

Young Scholars' Institute
349 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08618

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NEWS

“PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL, CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR ARE YOUTH”

JULY 2009

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PREPARING TO SUCCEED



The pressure many high school students feel to do well on the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) grows greater every year. The competition to get into the college of one's choice is difficult for suburban students and even more daunting for many urban students.

While the number and availability of SAT preparation courses has grown substantially in recent years, the cost is usually out of reach for those with limited financial resources. Young Scholars' Institute (YSI) believes that this obstacle must be removed if all students seeking to continue their education beyond high school are to be afforded similar opportunities.

In an effort to “level the playing field”, for more than ten years YSI has partnered with Princeton Review, Inc. to provide inner city students with this valuable service. The SAT Preparation program is one of YSI's core offerings and is part of a subset of college prep programs that includes college tours, Princeton Model Congress and the college admissions workshop.

The SAT Preparation program is designed to prepare high school students for the critical reading, mathematics and writing sections of the standardized exam. It is held in the spring and fall and it runs for six weeks. The program is divided into nine, three-hour sessions beginning with a sample test and ending a week before the actual SAT is taken.

The classes are kept relatively small with sixteen students participating in each of the two sessions. The instructors from Princeton Review, Inc., cover a wealth of material in each of the three sections and provide students with guidance in effective study habits and test taking techniques. In many cases, the Princeton Review instructors get as much out of the program as the students. Instructor and assistant director Brynne Obeid explained why Princeton Review is so committed to continuing the program. “YSI offers such essential and positive programs for urban children. We respect what they do and we really enjoy working with their students. These are smart kids that ask good questions and have made great strides”.

YSI TURNING TWENTY COCKTAIL PARTY

Supporters of Young Scholars' Institute gathered at Baldassari's Regency in Chambersburg last month to celebrate YSI's nineteen-plus years of service to the Trenton community. Friends, elected officials, staff, trustees (both past and present) and others enjoyed the event, which was co-sponsored by Trenton councilwoman Annette Lartigue.

Pictured at right are: (seated left to right) Gloria Alston, Reneé Herron-McKithen, Adrienne Hayling, Ros Smotrich (standing left to right: Jerri Morrison and Steve Smotrich)



TAKING THE FIRST STEP

Where should I look for money for college? How do I dress for an interview? What will make my college application stand out? What courses should I take to prepare for college? This is a small sampling of the questions heard from high school students and their parents in attendance at YSI's annual College Admissions, Financial Aid and Career Planning Workshop.

The all day event featured a keynote speaker, various panels of parents, college students and professionals and presentations on admissions requirements, financial aid and scholarships. The keynote speaker for the April event was Trenton native Dr. Jacqueline Grimes, M.D. The product of a single parent home in Trenton's housing projects, Dr. Grimes explained how she survived a difficult childhood with her spirit and ambitions intact and how the poverty and despair that pervaded her neighborhood proved to be the impetus for her to pursue a career in medicine.

Jacqueline graduated Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Howard University. She obtained her medical degree from UMDNJ- Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Committed to bridging the gap of inequity in medicine, her personal and professional mission is to improve the quality of care and obstetrical outcomes in high risk populations.

While the keynote speaker changes each year, a talented group of presenters has remained fairly constant. L'Oreal USA's Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, Edward W. Bullock provides a rousing career exploration presentation that gets students thinking about what it means to be a professional. Mr. Bullock was joined this year by Mr. Robert Alston from The College of New Jersey and Michael Hannon from Princeton University. Both gentlemen volunteered their time and expertise, providing valuable information on college admissions and financial assistance.



Michael Troutman, Shenette Grey, Valerie Hedgpeth, Nykeya Tibbs, Marc McKithen, Les Summiel

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM REMAINS VITAL AMIDST BUDGET CUTS

Substantial cuts in the New Jersey state budget will impact the Young Scholars' Institute's after school enrichment program (ASEP) in 2009/10. However, the popular program will continue to serve between 210 and 220 students in September while maintaining its status as one of the largest single site, after-school programs in the state. YSI's primary funder, New Jersey After 3, Inc., was forced to make some very difficult decisions for the upcoming school year relative to the various schools they support. ASEP will continue to offer homework assistance, recreational activities, field trips, robotics and a host of other special programs to Trenton Community Charter School students.

Mr. Bullock offered this observation. "For over 15 years I have witnessed more than a thousand young people participate in the YSI college admissions workshops. I have been fortunate to lead the career-planning session, where participants learn about job preparation interview skills and careers in the 21st century. This program affords students the unique opportunity to speak to adults who have made the successful transition from high school to college to the world of work."

ALUMNI CORNER -

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

Valerie Hedgpeth grew up on a family-oriented street in Trenton's North Ward.. She is, by all accounts, a successful young woman and a proud product of the Trenton Public School system.

From the time Valerie attended Jefferson Elementary School until the time she graduated Trenton Central High School, she seemed to understand that hard work and personal commitment would be the keys to her future. She will be the first to tell you however, that what gave her an advantage over other kids in her neighborhood was the important role that Young Scholars' Institute played in her development from an early age.

In Valerie's own words, "As a youngster, I broadened my horizons by participating in a variety of YSI educational programs, beginning in elementary school with the science exploration program. I continued on my academic path in middle school and high school by enrolling in the six-week summer enrichment program, SAT Preparation course and by participating in college tours."

She learned very quickly that one of the YSI staff's greatest attributes was their personal interest in her success. She was not simply a random participant and she was not forgotten once she left Trenton to embark on her college career. As a student attending William Paterson University, she received a "care package" from YSI twice a year. She also took the time to attend college student gatherings where YSI alumni convened to discuss their experiences beyond high school and learned about possible next steps from career speakers.

Valerie always found a way to stay connected. As a college intern, she worked for YSI as an instructor in the after-school enrichment program. In 2003, she was selected from a host of alumni to share her experiences and testimony with 150 guests at YSI's fifteenth anniversary celebration.

To this day, Valerie remains an avid supporter of Young Scholars' Institute's mission. She is a member of the Alumni Association Steering Committee and supports the annual appeal. She is currently working as a guidance counselor for Capital Preparatory Charter High School in Trenton while pursuing her Masters Degree in Counseling at Rider University.

The student from Jefferson Elementary School and Trenton Central High School continues to strive for excellence without missing a beat. Her efforts are not lost on executive director Jerri Morrison, who added, "We are all so proud of Valerie. Her "story" inspires us and propels us to try to do more for more of Trenton's young people."



THANKS!

The YSI staff and trustees would like to extend thanks to the Princeton Area Community Foundation, Bunbury Company, Mary Owen Borden Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Page Otto Marx Foundation, PNC Foundation, TD/Commerce, Church and Dwight, Jack and Jill of Mercer County, Roma Bank and a host of private and anonymous donors for their financial support over the last year. A special thanks is extended to former editor Richard Bilotti and The Times of Trenton for selecting YSI as the beneficiary of the 2008/9 holiday appeal.

We thank you!

**Young
Scholars'
Institute**