



OUR 20 YEAR JOURNEY

YEP BEGINS

Melissa Sawyer and two colleagues start YEP to support formerly incarcerated youth as they rejoin their families and communities after passage of the Louisiana Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2003 (Act 1225), creating the first program of its kind in the state. YEP carries out its mentoring work, later called **YEP Mentors**, in a storefront on Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.

2004



YEP Educates launches as NOPLAY (New Orleans Providing Literacy to All Youth) with free drop-in classes at YEP's offices focused on high school equivalency education for out-of-school youth. In the first weeks, dozens enroll.

2006



YEP Mentors adds a proactive prevention-focused, community-based mentoring program to serve youth as young as 10 years old who are not court involved.

2008



YEP secures a permanent presence in Central City by purchasing in full the Youth Center, later renamed the Michael R. Boh Youth Center.

YEP Works launches its work-readiness training and opens YEP Bike Works with seed funding from the Trafigura Foundation.

YEP Mentors expands to St. Charles Parish.

2012



YEP Enriches introduces an overnight camp for children impacted by substance abuse, initially partnering with the Moyer Foundation.

2015



2005



Hurricane Katrina devastates New Orleans, forcing YEP staff to disperse across the Southeast to continue supporting displaced young people. YEP's headquarters, undamaged in the storm, reopens within months to provide vital services to youth as they return to the city.

2007



YEP Educates moves to a larger space near the Orleans Parish Criminal District Court and expands the program's reach and impact in partnership with the court and the New Orleans City Council.

2009



YEP Enriches launches to meet the need for out-of-school time enrichment opportunities in the Central City neighborhood by offering a free, six-week summer camp for youth. In 2010, YEP Enriches adds an afterschool program.

2014



YEP purchases 1600 and 1604 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. buildings, which further establishes the organization as a transformative anchor on the thoroughfare.

YEP Educates opens a new location in the Algiers neighborhood.

2016



YEP Works expands training opportunities for participants by opening a second retail store, YEP Thrift Works.

YEP is selected as a U.S. partner by the International Youth Foundation for its Youth Global Learning Exchange; 19 YEP staff and participants travel to Brazil for a peer-to-peer learning experience with Rede Cidadã, an organization that places youth into work across Brazil.

2018



YEP adjusts to pandemic restrictions by providing services via Zoom, outdoor gatherings, and other ways to maintain critical connections while keeping staff and participants safe.

2020



YEP opens the New Orleans East Opportunity Center (NOEOC), working to bring its programming to an underserved area, where more children live than in any other part of the city.

2022



2019



YEP's drumline and dance team debut at their first Mardi Gras parade, Krewe of Iris.

2021



YEP receives its largest-ever unrestricted grant of \$3 million from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott, providing an unparalleled one-time gift to serve our community.

2023



YEP operates all four of its programs at the NOEOC, reaching more young people and their families with its community-based mentoring, enrichment, education, and employment-readiness training.

2024

YEP's Board of Directors establishes an endowment fund at the Greater New Orleans Foundation to ensure that YEP will be able to continue providing services to the community for decades to come.

YEP celebrates 20 years of empowering young people and their families in Greater New Orleans with a gala at the Smoothie King Center, when the Caesars Superdome was lit up in YEP colors, and a block party at its Youth Center.





OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

YEP + YOU
EMPOWERING COMMUNITY TOGETHER