(s) did not show up for orientation, someone else would be selected. The orientation packet was thorough and focused on a zero tolerance format.

As the ETC Workforce now know, Mr. Watson is a firm believer in the habit of displaying good character and good behavior. One of his favorite sayings as an educator is, "the only difference between an ordinary student and an extraordinary student is their attitude and behavior." Thus, Mr. Watson focuses on five quotes throughout the program that helps the teens improve their ***"Emotional Intelligence."***

***"Chase excellence not money. Money will always find excellence." (George Fraser)***

***"Do what you have to do in order to do what you want to do." (Great Debaters)***

***"What runs through you sticks to you." (Malo Carpenter)***

***“If you hang around four broke people, you will be the fifth one.” (Watson)***

***“Always think before you move.” (Eugene Brown)***

### **LEADERSHIP MENTORS**

***“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” (John Quincy Adams)***

The foundation and continued success of our program was based on the leadership of Mr. Watson and our college and adult mentors. The reputation of the program now precedes itself. Thus, each year the program has been able to recruit solid mentor leaders to help each ETC group. The mentors have various backgrounds. This year, we had 14 mentors ranging from ETC graduates, college students, college graduates, teachers and community leaders. The mentors are given lessons on peer leadership in order to help prepare them to lead their assigned Environmental Teen Corp. (ETC) group. Each workforce team was made up of 6-8 teens.

In the past, we contacted area colleges, such as HACC, Penn State Harrisburg, Harrisburg University, Shippensburg and Millersville to find qualified applicants for the program. This year, because of the popularity of the program, we had over 20 candidates apply to become a mentor. Fourteen of the applicants were selected as incredible mentors’ who ultimately displayed extraordinary leadership to our teens. Out of the 14 mentors, 10 of the mentors were teens who graduated from the program.

All staff and mentors complete the First Aid/CPR course and passed the criminal history and child clearance background check.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEENS)**

***“To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.”***

***~Theodore Roosevelt***

There is little debate that one of the major challenges for a teen is his/her ability to control and understand his/her emotions. With this in mind, the program incorporated mandatory study lessons for the book, “7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens.” In addition to having the teens memorize and recite the habits each day, the teens had worksheets to complete. Every morning the teens were instructed on how to apply the habits to help them successfully complete the program and how to incorporate them into their daily lives. We also added the phrase ***“Behavioral Economics”*** to compliment the impact of the 7 Habits. The teens learned to realize that their behavior was a lagging indicator of their economic power.

### **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

***“One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn’t as individuals.”***

***~Jean Vanier***

#### **OBJECTIVE NUMBER ONE**

**THE ETC YOUTHFORCE WAS TO HELP KEEP THE CITY OF HARRISBURG CLEAN BY ENGAGING IN NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN-UP, TRASH PICKUP, ETC.**

For the past nine years our main objective was to get the ETC Youthforce to understand how important it was to keep their own community clean and help beautify the City. This year, the teens came into the program expecting to keep the streets clean and knew they were setting an example for everyone in the neighborhood. In order to provide perspective, Mr. Watson also had the teens clean neighborhoods that were well kept; and asked the teens why some neighborhoods were cleaner than others. Mr. Watson had them clean and pick up trash on every main street and community in the City of Harrisburg to give the teens perspective and insight into developing expectations for themselves, their respective surrounding and our communities. The first week of the program is solely focused on cleaning all the main streets in Harrisburg. Below is an example of two of our 14 teams street cleaning schedules during week one.

**ETC TASK AGENDA**  
**TUESDAY, JULY 12<sup>TH</sup>**  
**TEAM AMORI**

9:00-9:15am – Morning Presentation/Youthforce Agenda

9:30-11:30am – Street Cleaning – Jefferson and Wiconisco Streets to Front and Wiconisco Streets, Front and Radnor Streets to 7<sup>th</sup> and Radnor Streets, 7<sup>th</sup> and Schuylkill Streets to Front and Schuylkill Streets

***(Note: Take a pic of where the bags are located and document the number of bags picked)***

11:45-12:45pm – Learning Lunch at Isabelles

1:00-2:45pm – Documentary

2:45-3:00pm – Closing Comments

**ETC TASK AGENDA**  
**TUESDAY, JULY 12<sup>TH</sup>**  
**TEAM JUSTIN**

9:00-9:15am – Morning Presentation/Youthforce Agenda

9:30-11:30am – Street Cleaning – Oxford Street, Curtain Street, and Camp Street

***(Note: Take a pic of where the bags are located and document the number of bags picked. Also, make sure the teens work until 11:30am. Meaning, if you finish your assignment early continue on another street.)***

11:45-12:45pm – Learning Lunch at Two Brothers

1:00-2:45pm – Documentary

2:45-3:00pm – Closing Comments

**OBJECTIVE NUMBER TWO**

**DEVELOP HEALTHY EATING INITIATIVES**

**“Food is medicine, and the right kind of relationship with food can make a positive impact on your health.”**

**~Hayley Hobson**

For the ninth year, our Learning Lunch Program provided a healthy education to our teens about the importance of healthy eating. This program was designed to teach the teens healthy eating habits, restaurant etiquette, how different cultures and people at differing income levels viewed food. The Learning Lunch Program was also designed to give back to local restaurants.

The goal was to spend three days at each restaurant. This year, with 100 teens, they were separated into 14 teams with a mentor supervising each team. They were dispersed at eleven different restaurants at the same time. The teens enjoyed good dining for three days at the same restaurant and then rotated to a different restaurant the following rotation cycle.

The program was also geared to introduce the teens to a broader base of dietary engagement. Not only were they going to enjoy different types of food, they learned restaurant etiquette, how to enter a nice restaurant, how to behave, how to order, how much to tip, etc. Before going to each restaurant, the teens prepared at least five questions to ask to owners. The questions ranged from why do you add a gratuity to a bill to how do you handle irate customers? Each restaurant owner spent at least 15 minutes of their time engaging in a question and answer session. Also, a few restaurants let our teens come in early to learn how and help prepare for the lunch crowd. The teens dined at the following restaurants; Underdog, Mother's Sub, Rookie's, Rapid Sandwiches, Isabelles, Joe Mamas, Las Delicias, Keystone Family Restaurant, Two Brother's Pizzeria, Crawdaddy's, Porter House, Mr. G's, Taste of Kate's, and the Slap Box. All restaurants had a different style and theme, and our teens got the opportunity to experience different styles and cultures of food. At the end of the three day cycle, we would conduct a question and answer session with each team on the pros and cons of each restaurant. Mr. Watson visited each restaurant every day to check on how things were going. We are happy to report that our teens were constantly praised by the owners, managers and staff from each restaurant about how well-mannered and professional the teens were. Our mentors did a fantastic job in making sure the teens displayed proper etiquette and ordered their lunches within their budget.

### **OBJECTIVE NUMBER THREE**

#### **THE TEENS WOULD LEARN ABOUT CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

*"The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary." ~ Vince Lombardi*

We had an opportunity to build wonderful active relationships with many business entities this summer that were very beneficially for our teens. Tuesdays for environmental and educational tours and Fridays for successful inspirational speakers. Our teens were exposed to different historical venues to hear inspirational speakers share their success stories. The purpose of the speakers and environmental tours was to share life leadership experiences so that the ETC Workforce could develop those skills and explore potential career opportunities. We had the following speakers share their knowledge and expertise with the ETC teens:

- Our first speaker was Leslie Moyer from Morningstar. Leslie spoke about the importance of understanding sexual health.
- Our second speaker was Milo Hooper, a retired City of Harrisburg Police Officer.
- Our third speaker was Ronald Goodrich. Manager at the McClure Company.
- Our fourth speaker was Patricia Robinson. CEO/Author/Speaker – Personal and Professional Transformation Coach.
- Our fifth speaker was Lamonte Jones. Entrepreneur and City Council candidate

## OBJECTIVE NUMBER FOUR

**TO TEACH OUR YOUTH LIFE LEADERSHIP SKILLS DESIGNED TO HELP THEM THROUGHOUT LIFE.**

### LIFE LEADERSHIP SKILL DEVELOPMENT

*“Not everything we face can be changed. But nothing can be changed unless we face it.” ~James Baldwin*

Twice per week, Mr. Watson and two mentors would teach lessons using the educational setting to teach our teens about the basic skills of how to live a productive life. We taught and had group discussions about the following lessons:

- The Importance of Gratitude
- Healthy Relationships
- Emotional Intelligence
- Intellectual Health
- Physical Health
- Financial Health
- Social Health
- Spiritual Health

In addition to learning life skills, our teens shadowed and interviewed local businesses and their owner and employees. We wanted to teach our teens that it’s possible to be a highly productive citizen in your own community.

## OBJECTIVE NUMBER FIVE

### TO EXPAND THE ENVIRONMENTAL TEEN CORPS ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN THE CARING OF THEIR COMMUNITY

With the continuous growth and positive reputation of the program, the Environmental Teen Corp increased their environmental awareness in the community.

#### **Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE) Partnership with the Environmental Teen Corp.**

Because of the positive and ongoing relationship with Harrisburg University, ETC connected with the (Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship) CIE. The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship delivers entrepreneurial education and start up support services to the previously underserved communities of women, the disadvantaged, and other minority groups, as well as entrepreneurs, and companies looking to innovate in Central Pennsylvania.

Twenty-five teens from the ETC Youthforce were selected to participate in the CIE LaunchU Program. The LaunchU Program is an annual “shark tank” style startup challenge and is open to anyone with a startup idea.

The LaunchU Program is usually a six week competition, but our teens had two weeks to compete. The teens were divided into five teams; each team had to come up with a business idea and then present it in front of their parents and the entire ETC Workforce. The five teams presented their business plans

well beyond expectations. The two week experience went so well, a local entrepreneur donated \$1,000 to be distributed amongst the teens in addition to the award money that was earned. The first place team earned \$1,000, second place \$750 and third place \$500. The LaunchU Program experiment went so well that they want 50 teens to participate next year.

### Chesapeake Bay Student Leadership Program

For the past few years, ETC has developed a good relationship with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Through the Chesapeake Bay Student Leadership Program, they continued to offer opportunities to expand their knowledge of watershed issues through unforgettable outdoor field experiences and by training our teens on how to advocate for local environmental issues that are meaningful to them. This summer, all the teens experienced a canoeing trip at Memorial Lake in Indiantown Gap. The learning point of the canoeing trips was to get the teens to understand that by keeping the streets clean they were helping keep the lakes and rivers clean as well.

### Community Garden Projects

The community garden projects provided the ETC with a structured plan to learn, enhance and maintain the community gardens in the city.

- **Project #1** – Built raised flower beds and planted vegetables and herbs for two of the Harrisburg Housing communities. Two ETC Workforce teams built 10 raised flower beds and planted different types of herbs and placed them at the Jackson building and Morrison towers. Residents from each community could pick some from herbs if needed.
- **Project #2** – The ETC Workforce, with the guidance of Rafiyka Muhammad and Christine Proctor, provided assistance in helping to maintain the Bridge Garden (at the old McDevitt school), and also picked fruits and vegetable that were provided to local restaurants.
- **Project #3** – For the past three years, the ETC Workforce has been gleaning (picking) vegetables and fruits from Strites Orchard that goes directly to the Central PA Food Bank. Even though Strites Orchard is not located in the City, it was important to our teens because many of them had to get food from the food bank at some time in their life. We sent two ETC Workforce teams out to Strites twice a week. This summer the teens picked 875 pounds of produce that was sent to the Central PA Food Bank.

## HARRISBURG UNIVERSITY AND THE CONTINUOUS PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL TEEN CORPS

### PREPARE OUR TEENS FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

In the past, the ETC Youthforce used Harrisburg University (HU) on Fridays for inspirational speakers. This year, HU expanded its reach and served to enhance our ETC teens' awareness of the incredible career opportunities that HU has to offer. Every Friday Shani Schalles and Alex Gibson would have a detailed schedule for the ETC Youthforce to follow. Below is an example of our schedule for Friday morning July 21<sup>st</sup>.

• Jeffrey/Laura	Factory.io	New UPMC Building	Two Teams
• Jesse/Adam	Forensics	Room 1202/1204	Two Teams
• Dana Harriger	Nutritional Science	Room 1102	Two Teams
• Sa Liu	Virtual Reality	Room 1302	Two Teams
• George Clements	Storyboarding	Room 1305	Two Teams
• Laura Wukovitz	Library Games	Library	Two Teams
• Jacquelyn Maddox	Biotechnology	1312-1314	Two Teams

## THE FINAL STAGE OF THE PROGRAM; THE DELAYED GRATIFICATION CELEBRATION LUNCHEON

*“To work and wait six weeks to get paid is a prime example of the power of “Delayed Gratification.”*

At the end of the program, we have a ***Delayed Gratification Celebration Luncheon*** that recognizes and highlights the teens’ completion of the program. This has become a signature event for the conclusion of the program. A recognition luncheon was not in the original plans nine years ago. As the teens were working through the first year of the program, Mr. Watson kept asking, “How should we present the stipends to the teens?” One day during a Learning Lunch sessions at Rookies with a group of teens, he asked the owner if HHA could have a luncheon in the upper level of his restaurant to give out the stipends to the teens; the owner said yes, and that started the ***Delayed Gratification Celebration Luncheons***. It started with 25 teens and their parents, which hosted an audience of 50 people. We were served wings and meatballs as a finger food entrée. Nine years later, we have evolved to having our ***Delayed Gratification Celebration Lunch*** at a five star hotel with over 250 enthusiastic teens and parents. It’s the most powerful display of recognition that Mr. Watson has ever seen throughout the entire City of Harrisburg in support of teens.

## LASTING (RESIDUAL) IMPACT OF THE SUMMER WORK PROGRAM

The exit reports listed below were written by teens who graduated from the program and became Leadership Mentors.

### Quartay B.

Quartay spent four years in the program, became a mentor for two years and is now a junior at Harrisburg University majoring in Business Management and Entrepreneurship. The essay below was written during his last year in the program.

“What I’ve gotten from this program for the last four years was nothing but positive, educational and most of all that four letter word LOVE. Through these years I’ve learned how to manage money, become a better teen, and most importantly a better citizen of Harrisburg. Through the years it’s been nothing short of fun. I enjoyed coming to work and seeing and meeting different people. I’m definitely going to miss coming to this program every summer and learning and growing more and more each year.

But I guess it’s time to take a step into the real world. But thanks to this program I am equipped with the tools and knowledge the average person doesn’t have. So I’m glad I’ve served my community for the past four years and I feel ETC has made a huge impact on not only this city, but sooner than later the



world. So Mr. Watson keep doing what you do and continue to change lives because this program and you surely changed mine. # ETC for Life!!!”

### **Brianni H.**

Brianni spent three years in the program, and has been a Leadership Mentor for three years. She is currently a senior at Morgan State University. The essay below was written during her last year in the program.

“This year, I expected the program to be a learning experience and for it to expand my mind in different ways. Throughout the program, I made multiple friends and even built stronger friendships with people I knew from last year. The learning lunches helped me expand my food variety and have a chance to taste different types of food. The Seven Habits book helped me realize things from centered relationships, to reactions for certain situations. Our group discussions taught me various things like how the egg travels through ovaries and how mistakes are bad decisions/choices.

The documentaries we watched had good lessons and often made you think and look at life in different perspectives. Last but not least, my mentor also taught me things and always had me thinking about something in another way. The program was everything I thought it would be and I’m happy that I was a part of it. I hope next year will be even better experience for the younger ones because sometimes they a mentor who can guide them in the right direction.”

### **Amori M.**

Amori spent three years in the program and has been a Leadership Mentor for one year. Amori is currently a senior at Harrisburg High. Because of her leadership skills that she displayed while she was in the program, she was the youngest mentor we’ve ever had. Her essay below was written during her second year in the program.

“This year was my second year doing the program and I can honestly say that I think it was a success. From all of our hard work, the places we ate, and the bonds that I created this year were great. The ETC program opens up many great opportunities for us teens that we probably wouldn’t get anywhere else. I know for myself and many more people in the program are very thankful for that. Personally, I think the mentors deserve a HUGE shout out (so thank you mentors for guiding us through six weeks... especially you Mr. Dwan.) My favorite memory from this year would probably have to be the canoe trip. It was a great learning experience and it was really fun. During the program we also work from the neck up and 7 habit lessons; including learning about ourselves, relationships, friendships, and more.”

### **Justin S.**

Justin spent two years in the program and became a Leadership Mentor this summer. Below is his essay that was written during his last year in the program.

“For my second year at the job, I had a really great experience. I honestly liked it more than I did last year because I recognized a lot more people and I was more comfortable with being around them. This is also my last year as a “non-mentor”, so I had to step up my leadership game. Our mentor Dashaun was in Iowa for whole week for a track and field event and I became the mentor for that week. I made sure we all were safe, cleaned a lot, and contacted drivers to make sure we ate on time and made sure we got back to the school. Even though Dashaun is back from Iowa, I still try to be a leader.

For the two years I've been here, Mr. Watson made us learn about the 7 habits. Mr. Watson stressed that if you utilize these habits on a daily basis, you will be successful. I had a great experience for the two years I was here, and hopefully when I graduate from high school, I can become a mentor."

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

What started out as a pilot program with 25 teens and not much support from many community stakeholders or leaders, has grown into a vibrant, respected and highly successful Summer Youth Program that unleashed the positive energy of 100 teens and 14 leadership mentors annually.

The growth journey has not always been easy. The program has had its challenges with support and mischaracterizations. However, through the power of the 3 P's (passion, persistence and perseverance) we've continued to learn and grow.

After nine years of continuous growth, our core approach remains intact; keeping the streets of Harrisburg clean, mastering and putting into action the Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens and continuing to promote and teach the importance of nutrition and fitness through our Learning Lunch Program.

Once again, the program has exceeded our expectations. The ETC Youthforce were engaged, motivated and very positive about helping the City of Harrisburg. For the ninth year, we cannot begin to thank enough the various groups, businesses and individuals that helped us reach and teach our teens.