



The **Blast**
NEWSLETTER
Winter Edition 2024

Official Newsletter of the
Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board

YAB
PA
YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

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Did You Know?

We are excited to share that the PA Statewide Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is now open to youth from age 16 until their 23rd birthday.

**YAB IS NOW
OPEN TO
YOUTH FROM
AGE 16 UNTIL
THEIR 23RD
BIRTHDAY!**



County Shoutouts

The Southwest region held its bi-monthly meeting on December 14, 2023 in **Indiana County**. There were eighteen attendees—thirteen youth and five staff representing four counties. The youth made Christmas Cards to send to youth in placement, residential treatment facilities, and shelters. The youth voted to send the cards to New Outlook Academy and Pathways.



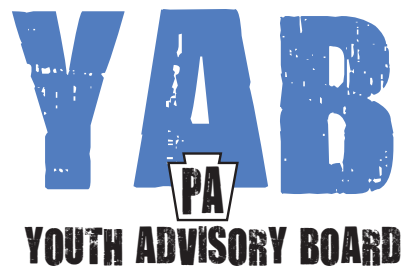
County Shoutouts

In **Butler County**, the local YAB made Christmas Cards for veterans, created encouraging cards for the Children's Advocacy Center, filled the Food Pantry Giving Box with food and winter items (gloves, scarves, etc.), began a gift drive for teens in Bethany Christian Group Home, rang the bell for Salvation Army, and volunteered at the River Community event and at the Reality Tour event (stand against drugs).



Erie County youth participated as they talked about choosing a theme for their upcoming spring fling and thought about new projects after completing their current initiative, which involved baking and decorating cookies for youth in placements.





Statewide Updates

The November YAB Statewide meeting brought together representatives from various regions. The day kicked off with an interactive icebreaker that fostered connection amongst the youth through partner interviews, where they introduced one another.

In addition, the youth actively participated in a focus group led by Dr. Daren Anderson Ellerbee, who currently serves as the inaugural director for the University of Pittsburgh's educational outreach center, addressing the challenges faced by older youth in foster care transitioning into post-secondary education. Dr. Ellerbee, along with her peers from Pitt Horizon Scholars Educational Outreach Center, facilitated an impactful session seeking the perspectives of YAB on post-secondary challenges, resulting in commendable engagement and insightful feedback.

Following this, youth leaders led a discussion on stipend policies, identifying commonalities and proposing standardized types of stipends across counties.

Please stay tuned for the YAB recommendation for standardized statewide stipends.

Beyond knowledge exchange, the Statewide YAB meeting serves as a catalyst for collaborative efforts, highlighting the dedication of both youth and stakeholders to shaping a more inclusive future in youth welfare.



NYTD

National Youth in Transition Database

- Is it time for you to take the NYTD survey? Do you have questions about why you are being asked to take the survey or its importance? Well, keep reading; below we answer some of those frequently asked questions when it comes to taking the NYTD survey.
- What is NYTD? NYTD (pronounced “knighted”) stands for the National Youth in Transition Database. This is a survey designed to track how the state has served you, an older youth, in care. It measures how well states are helping foster youth prepare for adulthood.
- How do you fit in with NYTD? The information gathered from NYTD helps Pennsylvania determine what impact they have made on your life. The survey gives agencies, staff, and lawmakers real feedback, from real youth, about the services that are provided and whether they are making a difference for youth exiting, or who have exited foster care.
- How do you get involved with NYTD? Glad you asked! All you must do is complete the NYTD survey before the deadline when you are contacted to take it. Spreading the word to your peers and other youth in care helps. Talk to them about the survey and how it’s important to their lives as well.

Black History Month Tribute

The YAB celebrates the enduring legacy of the Black community—stories of perseverance, advocacy, and triumph. Despite challenges, we share these narratives with youth of color in care to inspire growth beyond adversity. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “The time is always right to do what is right.”

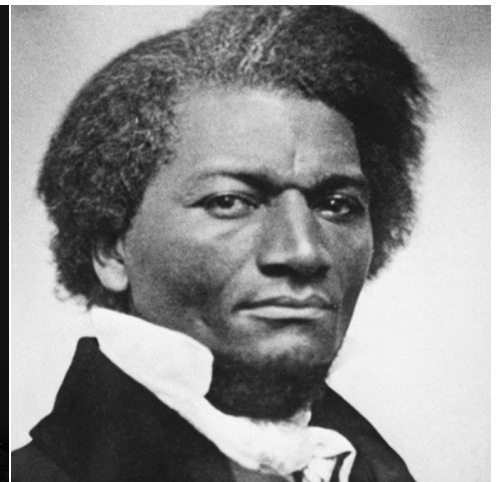
- Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream
- Rosa Parks fought for a seat
- Frederick Douglass spoke to inspire
- Iba Wells got the truth out to the media
- Booker T. Washington knew that knowledge is power
- Isabella Bomfree felt so strongly speaking out about slavery that she changed her name to Sojourner Truth



Martin Luther King, Jr.



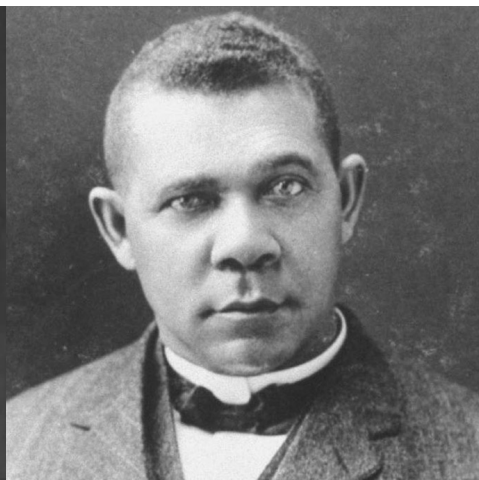
Rosa Parks



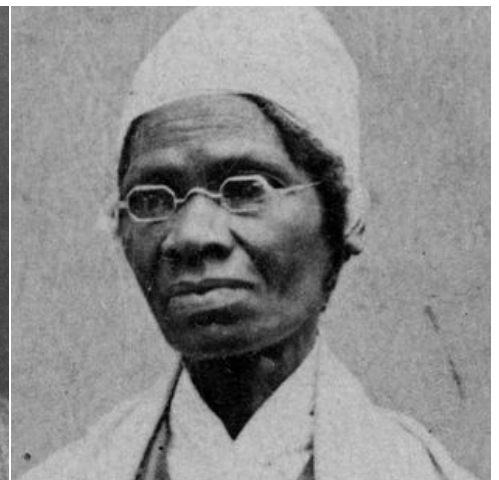
Frederick Douglass



Iba Wells



Booker T. Washington



Sojourner Truth

INTERESTING FACTS

◆◆ ABOUT ◆◆

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Originally focused on reaching **Black students** in public schools.



Started on February 7, 1926, as **Negro History Week**.

Launched by **Dr. Carter G. Woodson**.

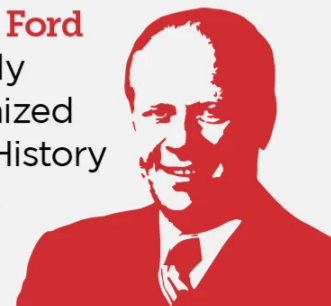


Celebrated in **the US, the UK, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, and the Republic of Ireland**.

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Kent State successfully promoted Black History Month in 1970.

In 1976, **President Gerald Ford** officially recognized Black History Month.



Protecting Your Crown

Please check out the newest resource developed by the PA Youth Advisory Board.



Black and brown youth, when removed from their homes, can be placed into environments where their culture is not reflected. These placements may be in rural areas without access to hair products and salons catering to textured hair. This guide is a resource intended to assist families, workers, and even youth to care for and protect their crown.

<https://www.payab.pitt.edu/files/ProtectingCrowns.pdf>



My name is _____

Black History Word Find

Find and circle the words.

P E A C E H O H B C J A P Z L N Q R U G V G V E
 F Q P U O A A P G N F M Q J L Z Q N L E H S F M
 X N B P T P B R P N N Y E Y R A M H I O B C R A
 U J L V G D K R R O C R C N E E J I N R I T O N
 Y N J M V E V M A I R D E O Z O I S T G J Q S C
 I V D P R F C A U H E T G G I H V T A E B X A I
 V N V E K Q R D M U A T U E K W T O B W I I P P
 F C T H R W U E H E G M T N P O C R O A H H A A
 R S T E A G F Q E B N U L U I U R Y L S C Y R T
 E C Z E G D R X N D G D U I B T B D I H I T K I
 D D Q Q W R W O N F O J M D N M Y A T I V U S O
 E T V C Q L A D U R L M E E B C A H I N I S R N
 R F O H M U G T E N E A J S N Z O N O G L K C E
 I A E L K J H I I Q D M K O X T J L N T R A I U
 C R K B E A D D F O U R I J V N S I N O I G V E
 K X P Z R R Q R W B N A A D Y Z N J U N G E I F
 D Z V V A U A W Z D A V L I Z N R B I C H E L D
 O K N M V B A N G W W V V I L R S I J A T A W Z
 U H I J W K M R C N A U X M T R U K T R S I A R
 G I K O M X T P Y E N G W V P Y O C G V J R R K
 L P M I I D I V E R S I T Y G U Z A K E C M Z J
 A M A Y A A N G E L O U V Q W J G T D R E E O G
 S M A R T I N L U T H E R K I N G J R F I N I L
 S N P M T D G M B O Q M C U H X C A R Z O I A U

ABOLITION
 ABRAHAM LINCOLN
 AMENDMENTS
 CIVIL RIGHTS
 CIVIL WAR
 DIVERSITY
 EMANCIPATION
 EQUALITY

FEBRUARY
 FREDERICK DOUGLASS
 FREEDOM
 GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER
 HARRIET TUBMAN
 HISTORY
 INTEGRATION
 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

MAYA ANGELOU
 OPPORTUNITY
 PEACE
 ROSA PARKS
 TOLERANCE
 TUSKAGEE AIRMEN
 UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Mental Health

Seasonal Wellness and Selfcare

As the days become shorter and the nights longer, there is a tendency to hibernate indoors, especially if you love the warmer weather that the summer brings. Consequently, this may bring with it some winter blues. While some winter blues are normal as we remain indoors more frequently, it is important to remember to take care of ourselves. Here are some tips to naturally shake off those winter blues.

Exercise

“Moving your body will compete with that tendency to be sluggish and can produce good brain chemistry,” says Dr. Scott Bea, from the Cleveland Clinic. Exercise is a way to release stress and increase overall mood. Luckily there are many exercise videos on web platforms like this [yoga video](#) to try at home.

Social Engagement

Create time to interact with others; continuing to routinely engage with others may help combat the winter blues. This may be a weekly virtual meeting, a cup of coffee with your neighbors, or joining a book club or other group that meets regularly. Although increased interaction may be stressful to some, maintaining a comfortable level of social engagement, while setting boundaries, may be found helpful to increase overall mood

Light Therapy

[Light therapy](#) is administered using a device that contains white, fluorescent light tubes covered with a plastic screen that blocks ultraviolet rays. Light therapy boxes range in intensity, with up to 10,000 lux of light. While it’s generally safe and well-tolerated by most people, those with certain health conditions shouldn’t try it without consulting with your doctor first. Dawn simulators are other devices that simulate sunlight. These are alarm clocks, but rather than waking you abruptly with sound, they produce light that gradually increases in intensity, just like the sunrise.

Adapted from [3 Tips to Fight Seasonal Depression – Cleveland Clinic](#)

Remember EAP

Free and confidential supports may be available for everyday concerns through your EAP. You can learn more about your EAP benefits through your employer’s HR department, find providers in your area, and access a wealth of information and resources for improving your mental health, building better relationships, recovering from substance misuse or addiction, navigating financial and legal matters, and much more.

Services available through EAP are a free benefit of working for the Commonwealth. Visit [liveandworkwell.com](#) or call 1-800-692-7459 to learn more.

OCYF Trauma Tip Sheet

December 2023

Questions? RA-PWOCYFTRAUMA@pa.gov

Human Trafficking Training

Polaris offers an interactive, online training program which includes six short modules, survivor stories and quizzes designed to deepen your understanding of human trafficking. Training participants will receive a certificate of completion.

<https://polarisproject.org/training/>

IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE

NO MATTER RACE, AGE OR GENDER



★
Polaris Freedom happens now.

The New FAFSA is Here!

Recently, the U.S. Department of Education announced that the 2024-2025 FAFSA is now fully available to students and parents, after a “soft launch” of limited availability earlier this month.

This new FAFSA includes many changes, including the important provisions for [homeless and foster youth](#). However, the delay from the usual October 1st release shortens the amount of time students have to complete the FAFSA and to make an informed decision about choosing a post-secondary institution. This makes it even more important for educators, service providers, child welfare professionals, and advocates to understand the new FAFSA and how to help youth complete it.

Additional FAFSA Resources

- [Start your 2024 - 2025 FAFSA Form](#)
- [New Federal FAFSA Guidance for Homeless Youth](#)



Career Link



Interested in a new trade or career choice? The Pennsylvania CareerLink can help you obtain a professional goal you may want to obtain while on YOUR journey to adulthood and independence. CareerLink offers multiple types of internships and job experiences to get young adult's foot in the door and ready for the real world. For more information, visit their website to see all jobs, trainings, and internships offered. If you know a young adult who can benefit from Yes To The Future services, call or text (570) 238-3400 / (570) 893-2989 or send an email to yestothefuture@csiu.org.

YES to the Future

YES to the Future provides no-cost career services for young adults who are **16-24 years old** and not currently enrolled in high school. Career services include access to **education, training** and **employment**.

Caring **YES Career Counselors** offer young adults support services including:

Assistance to **obtain important documents** such as birth certificates, Social Security cards, PA IDs and driver's licenses

Paid Internship and/ or **On-the-Job Training** opportunities

Financial and educational support to **pass GED®** or **HiSET®** exams and brush up other academic skills

Activities to help to **find and keep a job** including

- **Mentoring** and **peer networking**
- Preparation for **post secondary education** or **training**
- Opportunities to learn **money management** and **banking basics**

YES participants develop essential employability skills through various activities, like:

- Employer presentations and workplace tours
- Job search assistance, career exploration, and mock interviews
- Adult basic and secondary education classes, distance learning, tutoring
- School and campus tours
- PA CareerLink® workshops
- Career fairs

If you know a young adult who can benefit from YES to the Future services, call or text **(570) 238-3400 / TTY (570) 893-2989** or send an email to **yestothefuture@csiu.org**.

To learn more, visit www.csiu.org/YES.

Equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Program funded with federal dollars. For more information, visit: <https://advancecentralpa.org/about-us/public-notices/>

Visit or Call Us Today!

PA CareerLink®
**Northumberland/
Snyder/Union Counties**
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PA CareerLink®
**Columbia/Montour
Counties**
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PA CareerLink®
Lycoming County
(570) 601-1754

PA CareerLink®
Clinton County
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TTY (570) 893-2989
www.csiu.org/YES
yestothefuture@csiu.org

Scan QR Code to complete the interest form.



YES
to the Future



Your
Employment
Services

With YES Paid Internships you:

- Are placed with a local employer in an **industry of your choice** .
- Earn **\$12.00 per hour** .
- **Intern up to 30 hours a week** over 10 to 12 weeks.
- Could **make up to \$4,320** !



PAID
INTERNSHIPS



Scan the QR code to
complete a YES to
the Future program
interest form.

Have Questions? Call or Text (570) 238-3400 / TTY (570) 893-2989.

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

for no-cost services. Apply online today at

www.csiu.org/YES

Equal opportunity employer/program. Auxilliary aids and services available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Program funded with federal dollars. For more information, visit: <https://advancecentralpa.org/about-us/public-notices/>

A proud partner of the  American Job Center network

Upcoming Events

YAB Statewide meeting: March 14th & May 16th, 2024

Youth Summit: June 12th & 13th, 2024

Older Youth Retreat, July 29th - August 2nd, 2024

Resources

Mental Health National Suicide Prevention Hotline:

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

National Crisis Text Hotline:

Text HOME to 741741

Housing Homeless National Hotline:

1-800-786-2929

National Youth & Teen Runaway Hotline:

1-800-Runaway

Health & Safety National Domestic Violence Support Hotline:

1-800-799-SAFE

National STD Hotline:

1-800-227-8922

Legal Support Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network:

1-800-322-7572

Child Help National Child Abuse Hotline:

1-800-422-4453



YAB
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University of
Pittsburgh

School of
Social Work

Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center