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CALIFORNIA
During Benito (Benny) Arviso’s time at Margett Pathway Academy, teachers and staff watched him grow into a motivated and independent young man advancing diligently towards graduation.

Benny came to East San Gabriel behind on his high school credits, but he worked tirelessly to rectify that, taking advantage of the school’s independent study opportunities to make up classes and taking assignments home to stay current.

This young man’s dedication was evident not only in his work ethic but also in his attendance. At one point, it came to the school’s attention that, due to a change in Benny’s housing circumstances, he had had to relocate to a neighborhood some distance away. Yet, this did not deter him from coming to school each day – and on time. He woke up at 5 AM to take the train to the station nearest the school, then bicycled the rest of the way to the campus.

Besides working so conscientiously on his own studies, Benny also served as an inspiration to his schoolmates. He constantly encouraged students younger than him to make good choices so as not to get behind in their schoolwork or fall into trouble.

Benny’s YCC Case Manager reports that she has never seen a student so motivated to attend school and get an education.
With his commitment to career, healthy lifestyle, and supporting those around him, Sports Medicine Pathway student Feliciano (Felix) Barrueta embodied the core values of the School of Medicine, Art, Research & Technology at Manual Arts High School.

In his third year of YCC participation, Felix held a 3.7 GPA. He earned the highest possible score on each of his Project Based Learning presentations and, as a junior, he was on the judging panel for both tenth and twelfth grade presentations. Felix provided ongoing assistance to students with academic challenges and support to English Language Development students. He was a member of the school’s Leadership program and was slated to be an officer during his senior year. He is also CPR certified and provides CPR training to others.

As an athlete, Felix participated in cross country and tennis. He was the number-two runner at Manual Arts and has completed two Los Angeles Marathons.

The summer after his junior year Felix worked as a paid intern at a UCLA medical lab through the YCC Work-Based Learning Program. He also earned college credit and was enrolled in a four-course Elder Care Certification program in conjunction with Manual Art partner school, Los Angeles Trade Tech College.
Hellen Christiel Jiminez
East San Gabriel Valley Regional Occupational Program
Baldwin Park High School
Baldwin Park, CA
2016 – 2017 School Year

From the onset of the YCC program, Hellen was clear in her intention to pursue a career in veterinary science. Her love and appreciation of animals began with the frustration she felt from her inability to prevent her first dog’s declining health and ultimate death. This pivotal moment in Hellen’s life continued to influence her academic career and provided her with the drive to succeed in her chosen career pathway.

Throughout her high school education, Hellen continually challenged herself by enrolling in advanced placement courses, and she consulted frequently with her counselors about post-secondary goals. As a graduating senior, Hellen held a 4.15 cumulative GPA and was in the top 4% of her class. She explored her intended career beyond the classroom as well by reading online articles, watching videos on various domestic and wildlife specializations, and researching universities with majors or concentrations in Animal Science or Biology. Through the East San Gabriel Valley Regional Occupational Program’s YCC Work-Based Learning program, Hellen started an internship with a local veterinary clinic to gain experience in the field. She also exercised her leadership skills as President of Debate Club and Vice President of the Horticulture Club.

Hellen proved herself to be a model for fellow students, as she worked toward her goals and utilized every available opportunity to increase her exposure to the world of work.
Joel Miranda’s determination and dedication to academic excellence was evident from his 4.0 cumulative GPA and his position in the top 3% of his class at Technology Preparatory Academy. From the start of high school, he focused on his plan to pursue a career in engineering and study at the University of California, Davis, with a minor in Computer Science. He completed two computer science courses at Technology Prep and he challenged himself by taking honors courses, completing high school graduation requirement courses during the summer, and by attending Saturday classes to complete an additional year of math.

Through YCC, Joel learned to code and to apply his creativity to real-world experience. In ninth grade, he completed an Exploring Computer Science course and developed a website using JavaScript. By tenth grade, he was learning and working in game design. He was also introduced to Project Based Learning, where he worked in a team investigating genocide. Through this experience, Joel learned to communicate with peers, practice his public speaking skills, and share his new awareness about global issues with his community.

Joel’s athletic activities added to his understanding of the importance of teamwork, discipline, and setting priorities. He hopes to take additional concurrent enrollment courses at Los Angeles Mission College, and he looks forward to new projects and learning opportunities.
Senior Celina Vargas stood out as one of the most exceptional students in the Gladstone High School Medical Pathway, a program of more than 125 students ranging from the 10th through 12th grades. Her strong work ethic earned her a GPA of 4.67 and kept her steadily at the top of her medical pathway classes. Celina was an invaluable leader in the program as well, assisting struggling students and encouraging pupils in lower grades.

Celina’s leadership extended beyond academics into extracurricular activities. As Captain of the Gladstone High School volleyball team for two years, she led her teams to two consecutive playoff berths at the California Interscholastic Federation tournament. She also won multiple “CIF Player of the Match” Awards.

Celina’s post-graduation plans include pursuing a career as a pharmacologist and studying at either Harvard; Stanford; Princeton; University of Southern California; University of California, Los Angeles; or New York University. Her acceptance would make her the first person in her family to attend college.
By her senior year, Erika Bello-Ramirez was in her third year of the Health and Biomedical Science pathway and had also completed two years in the Information Technology pathway. While maintaining a 4.07 GPA, she was an active member of HOSA (Future Health Professionals) and president of NOBCChE (National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers).

Over one summer, Erika had the opportunity to participate in the Project SEED program at Indiana University Indianapolis where she worked on a breast cancer cell research project. Project SEED was established to provide students with the opportunity to explore a career in science and gain real-life, laboratory experience at the university level. In addition to Project SEED, Erika has also participated in the Health Career Opportunity Program.

Erika plans to attend college in Mexico and major in Pre-Medical studies, then return to the United States to complete her residency program. Her long-term career goal is to become an Oncologist, which will, hopefully, enable her to assist patients with early diagnoses, giving them a better chance for recovery or remission.
Essence Jordan began pursuing her career as a software developer by enrolling in three YCC computer science classes including Computer Tech Support, Computer Science I, and Network Administration.

Not only did Essence immerse herself in technology at school, she also took advantage of learning opportunities outside the classroom. She was a key member of the programming subteam for the high school’s FIRST robotics team and worked on a project with a programming mentor to create a scouting app using a Raspberry Pi.

Essence also became involved in Black Data Processing Associates (BDPA), an international association for IT professionals. Through this organization’s youth program, she worked with adult mentors to learn about database administration, and she attended a conference in Atlanta where she participated in competitions using her coding skills.

As a YCC Student Leader, Essence assisted the YCC Staff with program events. She participated in recruiting activities for both the Girls Who Code club and the robotics club. She also actively promoted STEM in her community by volunteering for the FIRST Lego League tournament and at the high school’s yearly STEM Fair. Reliable and trustworthy, and a high academic achiever with a 4.14 GPA, Essence has been an excellent role model for her peers.
Bryan McClain
Metropolitan School District of Pike Township
Pike High School
Indianapolis, IN
2017 – 2018 School Year

Bryan plans to attend Indiana University Purdue University in Indianapolis to major in Computer Science and Mathematics and pursue a career as a Software Developer. He began his pathway with the Computer Programming course and enrolled in Networking I. Other courses he has taken through YCC include Web Page Design, Computer Tech Support, and AP Computer Science.

On-the-job training included spending time as a paid intern in software development for Time Compressions. Bryan is a member of Business Professionals of America (BPA) and, in two different years, received first place in Visual Basic and first place in Java programming at the State level. He also competed at BPA Nationals. Bryan is a member of the National Tech Honor Society, National Honor Society, and Spanish Honor Society. He has held a 4.514 weighted GPA on a 4.0 scale and was ranked ninth in his class of 608.

Bryan has proved himself to be mature, honest, trustworthy, and dependable. His analytical mind and skills in problem solving have, no doubt, been a major factor in his accomplishments.
Aiming for a career as a Network Administrator, Savannah plans to attend North Carolina A & T University with a major in Information Technology. She enrolled in Networking II: Infrastructure in the Computer Tech Support course to begin her pathway. Her other YCC courses included Networking I and Introduction to Engineering.

Besides working as a paid intern for MSD of Pike Township, Savannah also became a member of Business Professionals of America (BPA) and received first place at Indiana’s annual BPA contest. She competed at BPA Nationals in Dallas, Texas.

A member of the National Tech Honor Society, Savannah had a 3.259 weighted GPA on a 4.0 scale. She has shown herself to be a problem solver, a leader, and a dedicated student with a high degree of respect for her teachers, supervisors, and fellow students.
Continued achievements by Casey County High School’s Emily Shoemaker earned her a place on the Student-of-the-Month Honor Roll for a second time.

As a YCC member at CCHS, Emily participated in Mock Interviews and was immediately offered a job by Tarter Industries. The company hired Emily, not just for the remainder of her senior year, but on a continuing basis. In addition, Tarter agreed to work around Emily’s college schedule and put her on track to move into management upon receiving her bachelor’s degree. They also offered her tuition support and incentives for academic achievement in college.

Emily has fully used the support of YCC to launch herself successfully into life after high school. Even before her job offer from Tartar, the interview practice she received won her a server position at Cracker Barrel and earned her the Distinguished Young Woman Interview Award. The YCC program has also helped her with her career exploration, college applications, and financial aid including the Governor’s Scholar Application.
MINNESOTA
Elijah Benson, of Apple Valley High School E3 STEM, has been one of his school’s top STEM students. In an astonishing academic turnaround since joining the program, Elijah transformed himself from struggling student to a perfect 4.0.

While active in the E3 STEM Tutoring Center and the Thomson Reuter’s mentoring program Elijah continued to make full use of every opportunity in pursuing his education. He augmented his academic skills with the resume-writing, interviewing, and leadership training made available through academic/career counseling and E3 STEM academy classes. He took additional initiative by applying to be a member of the E3 Leadership Team. And his participation in work-place experiences and visits to partner companies became further proof of his enthusiasm in working toward a quality STEM career.

Engaged, enthusiastic, reliable, and friendly, Elijah has flourished in the STEM program.
Alicia Duo was raised in a household where English was not the primary language, but that did not prove to be a barrier to her education. Attending Apple Valley High School, she took full advantage of all the opportunities the E3 STEM program offered: employer engagement fieldtrips, mentoring, service learning, college coursework, and career counseling. These experiences piqued her interest in the biomedical technician pathway – a career she might not have been aware of otherwise.

Alicia elected to attend one of the grant partners, Inver Hills Community College (IHCC) for her post-secondary education. While her family supported her decision to attend college, they were concerned that a two-year degree would not be sufficient career preparation, and they pressed her to pursue other degree options. However, through meetings with E3 STEM high school staff, post-secondary E3 STEM staff, and college career counselors, it became clear to Alicia and her family that a two-year biomedical technician degree is, in fact, a terminal degree offering the potential to earn between $23-$36 an hour on average.

With the support of her family and E3 STEM staff and partners, Alicia is now working toward her degree and her desired career. Her professors at IHCC have commented that she is a hard-working and thoughtful student, and her perseverance and dedication make her a great role model, particularly for students for whom English may be a second language.
NORTH CAROLINA
Zephaniy Polk
Anson County Schools
Anson High School
Wadesboro, NC
2016 – 2017 School Year

My Vue
Anson County Schools
Anson High School
Wadesboro, NC
2016 – 2017 School Year

Zephaniy (Zep) Polk and My Vue attended the Youth Career Connect STEM Academy at Anson High School (AHS) in Wadesboro, North Carolina, as Information Technology students. This rigorous STEM program enables students to earn a high school diploma, college transferable credits, Microsoft Office Specialist credentials, college diplomas, and certifications. My and Zep joined thirteen of their classmates at the 2017 South Piedmont Community College (SPCC) Commencement to receive one of two college IT certifications they earned through a partnership between SPCC and YCC at AHS.

Driven by a strong work ethic, My and Zep have taken full advantage of their program’s emphasis on industry competencies and employability skills. Each held internships, winning superior approval ratings from their work-based industry supervisors. Representatives from the school’s YCC program often heard about the phenomenal work My and Zep were doing and how they would make outstanding career professionals for future employers. Zep’s internship landed him a job for the summer, and My’s internship experience led to an IT internship in Advanced Studies at the school level. In addition, both students made the YCC at AHS Honor Roll at the A or B level every semester for three years.
The students have also been active in community service endeavors. A frequent volunteer activity was visiting the YCC at AHS “adopted grandparents,” who live at the skilled nursing facility, Meadowview Terrace, located just across the street from the high school. Zep and My, along with their peers, enjoyed interacting with the senior citizens and took this service role as seriously as their studies.

The high level of motivation and enthusiasm for learning that Zep and My exhibited reflect the culture of YCC at AHS, which aims to instill a dedication to quality, compassion, positive relationships, and service to others. As students who embody these values, they have earned the respect of both teachers and peers, all of whom were delighted that the two were to be recognized on a national level.

Jordan Hildreth, YCC IT Instructor, had high praise for both students. “My Vue is a phenomenal student that is extremely eager to excel at everything she does,” Mr. Hildreth stated. “This characteristic is most noticeable from the internship reviews that she received from the Anson County School’s Central Office IT Director and IT Department, as well as the work done during her Advanced Studies Internship. My was able to use attained IT knowledge, employability skills integrated into her studies, and her own natural artistic abilities to help with numerous promotions of YCC activities. For a sixteen-year-old, she is amazingly professional and focused.”

Mr. Hildreth continued, “Zephaniy Polk is a student that is most recognized by his outgoing personality. But he is also a hardworking individual always looking for ways to enhance his skills. Zephaniy was our first YCC intern, spending his summer working with the Pee Dee Wildlife Refuge. During that time, he incorporated his IT background into the work there as he helped gather information to solve wildlife concerns. He used his Excel and Access industry certifications to move the refuge into the 21st century with data collection and analysis, and he earned a job this summer helping the worksite move forward in applying IT skills to the wildlife industry.”

From the point of view of YCC Project Director Deborah Davis, integrity is what clearly defined My and Zep. “They are honest hard-working students who care about others,” she noted. “They have positive attitudes about school, their careers and life. They both leave a positive impression on those with whom they interact daily. Quite simply, they are teenagers who know right, do right, and reflect right.”
OHIO
Evan Meyers, a graduate of Toledo Public Schools and Start High School’s Precision Machining Program, is a proud YCC success story. Talking animatedly about his work in the Apprenticeship Program at Abbott Tool Company, he confidently explains: “The job required a tolerance of five one-thousandths of an inch — and I did it for our customer!”

Evan fell in love with metal working in his sophomore year Construction Technology class. His dedication, encouraged by the mentorship of his teacher Mr. Borko, overcame his parents’ uncertainty about a future in a trade profession. Then, thanks to the YCC grant program, came “a Big Deal, Unique Experience”: collaborating with NASA Glenn engineer Kyle Johnson on the “Gaining Traction on Mars” project.

Meanwhile, Evan and his family were dealing with the debilitating illness of his mother Aili, who passed away in July, 2016. The difficult experience brought Evan closer to his father Jamie and his brother Jay as he traveled with them to the Cleveland Clinic to support his mom. And the necessity of continuing his schooling throughout the ordeal no doubt contributed to his resilience and sense of discipline.

As a result of his participation in the YCC Precision Machining program, Evan has headed toward a salary of $50,000 a year his first year out of high school. But that’s not all. Rising for work every morning at 3:00 am, Evan proves on a daily basis that his work ethic remains strong.

Even beyond that, he is following the example of his high school teacher Mr. Borko, his current boss and mentor Garland Scarberry, and “all the guys” who are his mentors at work. How? By paying it forward. He serves on the Business Advisory of the Precision Machining Program at Start High School. He has also brought a machining student from Start High School to shadow him at work, saying, “You have to let others see what the job is really like.”
Ckalvin Smith-Hamilton was a participant in the Supply Chain Management Program at Woodward High School in Toledo, Ohio. His cheerful, mature nature doesn’t reveal the difficult circumstances he has overcome. Losing his mother at the age of two, he was shuttled between foster care and family members several times before being adopted at age five by Karma Hamilton. As a child and pre-teen, he struggled with anger management issues and ADD. He worked to control the former and learned to embrace the latter, discovering that it keeps him active and focused at work.

By the end of his freshman year in high school, however, he was still lagging behind with a 1.9 GPA. His turn-around began when the AVID (Advancement VIA Individual Determination) teacher took him into her class. In sophomore year, his schoolwork began to improve. He progressed to his senior year with good grades even while completing an internship at Vinyl Design.

Ckalvin was accepted at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) not only to attend classes, but to play rugby. Mr. Carr, Ckalvin’s Supply Chain Management teacher and rugby coach, was so invested in Ckalvin’s continued growth that he contacted the coach at BGSU to discuss the support Ckalvin will need to be successful.

Ckalvin believes that his life has changed for the better because of AVID and Supply Chain Management, a program that exists because of the Youth CareerConnect Grant.
PUERTO RICO
Julio Ángel Torres Delgado

Puerto Rico Academy of Medical Directors
Lila Mayoral High School
Puerto Rico
2016 – 2017 School Year

Julio A. Torres Delgado attended Lila Mayoral High School in Puerto Rico and requested admission to the Puerto Rico Youth Health Careers (PRYHC) Program with a clear motivation to aim toward a career in the health field. This interest arose after several long hospital stays due to a variety of medical problems. Exposure to the hospital environment was key to developing his interest in health, diseases, and treatments.

Throughout his academic career, Julio performed at a high level, achieving the honor of being part of the High School’s Advanced Level Program. He held a 4.0 GPA and was in the school’s Honor Recognition for three consecutive years. After three years of participation in the PRYHC Program, Julio was the only student out of his cohort to graduate with 12 post-secondary credits.

In addition to his academic achievements, Julio has been committed to social causes and has participated in a number of community service activities which include collaborating with the American Cancer Society, working with foundations that protect abused animals, and helping clean beaches and coastlines. On weekends, Julio has also helped his father in construction tasks. His parents and siblings have been a crucial part of his growth and have been supportive of his many academic and community activities.
Omika Claudio Rivera attended Natividad Rodríguez High School, performing extremely well academically with excellent grades and a 4.0 GPA. In addition, Omika was a member of the following organizations: Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), Club of Medicine, Puerto Rico Youth Health Careers (PRYHC) Program, and Puerto Rico Health Occupations Students of America (PR-HOSA). She participated in the PRYHC Program since August of 2016 and was selected by her peers as a PRYHC Directive and PR-HOSA Student Representative. She achieved Second place in the 2017 PR-HOSA Program National Competition in the Poster Category.

Omika had the highest score of her high school on her College Board Exam. Due to her effort and dedication, she was admitted to the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus, to study Chemistry.