Our future is bright.

2015 REPORT to the COMMUNITY
ABOUT SAY YES BUFFALO

Say Yes Buffalo is a landmark partnership that brings together the Buffalo Public School District, parents, the Buffalo Teachers Federation, the Buffalo Association of Administrators and Supervisors, higher education, the City of Buffalo, Erie County, Say Yes to Education, Inc., and a diverse group of Buffalo area corporate, non-profit, and philanthropic organizations to organize people, time, money and resources to provide holistic, year-round support to Buffalo Public School District students throughout their K-12 years and beyond. Say Yes Buffalo and its partners believe every student can graduate high school and college when given the proper supports, resources and opportunities.

Say Yes Buffalo partners facilitate comprehensive supports, including locally funded tuition scholarships to one of more than 170 colleges and universities for those who meet residency, graduation and admission requirements. These supports are aligned with what research indicates is needed to enable every child in the program to achieve his or her potential and include:

- Social services and family supports
- After school and summer programming
- Mentoring
- Health care
- Mental health care
- Legal services
- College preparation supports
- College scholarships
- Paid internships

When it was launched in December 2011, Say Yes Buffalo became the second Say Yes chapter to partner with an entire city school district. Other Say Yes chapters are located in Cambridge, MA; Hartford, CT; New York City, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Syracuse, NY; and Guilford County, NC.

INVESTING IN EDUCATION GROWS THE ECONOMY

24.4% of Buffalo adults have 4-year degrees; Increasing this number to the NYS average of 33.2% will bring $1.7 billion annually in disposable income into WNY economy

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 QuickFacts and CEOs for Cities Talent Dividend
In June 2015, hundreds of Say Yes Buffalo Scholars graduated high school and among them was Abbeni Dixon - the student representative who spoke at the event announcing the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship in December 2011.

Abbeni is now a freshman at Morgan State University.

TOP: Buffalo Public School student Abbeni Dixon in ninth grade speaking at the event to announce Say Yes Buffalo.

BOTTOM: Three years later, Dixon walking across the stage for her graduation from the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts.
Welcome to Say Yes Buffalo’s 2015 Report to the Community!
This past year, powered by the Say Yes Buffalo Partnership’s unwavering commitment to the vision of a better Buffalo, we’ve made incredible progress towards strengthening educational outcomes for Buffalo students. We hope our Angel Donors and partners feel a sense of pride when you consider the significant progress we’ve made together to remove barriers to our city’s young people’s ability to graduate high school prepared to succeed in college. The services and supports we are facilitating with dozens of partner organizations in this community took important steps toward maturity this past year. We are pleased to share the following highlights:

In the past year, we…

Contributed to another increase in the Buffalo Public Schools’ graduation rate, which rose to 61% for the class of 2015, and marked a 10-year high for the school district

Saw our third class of scholars began their college careers at 69 institutions of higher education around the country, bringing the total number of Say Yes Buffalo Scholars we’ve helped get to college to nearly 3,000

Coordinated with Erie County and the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo to increase access to needed mental health services in a total of 42 Buffalo Public School buildings

Launched the Scholar Mentoring Program which pairs high school seniors with a mentor to guide them through the transition from high school to college

Coordinated with the Erie County Bar Association’s Volunteer Lawyers Project and the legal community of Western New York to add more legal clinics, providing free legal advice to Buffalo students and families

Embedded Family Support Specialists into every Buffalo Public School to mentor and connect students and families with social services and other supports

Partnered with The Buffalo Niagara Partnership and the Western New York Association of College and Career Centers to launch a paid internship program for scholars that will create an important talent pipeline for our young people while meeting the pending demand for 165,000 open jobs anticipated in the next ten years here in Buffalo

We invite you to explore the enclosed report and reflect on the accomplishments made to date. None of this could be done without your leadership, advocacy and support.

Thank you for believing in the power of this partnership.

With gratitude,

Alphonso O’Neil-White
Scholarship Board Chair

David Rust
Executive Director
The Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Board focuses on fundraising and policy related to the program’s scholarships. This board is comprised of private individuals who are volunteering their time to raise the funds needed to provide the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship in perpetuity. Scholarship Board members also determine eligibility guidelines and advocate on behalf of the program.

Nancy Davis
Clotilde Dedecker
Secretary
Danis J. Gehl, Ph.D.
Roger Hungerford
Peter Hunt
Jeremy Jacobs, Jr.
Luke Jacobs
William L. Joyce
Vice-Chair
Daniel Lewis
Blythe Merrill
Alphonso O’Neil-White
Chair
Reverend Rachelle Robinson
Mary Anne Schmitt-Carey
Hon. Hugh Scott
Nick Sinatra
Stephen Swift
Treasurer
Daniel Lewis could be considered the first donor to the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Fund. In 2011, he learned about what was then just an idea, after meeting with Community Foundation President and Say Yes Buffalo co-founder Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker and immediately jumped at the opportunity “to invest,” as he puts it.

“When Clotilde explained how the scholarship would work, it was clear to me that this was a tool where people like me who care about Buffalo could invest in bettering its economy in a new way—by supporting the education of the city’s public school students, the region’s future workforce. I wrote a check then and there.”

A native of Western New York, raised by two public school teachers, Lewis grew up with a strong appreciation for the importance of education and the opportunities available to those who had access to earning a college degree. After graduating from Cornell University he landed in New York City, and put his education to good use building an impressive business portfolio. But, giving back was never far from his mind.

According to Lewis, “I think it is important for business people to partner with our community leadership to provide opportunities for our children.”

After a few years spent supporting a range of philanthropic interests, when he learned about Say Yes Lewis made a decision to focus his giving on education-related issues. Since then he has joined the board of the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship and the board of Say Yes to Education and he works tirelessly to connect the organization with opportunities to grow its reach. He’s also made non-traditional financial commitments to the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship, including conception of and support for the “Bright Spots” marketing campaign to grow awareness of the effort among potential donors, and has pledged to donate a percentage of anticipated profits through a Buffalo-based real estate venture.

“I hope other business leaders will also see the importance of Say Yes,” says Lewis. “With these investments, I think it shows we are investing in this city’s young people and our great city of Buffalo.”
SA Y YES BUFFALO 2015 Report to the Community
In Fall 2015 we launched our “Bright Spots” marketing campaign to highlight what has become possible for Buffalo students and families since launching the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship. Driven by the vision and generosity of Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Board Member Daniel Lewis, the campaign highlighted specific students and their families whose lives have been changed due to the now real possibility of a college education, and provided commentary from key Say Yes partners on why they support the program. Say Yes worked with award winning film-maker John Paget to create a compelling video that shares the story of Say Yes. To view the video, click “Learn More” at SayYesBuffalo.org.

RIGHT: Kyle Gray (back center), a future Say Yes Scholar, with his family at the video launch event.

Say Yes Buffalo joined the City of Buffalo in its call for diverse and inclusive workplaces by signing Mayor Byron Brown’s Opportunity Pledge. Say Yes Buffalo prides itself on being an inclusive workplace where its employees reflect Buffalo’s rich diversity. Say Yes Buffalo is committed to continuing its efforts so that all members of Buffalo’s future workforce have fair and equal access to career opportunities in the city of Buffalo.

LEFT: Mayor Byron Brown with Say Yes Buffalo Staff at the Opportunity Pledge signing.

The Buffalo Niagara Partnership, The Western New York Association of College and Career Centers and Say Yes Buffalo teamed up to create a new internship program to strengthen the talent pipeline between our scholars and Western New York area employers. The new internship program provides paid summer opportunities for college juniors and seniors who are Say Yes Buffalo Scholars.

BELOW: The new Say Yes internship program provides paid summer opportunities for current Say Yes Scholars.
The Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Fund passed the $23 million mark with help from The Ralph C. Wilson Jr., Foundation which announced a $2 million grant in January 2016. One hundred percent of donations to the Scholarship Fund go toward college scholarships for graduates from Buffalo public and charter high schools.

BELOW: Mary Wilson (center), other leaders from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, Buffalo public schools Superintendent Dr. Kriner Cash, Mayor Byron Brown, Say Yes Buffalo Scholars and Partners at an event to announce the foundation’s $2 million gift.

The Say Yes family welcomed Guilford County, NC as its first county-wide chapter. Guilford County, which includes the cities Greensboro and High Point, serves 72,000 students.

RIGHT: Guilford County students celebrate at the Say Yes announcement event.

ABOVE: Scholarship Board Member Hon. Hugh Scott at a press conference to announce expansion of Say Yes legal clinics.

Legal Clinics expanded to additional locations and to provide summer hours. In 2015, a new clinic was added at the Buffalo Public Schools’ Adult Education Center in downtown Buffalo. This clinic brings the total number of clinics now in operation to five. Each is open one day per week throughout the school year. A sixth clinic location at BPS Central Registration will open in Summer 2016 to provide access to services during summer months when the school-based locations are closed. All clinics are staffed by local attorneys who volunteer their time through the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, and they are available on a walk-in basis to provide advice on non-criminal matters.
Twenty-nine private colleges and universities joined the Say Yes to Education Higher Education Compact in 2015, providing significant additional scholarship opportunities for our scholars. There are now almost 100 private and 74 public postsecondary options for Say Yes Buffalo Scholars in New York State and around the U.S. including in California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington, DC. To see a full list of our college partners, visit SayYesBuffalo.org/scholarship.

In partnership with Compeer of Greater Buffalo, Say Yes Buffalo launched a Scholar Mentoring Program in 2015, to match students about to graduate high school with a mentor to help guide them through the transition to college. Since launching, 50 mentor matches have been made and several local businesses, including Curbell, Harmac, Sandhill Investment Management, First Niagara and Rich Products, have partnered with the program by encouraging their staff to volunteer as mentors.
Dr. Ellen Grant joined the national team at Say Yes to Education’s national team as Senior Vice President for Chapter Programming at Say Yes to Education.

Dr. Ellen Grant joined the national team at Say Yes to Education, stepping down from her role as Deputy Mayor of the City of Buffalo. Dr. Grant now supervises Say Yes chapters in Harlem, NY; Philadelphia, PA and Syracuse, NY. In addition, Dr. Grant is supporting the national office’s efforts to build strategies to increase postsecondary persistence for students who attend college throughout the country with the help of Say Yes scholarships and grants.

Mayor Byron Brown assembling a Bak Tablet with Say Yes Scholars after announcing the city would donate 500 of the tablets to Say Yes Buffalo Scholars.

Mayor Byron Brown and the City of Buffalo donated 500 BAK Board Tablets manufactured by START-UP NY Buffalo based BAK USA to Say Yes Buffalo Scholars.
IMPACT DASHBOARD

The Say Yes Buffalo Impact Dashboard is a collection of data points that the Say Yes Buffalo Partnership identified collaboratively to measure the impact of their work. Individual data points are updated annually as data becomes available at SayYesBuffalo.org.

PUBLIC SCHOOL GRADUATION and MATRICULATION RATES

Nationally since 2012, postsecondary enrollments have decreased overall by 4.4% and in New York State they have dropped by 2.1%. But in Buffalo the overall number of students who enrolled in postsecondary has increased.

12 percentage point increase in high school graduation rate since the launch of Say Yes Buffalo

10 percentage point increase in postsecondary enrollment rate since the launch of Say Yes Buffalo

Who makes up the Buffalo public school system?

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</table>

14% Of students are English Language Learner/Limited English Proficient. (2014-2015)

79% Of students receive free or reduced lunch. (2014-2015)

Sources include: New York State Department of Education, Federal Student Aid, Buffalo City School District Report Cards, Buffalo Public School District and The National Student Clearinghouse.
In addition to monitoring the outcomes stated in the Impact Dashboard, Say Yes is also committed to regular evaluation of the programs it supports. Below are sample outcomes from the past year:

**K-6 Summer Camps**
Students who participated had NO summer learning loss

**Preventive Services Program**
Students who received services increased their school attendance rate by an average of 4%

**Mental Health Clinics**
Served 650 individuals in 2015

**Legal Clinics**
338 families received help in 2015; 58 local attorneys volunteered services

**Summer Success Academies**
Erie Community College Summer Success Students improved their placement from developmental English and math to college level math and English.

- **95%** improved their math placement
- **92%** improved their reading placement
- **93%** improved their writing placement.

At Buffalo State College, 87% of Summer Success Students earned a 3.3 GPA or higher and earned six college credits before the school year started.

**Scholarship Fund:** $23,000,000 committed*
- 100% goes toward student scholarships
- *An additional $2 million committed to the scholarship (after 2022)

**Operational Budget:** $5,951,265
- 82% goes toward student supports: (Programs and Program Personnel)
- 18% goes toward overhead costs (Administrative Personnel, Office Expenses, Communications & Events)

**FINANCIAL DATA**

Say Yes Buffalo Scholarships are funded by donations from private individuals, families, businesses and foundations.

The number of students applying for Federal aid has increased since the launch of Say Yes Buffalo.

**FAFSA COMPLETIONS**

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</tr>
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**ATTENDANCE**

- **ATENDANCE**
- **Preventive Services Program** Students who received services increased their school attendance rate by an average of 4%
SUMITRA ACHARYA Scholar

Sumitra Acharya, a Class of 2015 Say Yes Buffalo Scholar who now attends Buffalo State College, had more than just graduation to look forward to as she completed her senior year at Burgard High School this past spring, and graduated salutatorian. In July, she was on her way to Washington, DC as one of only 150 students from around the United States to be invited by First Lady Michelle Obama to attend her “Beating the Odds” Summit at the White House. The opportunity came about when Say Yes learned that the White House and the First Lady’s Reach Higher Initiative were looking for students who demonstrated determination in the face of significant challenges.

Sumitra came to Buffalo in 2013 after spending her entire life in a refugee camp in Nepal.

After returning from Washington, DC, Sumitra started her college career early by participating in Say Yes Buffalo’s Summer Success Academy at Buffalo State College. The program, designed to help incoming freshmen make the transition from high school to college, also allows them to earn up to six credits and they are paid through the City of Buffalo’s Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment program.

“Through all these opportunities—the trip to the White House, the summer program and the scholarship, Say Yes Buffalo has had a significant impact on my life,” says Sumitra. “It opened the doors of opportunity for a student like me. Earning a degree has been my lifelong goal, and now because of Say Yes I am much closer.”

Sumitra hopes to become a pediatrician – and to travel back to Nepal and other third-world countries to help them create sustainable pediatric clinics.

But for now, she’s focused on being a college student where her hard work is continuing to pay off. During her first semester she earned a 3.7 GPA and is on the Dean’s Honor List.
About

OUR PROGRAMS

Say Yes Buffalo partners work in myriad ways to provide and facilitate programs that help remove barriers preventing students in the Buffalo Public Schools from graduating high school prepared to succeed in college. The range of programs now available through our collective efforts begin in Kindergarten and carry on through a student’s collegiate years.

KINDERGARTEN-GRADE 12 PROGRAMS

Family Support and Social Services: Say Yes Buffalo school-based staff, called Family Support Specialists (FSS), are located at all 55 Buffalo Public Schools. In partnership with Erie County’s Department of Social Services, they are responsible for working with students who demonstrate poor attendance or behavior problems to help them get back on track. This can include connecting students and their families to health, mental health, after school and basic needs programs, providing individual and group mentoring for the student and/or family, and assisting families with navigating school processes including registration, enrollment and parent-teacher conferences. One of the primary goals of this program is to increase student attendance, and to date there has been a four-percentage-point increase in attendance for those students engaged in the program.

Mental Health Services: Mental health clinics are now available in 42 Buffalo public school buildings to help students address any social-emotional issues that may be preventing them from being successful at home or in the classroom, including depression, anger and anxiety. Services are provided by licensed clinical mental health professionals, and are billed to the student’s health insurance (for example, private insurance or Medicaid). In 2015 more than 650 students received services through these clinics and it is anticipated that the number will double by next year when clinics are open in all 55 school buildings.

Key Partners: Buffalo Public Schools, Catholic Charities of Western New York, Erie County

Key Partners: Buffalo Public Schools, Erie County, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Baker Victory Services, Lake Shore Behavioral Health, Jewish Family Services, Kaleida Health, Catholic Health, Child & Family Services, Gateway Longview, Catholic Charities, Child & Adolescent Treatment Services, New York State Office of Mental Health, Mid-Erie Counseling & Treatment Services

RIGHT: Family Support Specialists Hector Gil (left) and Nikia Jackson (center) with a parent and members of the Class of 2015.
Legal Advice: Free legal advice is available to all Buffalo Public School students and families on non-criminal matters year-round at any one of our five school-based legal clinic locations. Clinics are open four days per week during the school year and one day per week during the summer at a sixth location housed within the Buffalo Public School District’s Central Registration Office. Advice is provided by attorneys from local law firms and coordinated by our partners at the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project. Since the first clinics opened in January 2015, more than 338 families have received help through this service and 58 attorneys have volunteered their time and expertise.

Key Partners: Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, Barclay Damon LLP, Gibson, McAskill & Crosby LLP, Harris Beach PLLC, Hodgson Russ LLP, Lippes Mathias Wexler Friedman LLP, Phillips Lytle LLP

Summer Camps: The Buffalo Public Schools, City of Buffalo and Say Yes Buffalo jointly signed a Memorandum of Understanding that commits those parties to organizing and providing free summer programming to students in Kindergarten to grade 6 through 2021. The first session of these “summer camps” was held in summer 2015 where 1,500 students participated in programs hosted by church and community-based organizations throughout the city. The camp day consists of an academic component that incorporates the Mayor’s Summer Reading Challenge and reinforces school-year lessons plus an enrichment component that seeks to expand students’ exposure to leadership, arts, culture and other activities. For summer 2016 the programs are being expanded from four weeks to six and hope to attract 3,000 students.

Key Partners: Buffalo Public Schools, City of Buffalo, community based and religious organizations, Erie County

PRE-COLLEGE SUPPORTS

NYGEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs): Say Yes Buffalo is proud to be a part of a local partnership funded through this federal initiative designed to increase the number of students who are prepared to succeed in college. Led here in Buffalo by the University at Buffalo Graduate School of Education, NYGEAR UP staff are now working at ten Buffalo Public Schools to help 570 eighth graders envision and plan their paths to college. Activities underway include parent workshops, college tours, counseling support, mentoring, tutoring, planning for high school and college, and an academic summer program.

Key Partners: Buffalo Public Schools, University at Buffalo, Higher Education Services Corporation
Say Yes to College Workshop Series: Free workshops are held monthly to help demystify the college and financial aid application processes for high school students by exploring topics such as The College Application Process, Essay Writing, Standardized Tests, Scholarships, Financial Aid, Self-Advocacy Skills, College 101 and Making the Transition from High School to College. Workshops are led by Say Yes staff and representatives from many of our higher education partners and attract an average of 40 students per workshop.

Key Partners: Canisius College, University at Buffalo, Courier College Prep

FAFSA Completion Project: This effort led by the University at Buffalo provides one-on-one support to students and families as they navigate the financial aid process. Largely responsible for a 61% increase in successful federal financial aid applications by Buffalo public school students during the first year it was available (2013), this program places volunteer financial aid experts at every Buffalo public and charter high school to help families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) application, and the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship application.

Key Partners: Buffalo Public School District, University at Buffalo

As part of the Say Yes to College Workshop Series a "Peer Panel" of current college students shares what they wish they had known before getting to college.

In partnership with the University at Buffalo, The FAFSA Completion Project has helped hundreds of families with the complicated process of applying for free state and federal college aid.
COLLEGE-LEVEL SUPPORTS

College Scholarships: Perhaps what Say Yes Buffalo is best known for is its scholarship program. Funded by the generosity of more than 250 individuals, families, businesses and foundations, the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship fund provides college tuition scholarships to all eligible Buffalo public and charter school students at any college or university in the State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) system and at nearly 100 private colleges around the country. The scholarship fund currently has $23 million committed and is well on its way toward an initial fundraising goal of $33 million, which will ensure the scholarships’ availability through the class of 2023. The class of 2013 was the first eligible for the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship and since inception we have helped nearly 3,000 students get to college.

Key Partners: Say Yes Buffalo Angel Donors, Members of the Say Yes Buffalo Private College Compact

Our Scholar Mentoring Program matches college-bound high school seniors with area professionals with similar interests to help them through the college application and choice processes as well as the transition from high school to college.

Scholar Mentoring Program: In partnership with Compeer of Greater Buffalo, the Say Yes Scholar Mentoring Program launched in January 2015 to match high school seniors and current Say Yes Scholars with volunteer mentors. The program provides guidance and support to our scholars, many of whom are the first in their families to go to college, as they make the sometimes difficult transition to college. Matches are made based on similar interests, career aspirations and preferences of both participants. To date 50 students have been matched with a mentor.

Key Partners: Compeer of Greater Buffalo, Rich Products, Sandhill Investment Management, First Niagara, The Buffalo Sabres

High school graduates accepted to Buffalo State who elected to participate in the Say Yes Summer Success Academy to get help with the transition to college. During the three week program students earn a stipend through the Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment Program and six college credits.
Internship Program: Say Yes teamed up with the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Western New York Association of College Career Centers, area businesses and local institutions of higher education to create a paid summer internship program specifically for Say Yes Buffalo Scholars who have completed at least two years of college. Launched in spring 2016, with more than 45 paid internship opportunities, the positions cover a wide range of industries, including not-for-profit, accounting, education, human resources, retail operations, sales management, marketing, customer service, information technology, healthcare and more. Internship providers include Wegmans, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York.

Key Partners: The Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Western New York Association of College Career Centers, University at Buffalo, Buffalo State College, Medaille College, Villa Maria College, Erie Community College, Bryant and Stratton College, Niagara County Community College, First Niagara, Harmac, HSBC, Wegmans, The InVentures Group, BlueCross BlueShield of WNY, National Grid, Darwin Martin House, Goodwill Industries, Superior Group, Deep Wells Ministries, WNY Consortium of Higher Education, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, NFTA, Roswell Park Cancer Institute

Say Yes Ambassadors: This student leadership program is dedicated to the positive promotion of Say Yes Buffalo within the community. Say Yes Ambassadors are all current Say Yes Scholars, who serve as liaisons between the organization and students, families, colleges, donors, and other key stakeholders in the Say Yes Partnership. They participate in Say Yes events throughout the year and help educate the community at large about the mission of Say Yes. Ambassadors also receive professional development training in communication, public speaking and networking. The inaugural class of 15 ambassadors began their work in January 2016.

Summer Success Academies: Another group of programs that focus on supporting students as they transition to college is our Summer Success Academies. Open to students matriculating to Erie Community College, Buffalo State College and Medaille College, each program is tailored to address potential barriers to student success prior to the students beginning their first semester of college. As an added incentive, students who participate in the programs have the opportunity to be paid for their work through a partnership with the Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment Program. To date more than 300 students have participated in these programs and early data shows they are persisting better than their peers.

Key Partners: Medaille College, Buffalo State College, Erie Community College, City of Buffalo
Kyle always knew he wanted to go to college but wasn’t sure how he would get there.

“My mom has always said that college is a big thing in life, because you need an education to be somebody,” said Kyle.

“But,” he added, “some parents don’t have the money to help their kids get to college. So it’s wonderful that Say Yes is helping and making it possible for those who might not have been able to go.”

Kyle was in sixth grade at Bennett Park Montessori Elementary School when Say Yes Buffalo was announced. Once he learned that he would be eligible for a scholarship from Say Yes when he graduated high school he immediately buckled down and began working harder at school.

“Say Yes changed my future because it motivated me,” he said. “Now I’m pumped up to do better and pass to the next grade and keep going so that when I get to college and I finish I can do what I want to do.”

Now in the tenth grade at Middle Early College High School he’s focused on his future.

“When I graduate from college I want to be a counselor because I like helping people,” he shared. “You have to have heart, and I have a lot of heart because of the my past experiences in my life.”

With his focus on education, Kyle has become a role model to his peers and inspires them to have the goal to graduate from high school and go on to pursue a college education. “We all now know that college is a real option, and we’re excited” said Kyle.

To hear more of Kyle’s story and other Say Yes scholars and partners you can watch our Bright Spots video produced by filmmaker John Paget at InvestInSayYes.org.
GOVERNANCE

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The Say Yes Buffalo Partnership gets much of its strength from the collaborative governance bodies that govern and guide its work. At the top of the structure is the Say Yes Buffalo Community Leadership Council, which is chaired by the Mayor, Deputy Erie County Executive, President of the Board of Education, the New York State Department of Education Regent for our region and the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Board Chair. This body meets six times per year (three times privately, three times publicly) to tackle barriers to the work of Say Yes, share updates on the partnership’s overall progress and provide opportunities for public input and dialogue. Membership in the Council itself is comprised of more than 60 local, state and federal elected officials, business and community leaders, parents, teachers and administrators (including union leaders).

2015-2016 CO-CHAIRS:

Byron Brown
Mayor, City of Buffalo

Dr. Catherine Collins
Regent, New York State Board of Regents

Alphonso O’Neil-White
Chair, Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship

Jim Sampson
President, Buffalo Board of Education

Maria Whyte
Deputy Erie County Executive
The Say Yes Buffalo Operating Committee meets every three weeks to monitor progress and ensure stability of programs. This body is comprised of the Deputy Mayor, County Commissioner of Social Services, parent leaders, the Board of Education, Superintendent, teachers’ and administrators’ union presidents, chief of public school safety, higher education officials and leaders from the region’s two largest private foundations.

2015-2016 MEMBERS:

Crystal Boling-Barton
President, Buffalo Council of School Supervisors & Administrators

Kevin Brinkworth
Chief of School Safety and Security, Buffalo Police Department

Dr. Kriner Cash
Superintendent, Buffalo Public School

Gene Chasin
Chief Operating Officer, Say Yes to Education, Inc.

Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner
President, Buffalo State College

Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker
President/CEO, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

Dr. Al Dirschberger
Commissioner of Social Services, Erie County

Dr. Kenneth M. Macur
President, Medaille College

Blythe T. Merrill
Senior Vice President for Programs, The John R. Oishei Foundation

Jack Quinn
President, Erie Community College

Sam Radford
President, District Parent Coordinating Council

Phil Rumore
President, Buffalo Teachers Federation

David Rust
Executive Director, Say Yes Buffalo

James Sampson
Board President & West District Representative, Buffalo Board of Education

Dr. Barbara Seals-Neergold
Member-at-Large, Buffalo Board of Education

Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner
President, Buffalo State College
COMMUNITY TASK FORCES

To directly engage local stakeholders in the different areas where the Say Yes Buffalo Partnership is focused on strengthening outcomes, a group of community Task Forces were created. Today there are nine Task Forces working on behalf of Buffalo students focused on a range of issues including early childhood education, leveraging relationships in the religious community to reach Buffalo families, and recruiting internships for our college scholars. Each Task Force is led by volunteers from the community and staffed by a member of the Say Yes Buffalo administrative team.

Birth to Third Grade Task Force

Chairs: Anne Ryan, Read to Succeed Buffalo; Jessica Sipes, Buffalo Public School District; Amber Slichta, Community Health Foundation of Western and Central NY

Mission

Strengthen Pre-K programs so that students are ready to succeed in Kindergarten

Key accomplishments

- Strengthened collaboration with United Way of Buffalo & Erie County Birth-to-Eight Coalition

Business Council

Chair: Bob Orrange, Western New York Association of College Career Centers

Mission

Create a talent pipeline that connects Say Yes Buffalo Scholars to meaningful internship and career opportunities with Western New York employers

Key accomplishments

- Recruited more than 25 companies to provide more than 45 paid internship opportunities

Say Yes Buffalo's new internship program was developed in partnership with the Buffalo Niagara Partnership to provide meaningful paid professional opportunities for our college scholars.
Legal Task Force
Chairs: Robert Elardo, Esq, Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project; Hon. Judge Hugh Scott, U.S. Magistrate Court Judge

Mission
Link Buffalo Public School families to free and affordable legal services for non-criminal matters

Key accomplishments
- Opened legal clinics in 5 Buffalo Public School locations and made arrangements for an additional location to be open during the summer months when school-based locations are closed
- Recruited 6 WNY law firms to volunteer services at legal clinics

Mental Health Task Force
Chairs: John Greico and Lynn Karczmarowski, Erie County Department of Mental Health

Mission
Improve access to mental health services for Buffalo Public School students

Key accomplishments
- 15 new mental health clinics added in school buildings, bringing total to 42
- More than 650 students connected with needed services to address issues ranging from depression to anger management

Postsecondary Pathways Task Force
Chairs: Dr. Nathan Daun-Barnett, University at Buffalo; Steven J. Harvey, Ph.D., Western New York Consortium of Higher Education

Mission
Improve access to postsecondary options for Buffalo’s students

Key accomplishments
- Secured funding from New York State’s GEAR UP program to open College Success Centers at East, Lafayette, Riverside, South Park, Burgard, and the Buffalo Academy for the Visual and Performing Arts High Schools
- 61% percent increase in the number of Buffalo Public School students who completed their FAFSA and New York State TAP applications for federal student aid

The Legal Task Force has created six free clinics where Buffalo Public School parents and students can get legal advice on noncriminal matters from volunteer attorneys.
Primary Health Task Force

**Chairs:** Dr. Gale Burstein, Erie County Health Commissioner; Assunta Ventresca, Buffalo Public School District; Paul Hogan, The John R. Oishei Foundation

**Mission**
*Increase access to primary healthcare services for Buffalo Public School students and families.*

**Key accomplishments**
- Funding secured to purchase and outfit two mobile health units
- Process underway to secure necessary New York State and Federal permits/licenses to operate the mobile clinics with the expectation they will open in Fall 2016

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Religious Leaders Task Force

**Chairs:** Rev. Rachelle Robinson, Deep Wells Ministries; Rev. Dennis Lee, Hopewell Baptist Church

**Mission**
*Increase information sharing of Say Yes Buffalo programs and services to Buffalo students and families through congregational outreach*

**Key accomplishments**
- Recruited 20 churches to host a 2015 Say Yes Buffalo summer camp
- Nine churches adopted 11 Buffalo Public School buildings and now provide supports, including tutoring and mentoring, to students in those buildings

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**ABOVE:** Expected to launch in Fall 2016 are two Health In Motion mobile health units that can provide basic health care services at Buffalo public schools that don’t have a school-based health clinic.

**BELOW:** First Lady Gloria Babbs with students at the Thankful Baptist Church summer camp – 20 churches participated in Say Yes Buffalo’s first year of providing neighborhood-based camps for students in grades Kindergarten to 6.
Thank you to our former governance members

The Say Yes Buffalo Partnership is grateful to those individuals who served with our leadership bodies in 2015.

**Former Community Leadership Council co-chairs:**

Robert Bennett, Former Regent, New York State Board of Regents

Barbara Seals-Nevergold, Former President, Buffalo Board of Education

Rich Tobe, Former Deputy Erie County Executive

**Former Operating Committee members:**

Carol Dankert-Maurer, Former Commissioner, Erie County Department of Social Services

Dr. Ellen Grant, Former Deputy Mayor, City of Buffalo

Dr. Richard Jurasek, Former President, Medaille College

Donald Ogilvie, Former Interim Superintendent, Buffalo Public School District
MEGAN LARSON  Mentor

In 2015, Say Yes Buffalo launched its Scholar Mentoring Program. Created to help students make a successful transition from high school to college and complete their first year of postsecondary studies, the program matches high school seniors with professionals from the community.

Megan Larson, a Senior Financial Analyst at Rich Products, was one of the first area professionals to sign up.

“Helping others to go out and do what they want to do is something I’ve always been drawn to,” says Megan, who is now a mentor to Chervona Lowmack, a 2015 graduate of the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts, now attending Erie Community College.

And while it may seem that it’s the mentor’s job to take care of the mentee, Megan shares that the relationship can go both ways.

“During my last meeting with Chervona we were talking about how our weeks were going and I ran down a list of what I was doing in my work life and my social life,” recounts Megan. “She just sat back and she said you need a break. You need to calm down and take a little bit of time for yourself.’ And about two days later, I hit a wall. I remembered what she had said so I cleared my calendar for a while. That really helped realign what I needed to do. So I sent her a text message saying ‘By the way I listened to you, and it really helped.’ Mentoring is more of a 360 degree program because it’s not just mentoring down to somebody to lift them up- it’s also mentoring up.”

She’s also learned how to see things differently as a result of her mentoring relationship.

“Mentoring has taught me that everyone approaches the same situation differently and so now I try to really step back and ask, tell me why you want to do this, why do you think this way, are you good with that opinion. So when my mentee is having difficulty with a situation I can help her look at the situation from many different perspectives until something clicks, there’s this light bulb. They finally get it and you witness this growth.”

Asked why she became a mentor Megan shares that she’s always enjoyed helping others and looked for different ways to give back.

“With the Say Yes Buffalo Scholar Mentoring Program I know I’m helping someone take an important life-step and that’s one of the biggest things I get out of it.”

RIGHT: Say Yes Buffalo Scholar Mentor Megan Larson with her student mentee Chervona Lowmack.
THANK YOU

Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Donors as of June 2016

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Scott and Mary Newman in honor of Harry and Phyllis Newman
Dr. Mary Schohn in honor of Betsy Behrend
Drs. Mary Schohn and Larry Lantinga in honor of Ruby June Behrend
Thomas Tomaka in honor of David and Jeri Brooks

Angel Donor Anne Saldanha, Say Yes Scholarship Board Member Hon. Hugh Scott and Angel Donor Ruth Bryant.

*deceased

Angel Donor Ross Eckert at the Bright Spots video premier.

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Key Bank Foundation Chair and CEO, Margot James Copeland, presenting $1,000,000 to the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Fund with graduating seniors at Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts.

Howard Rich, of Angel Donor Rich Family Foundation, with elementary students from Dr. George E. Blackman School.

Bank of America presenting $10,000 to the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Fund at Erie Community College. Ben Packer (ECC), Kevin Murphy (Bank of America), ECC Student Kyle Salley, Angel Donor and Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Board Member Nancy Davis, Laura Dolan (Bank of America) and David Rust (Say Yes Buffalo).

Angel Donors Sue Gardner and Gail and Bruce Johnstone.
“I always knew that Galen would go to college,” said Valencia Powell, mother of Say Yes Buffalo Scholar Galen Powell. “I believed without a doubt, a way would be made possible somehow.”

Valencia Powell met tough times as she steadfastly raised her son into the young man he’s become today. “After leaving Florida to move to Buffalo when Galen was 14, we were homeless for some time,” she shared. “It was a struggle to find employment, get on my feet and provide the basic needs of food and shelter for my son.”

Faced with adversity, Valencia instilled strong values of the importance of education and perseverance in her son.

“I attended college myself and understand the importance of furthering your education after high school,” she said. “We never gave up, and through it all, I knew it would work out for the best.”

Learning about Say Yes Buffalo and the scholarship opportunities for which Galen was eligible was a life changing moment for mother and son.

“The Say Yes program reinvigorated the hopes and the dreams I’ve always had for him,” she said. “Through Say Yes, Galen now has the opportunity to pursue his college dreams and for that I am forever grateful.”

Galen, a 2015 graduate of Frederick Law Olmsted School is currently a freshman at Brooklyn College in Brooklyn, New York. He works seasonally at Canalside when he’s home from school and the summer before his freshman year, he worked full-time in order to pay his dorm expenses at college, biking across town everyday, in the heat of summer and sometimes in the rain to get back and forth to work.

Said Valencia, “I’m so proud of my son and the man he’s becoming.”
OUR STAFF

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