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 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:

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

When it was announced in December 2011, Say Yes Buffalo became the second Say Yes chapter to partner with an entire city school district. Other cities where Say Yes has had a presence are Cambridge, MA; Hartford, CT; New York City, NY; Philadelphia, PA and Syracuse, NY.
ABOUT
SAY YES TO EDUCATION

Founded in 1987, Say Yes to Education is a leading national nonprofit that partners with communities around the goal of every public school student not only graduating high school – but doing so prepared for a college or other postsecondary education, and with access to resources to make that education affordable and equitable. At the heart of Say Yes is a powerful incentive for families and communities: the prospect of a college scholarship. Say Yes and its partners ensure that students have the support outside the classroom to clear the path to academic achievement. Say Yes works with its community partners to bring together local stakeholders and arm that coalition with the tools to boost postsecondary participation and success. Those systems and structures enable the work of the local Say Yes partnership to go to scale and be sustained through predictable transitions in leadership, and historically unpredictable funding from state and local sources. The organization’s support services are available to tens of thousands of public school students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. In Spring 2017, the organization launched the Weiss Institute, named for its founder and chairman, George Weiss, to increase the capacity of communities to support young people along the developmental pathway from early childhood to adult success.

www.SayYestoEducation.org
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Say Yes Buffalo .................................................................................................................. 2

About Say Yes to Education ........................................................................................................ 3

“Say Yes Forever” Endowment Campaign .................................................................................. 5

Letter from the Chair of the Scholarship Board and Executive Director .................................. 8

Top 10 Highlights of 2017-2018 ................................................................................................ 10

Profiles
Parents: Cedric and Trina Burrruss .............................................................................................. 22
Student: Jean Michel, Jr .............................................................................................................. 26
Donor: Nick Sinatra .................................................................................................................... 30
Student: Malik Stubbs ............................................................................................................... 36
Parent: Tamara Smith ............................................................................................................... 38
Donor: Sylvia Smith ................................................................................................................. 48
Donor: Beverly Jones ............................................................................................................... 52
Donor: Citibank ......................................................................................................................... 56

Programs and Supports
Pre-K – Grade 12 ...................................................................................................................... 15
College ......................................................................................................................................... 19

Governance
Community Task Forces .......................................................................................................... 24
Scholarship Board .................................................................................................................... 32
Operating Committee .............................................................................................................. 33
Community Leadership Council .............................................................................................. 34

Impact Dashboard ..................................................................................................................... 40

Ensuring the Future Sustainability of the Say Yes Buffalo Partnership ..................................... 44

Donors to the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Fund ..................................................................... 46

Say Yes Buffalo Team ................................................................................................................ 60
$100 MILLION
TO ENSURE
SAY YES FOREVER

ON THE COVER

Say Yes Buffalo recently announced the start of a five-year $100 million endowment campaign to secure funding for scholarships in perpetuity. The campaign was seeded by an anonymous $25 million challenge gift from one individual donor, one of the single largest donations from an individual in the city’s history.
AS OF TODAY... FUNDING THE $100 MILLION ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN

RAISE $100 MILLION BY 2023
Ensures the scholarship forever

$25M
Local Challenge

$10M
New York State

$2.2M
Local Challenge

$62.8M
left to raise

10-Year Spend-Down Fund – RAISE $29.05 MILLION BY 2019
Ensures the scholarship through 2023

$25M
raised

$4.05M
left to raise

“MANY OF US ASK OURSELVES, ‘WHAT CAN WE DO?’” said the $25M anonymous donor. “RIGHT NOW, I FEEL A FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP REBUILD MY COMMUNITY AND I HOPE OTHERS DO AS WELL.”
WAYS TO SUPPORT THE SAY YES FOREVER ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN:

Say Yes Buffalo Endowment Fund:
Make a gift to the general fund to support students’ scholarships in perpetuity

Named Fund to the Say Yes Buffalo Endowment Fund:
A gift at a high level (minimum $100,000) provides donors with the opportunity to establish a permanent fund in their name or in someone’s honor

Additional Donation Vehicles
- Planned Gifts
- Stock
- Insurance beneficiary
- IRA distribution
  (mandatory distribution at age 70)

Please contact Emily Wyckoff at 716-247-5310, ext. 207 or ewyckoff@sayyestoeducation.org for more information on how to support Say Yes Buffalo.
Welcome to Say Yes Buffalo’s 2017/18 Report to the Community!

We are proud to announce the launch of the Say Yes Forever Campaign, thanks to a generous $25 million anonymous challenge gift that seeds our $100 million endowment goal, which will ensure the Say Yes Buffalo scholarship is available to all Buffalo students in perpetuity. We are incredibly grateful for the support of our donors who have supported the work and mission of Say Yes to strengthen our local economy by investing in the education of our young people. Without all of you, none of the impressive outcomes we have seen to date would be possible. We have a lot of work ahead but we are confident that, together, we can achieve this fundraising goal to guarantee a postsecondary education for all of Buffalo’s young people...forever.

Also notable this year is the compromise with New York State regarding the Excelsior Scholarship. The state made a $10 million commitment to our endowment fund to cover books, fees and other non-tuition expenses for Say Yes Buffalo scholars with the most need; in return, Say Yes will continue to provide tuition scholarships for all Buffalo students to attend state institutions, given they meet eligibility requirements. We commend Governor Andrew Cuomo for his commitment to higher education.

The data continues to tell the story of the efforts of the Say Yes partnership. Since launching Say Yes Buffalo, the Buffalo Public Schools’ high school graduation rate has increased 15 percentage points. At launch, we were at 49%; most recently, the class of 2017 graduated 64%. There is still work to be done, but in just five classes of graduates, the school district has seen an increase in completion unlike ever before. Even more significantly, we are closing the achievement gap for our students of color, who have achieved double-digit increases in high school graduation rates. Most encouraging is that young men of color have seen a 19-percentage point increase (from 40% for the class of 2012 to 59% for the class of 2017).

Also on the rise is the number of students enrolling into college. Since launch, college enrollment of Buffalo students has increased 10 percentage points to 67% for the class of 2017, reversing state and national trends where matriculation is down.
And we celebrate the more than 500 Say Yes Buffalo scholars who have graduated with two- or four-year degrees and look forward to sharing their stories – and those of the more than 2,500 scholars who are on their way to graduating – with all of you, who have invested in their educations and futures.

Additional accomplishments of the Say Yes Buffalo Partnership over the past year include:

- The second year of the Buffalo Public School District’s Strong Community Schools and Parent Centers initiatives increased the number of sites, programming and attendance, offering hundreds of workshops and activities to students, families and neighborhood residents primarily at Saturday Academies. Students who attended three or more Saturday academies with a parent had improved outcomes at school.

- The Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable’s Boys and Men of Color Coalition, supported primarily by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, launched the Breaking Barriers initiative focusing on accelerating positive outcomes for boys and men of color across the cradle-to-career continuum. The program’s Youth Leadership Council was formed, bringing together 100+ young men of color to advocate for social justice, racial equity and policy change in our community.

- Family Support Specialists embedded in all Buffalo Public schools continued their work with students and families at risk for child welfare/juvenile justice; participants’ attendance increased an average of 5% and the program served approximately 18% of the Buffalo Public Schools’ population.

- 100% of all gifts go directly to scholarships for young people; to date we have awarded $10 million in scholarships and have leveraged $102 million in federal, state and institutional aid (a ten-to-one return on your investment).

- The Internship and Career Pathways Program expanded with the addition of two full-time staff, a robust offering of professional job skills workshops, student coaching, and increased and more diversified internship opportunities thanks to a significant investment from Citi Foundation.

We hope you enjoy reviewing a recap of the past year in the enclosed report – we are proud of the accomplishments of the partnership and look forward to continued gains in the future. As always, none of this work could be done without the support of our investors and partners. Thank you for joining us as we, as a community, “say yes…forever.”

Gratefully,

David Rust  Alphonso O’Neil-White
Thanks to a $250,000 grant from Citi Foundation, the Internship and Career Pathways program expanded this year to provide more student supports and diversified paid professional summer job opportunities for Say Yes Scholars. For the first time, two dedicated staff members were hired to focus on student engagement and growing the number and type of employment opportunities, and added new supports including a clothes closet, one-on-one coaching and ongoing mentoring during students’ internships.
For the first time, Say Yes to Education offered scholarships for students from the senior class of 2018 in its Buffalo, Syracuse and Guilford County chapters to attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) that are outside of the Private College Compact.

In total, five Buffalo students were awarded the scholarship out of a total of 15 scholarships available across all chapters. Those awarded receive a scholarship of up to $10,000 per year, for up to five years, to attend the HBCU of their choice, public or private. The Buffalo recipients are:

Kenneth Fling, City Honors School graduate, attending Howard University
Boaz Gordon, City Honors School graduate, attending Howard University
Kayla Harwell, Olmsted High School graduate, attending Howard University
LaMya Hedgepath, Olmsted High School graduate, attending Morgan State University
Cameron Wilson, Tapestry High School graduate, attending Morgan State University

Say Yes Buffalo was designated by the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo and the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable to convene the city of Buffalo’s work in the advancement of equitable outcomes for boys and men of color in the policy target areas of early childhood, college access and readiness, career pathways and economic opportunities and criminal justice and public safety.

Through a citywide, collective effort, the aforementioned key policy target areas will be explored with a lens on their effects on boys and men of color. Those identified that negatively impact boys and men of color will be lobbied for change.

As part of this new initiative, “Breaking Barriers,” a leadership council of young men of color from ages 12-24 has launched. The goal of the leadership council is to expand the capacity of boys and young men of color and empower them to become agents of change in their community, and to advocate for social justice, racial equity and policy change, and ultimately, improved life outcomes. Since launching in 2018, more than 50 young men of color have been active in the council’s monthly meetings and have committed to the yearlong schedule of activities.
FAMILY SUPPORT SPECIALISTS
ASSIST MORE THAN 5,900
BUFFALO STUDENTS

During the 2017-18 school year, the School-based Preventive Program provided services to 18% of Buffalo Public School students – more than 5,900 students! Through delivery of short and long-term services, school-based staff addressed both basic and complex needs of students, their siblings and entire families. Challenges such as access to food and clothing, school attendance and in-school behavioral issues, access to employment resources for parents and providing a safe home were just some of the needs addressed by Family Support Specialists.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
DOUBLE ATTENDANCE
IN YEAR TWO

In 2016, Say Yes Buffalo partnered with the Buffalo Public Schools to launch the Strong Community Schools and Parent Center initiative at 13 participating elementary and high schools. Now in its second year, more than 40,000 people (up from 20,000 in the inaugural year) have attended the Community Schools after-school, Saturday Academy and Parent Center workshops. Looking ahead to the 2018-19 school year, the Community Schools initiative will now include 21 schools focusing on embedding programs and other supports within the school. The Community School programs are open to EVERYONE, regardless of whether you have a child in the Buffalo Public Schools. Learn more at: BuffaloSchools.org/CommunitySchools.
During the past year, several members of the Say Yes team and the agency itself were recognized by various community organizations:

Graphic Design and Communications Specialist Aziza Abdul-Alim and Community School Navigator Ruqayyah Simmons were named to the 2018 and 2017 Class, respectively, of Changemakers 30 Under 30; Mentoring Program Supervisor Tereka Baltimore and Family Support Specialist Elizabeth Minns were honored with the 2018 Unlimited Possibilities Overcoming Poverty Ministry’s “Women Touching the World” award; Boys & Men of Color Program Manager Daniel Robertson was a 2018 Ballin’ For a Cause “BIG 4” Achievement Award Honoree and also received Grassroots Buffalo’s Rising Star Award; Communications Director Daphne Ross was recognized with the Changemakers Outstanding Alumni Award; Community Schools Director Tanya Staples was a finalist for the Buffalo Niagara Partnership’s Athena Awards; Community Schools Navigator Edreys Wajed was commissioned by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery’s Public Art Initiative to help design, create and paint the ‘Freedom Wall’ at Michigan and Ferry Streets; and, Say Yes Buffalo was named the 2017 recipient of the Communities of Giving Legacy Initiative’s “Pay It Forward” award.

2017-18 was the first school year to offer mobile health services to Buffalo Public School students. Two mobile units operated by the Community Health Center of Buffalo, Neighborhood Health Center, and Planned Parenthood of Central and Western New York, Inc. provided services to a total of 175 students.

Students took advantage of primary and reproductive health care services right at their school in a safe, confidential and private space, eliminating the barrier faced by many students of transportation to a doctor’s office.

Plans for the 2018-19 school year include expanding the schools where services are offered based on the needs identified in the latest Buffalo Public Schools Youth Risk Behavior Survey.
Say Yes Buffalo prioritizes the continuous professional growth of its staff, and in 2018 launched the “Emerging Leaders” program with the objective of sustaining and developing momentum toward the vision and mission of Say Yes Buffalo. The program invests in the organization’s collective capacity to deliver skilled and insightful leadership and provides a curriculum with topics including how to convene partners in support of a common goal, and how to become dealers in hope.

The program requires an 18-month commitment and examines leadership styles and areas for professional growth. The inaugural participants in the program are:

- LeRondra Byrd, *Family Support Specialist Supervisor*
- Johanna Caplan, *Internship and Career Pathways Program Supervisor*
- Tom Cranston, *Family Support Specialist*
- Wil Green, *Community Schools East Zone Leader*
- Elizabeth Minns, *Family Support Specialist*
- Ta-Tanisha Palmer, *Family Support Specialist*
- Stephanie Peete, *Internship and Career Pathways Program Supervisor*
- Tiffany Swink, *Family Support Specialist Supervisor*
- Hope Tuck, *Family Support Specialist*

Say Yes Buffalo congratulates New York State and Governor Cuomo’s commitment to making a college education accessible to all young people, and is pleased that our work complements and strengthens outcomes for Buffalo’s students.
PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTS
Pre-K – 12

The Say Yes Buffalo Partnership brings support services to students and families, often directly into school buildings making them easier to access. The programs and services explained below are available to assist Pre-K through 12th grade Buffalo Public School students reach their full academic potential and prepare them for high school graduation and college. Once enrolled in a postsecondary program, our college level supports help students make the transition from high school and aid in their persistence through college completion to career.

FAMILY SUPPORT AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Say Yes Buffalo school-based staff, called Family Support Specialists (FSS), provide support to 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 five-percentage-point increase in attendance for those students engaged in the program. In addition, it is estimated that the program successfully diverted 400 students from entering the juvenile justice or child welfare systems.

MOBILE HEALTH CARE

Mobile Health Buses are parked at various Buffalo Public School locations to provide primary and reproductive health care to students where in-school services are not available. Services are provided by licensed medical professionals and are billed to the student’s health insurance (private insurance or Medicaid). Families who do not have health insurance receive help with getting it.
MENTAL HEALTH CLINICS

Mental health clinics are now available in 59 Buffalo Public School buildings. Services are provided by licensed clinical mental health professionals, and are billed to the student’s health insurance (private insurance or Medicaid) and help students address any social-emotional issues that may be preventing them from being successful at home, in the community, or in the classroom, including depression, anger and anxiety. During the past school year, more than 800 students received services through these clinics.

LEGAL CLINICS

Free civil legal advice is available to all Buffalo Public School students, families, and community members on non-criminal matters year-round at any one of our six school-based legal clinic locations. Clinics are open four days per week during the school year and two days per week during the summer. Our Adult Education site is the only legal clinic open year round. Advice is provided by attorney volunteers from local law firms and coordinated by our partners at the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project. During the past year more than 407 family and community members have benefitted from the free legal help through this service and 93 attorneys volunteered their time and expertise.

SUMMER CAMP

Free community-based summer camps are offered to Buffalo Public School students grades pre-kindergarten through sixth through a partnership with Buffalo Public Schools, Say Yes Buffalo, the City of Buffalo and the Cullen Foundation. In the summer of 2017, the program had 41 sites and served 1,747 students. A typical camp day consists of an academic component that reinforces school-year lessons, plus an enrichment component to expand students’ exposure to leadership, arts, culture and other activities.

Students and Say Yes Buffalo partners smile at an event kicking off the start of summer camps across the City of Buffalo.
Launched in January 2018, the Breaking Barriers Youth Leadership Council is a program of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable’s Boys and Men of Color Initiative that is aimed at accelerating positive outcomes for boys and young men of color across the cradle-to-career continuum. Participation is open to young men of color ages 12 – 24 years. Participants agree to a one year commitment where they learn how to elevate their voice to advocate for social justice, racial equity and policy change in our community.

Breaking Barriers Youth Leadership Council participants at the annual Juneteenth Parade
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Research shows that the earlier children receive the supports they need to be successful in life, the more likely they are to graduate high school and earn a postsecondary degree. With this in mind and with a generous grant from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, Say Yes Buffalo began a new partnership in the fall of 2017 with Help Me Grow Western New York.

Help Me Grow provides families of children ages birth to 5 years with free developmental screenings and facilitates connections to community resources and child development information. Services include referrals to early intervention agencies, literacy support, parenting classes, linkages to child health providers and more. Through this partnership, families in the Buffalo Public Schools will have access to Help Me Grow’s resources as a new extension of the socioemotional supports offered by Say Yes Buffalo. For more information about the initiative, visit HelpMeGrowWNY.org.

NYGEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs)

Led by the University at Buffalo Graduate School of Education, NYGEAR UP staff work at ten Buffalo Public Schools to help eighth graders envision and plan their paths to college. During the 2017-18 school year, nearly 1000 students were assisted in their preparation to attend college. Activities include parent workshops, college tours, counseling support, mentoring, tutoring, planning for high school and college, and an academic summer program.

FAFSA COMPLETION PROJECT

Led by the University at Buffalo, the FAFSA Completion Project provides one-on-one support to students and families as they navigate the college financial aid process. The program continues to see year after year increases in the number of students and families helped. The 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.
PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTS

College

SCHOLAR MENTORING PROGRAM

The Say Yes Scholar Mentoring Program matches 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, more than 134 students have been matched with a mentor. Those students who participate in the program are persisting at a higher rate to their sophomore and junior years than those who do not.

SUMMER SUCCESS ACADEMIES

Summer Success Academies are 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 approximately 500 students have participated in these programs and early data shows they are persisting better than their peers.

COUNTDOWN TO COLLEGE

Each summer, Say Yes Buffalo hosts a free “College Kickoff” event to introduce students to what to expect when they get to college, and to give them the tools to be successful once they begin. All Buffalo Public and Charter school graduates are eligible to attend.
INTERNSHIP AND CAREER PATHWAYS PROGRAM

Thanks to a $250,000 grant from Citi Foundation, the Internship and Career Pathways program expanded this year to provide more student supports and diversified paid professional job opportunities for Say Yes Scholars. For the first time, two dedicated staff members were hired to focus on student engagement and growing the number and types of employment opportunities. New supports were added, including a clothes closet, one-on-one coaching and ongoing mentoring during students’ internships. Citi volunteers worked with Say Yes scholars in support of the program throughout the year, facilitating resume, cover letter, interview prep and professional skills workshops, as well as donating to the Professional Clothes Closet.

Thirty nine interns were placed in the Summer 2018 program (a 160% increase over the previous summer); new employers to hire interns include United Way, National Grid, the Buffalo Zoo, Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, Aleron, Bar Association of Erie County, 43North, Center for Employment Opportunities, West Side International Soccer, Burden, Hafner & Hansen, LLC, Center for Elder Law and Justice, Hamister Group, NYS Court System, Peaceprints of WNY and AAA of Western & Central New York.

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

A leadership program for Say Yes Scholars, the Ambassador Program provides opportunities for our college students to network, participate in workshops on topics such as public speaking and professional skills, and speak and represent Say Yes at community events and in its communication vehicles. A new class of Ambassadors is accepted each year and scholars must submit an application to be accepted into the program. Say Yes Ambassadors mentor their peers on their college campuses and help to inform and educate the community on the efforts of the Say Yes partnership.
This past year, the Internship and Career Pathways program hosted a Mocktail Hour, allowing program participants the chance to network and hear from a group of young professionals during a panel discussion.
MEET CEDRIC & TRINA BURRUS
PARENTS

Cedric and Trina Burruss met as teenagers and it didn’t take long for their friendship to turn into love and children. One of those children is Say Yes Ambassador Danielle Burruss. A glowing example of the potential of our students, Danielle excelled in the Buffalo Public Schools, especially at McKinley High School, where she found her love for graphic design that led her to start her own small business, Burruss Designs. Danielle now attends Buffalo State College, majoring in Public Communications. Through the Say Yes Buffalo Internship and Career Pathways Program, Danielle has interned at BlueCross BlueShield of WNY, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and with New York State Assemblyman Sean Ryan.

Trina is the Regional Vice President and Community Relations Officer at Northwest Bank and is actively involved in her community and in her support of Say Yes. From serving as a mentor to the Say Yes scholars who intern at Northwest, to volunteering at our inaugural fundraising gala, Trina is a true Buffalo booster who believes in the importance of Say Yes and other community-based organizations.

While she may get her drive from her mother, Danielle’s personality and zest for life can surely be traced to her dad. “Sometimes I can’t believe all that she’s achieved in her short life. It’s amazing to see her grow and know that Say Yes helped her. I hope other young people will take advantage of this program and all of the others out there,” said Cedric.

Cedric knows all too well what it means to work hard. He saw his parents do their very best to provide for their large family, but never felt he was being held back or limited in his potential success. A veteran in the United States Marines and National Guard, Cedric believes in sacrificing for others, and continues to do so today in his work making sure others can safely enjoy Buffalo’s hospitals, hotels and other public spaces. “Caring for others isn’t easy work. It takes real passion and commitment. It’s a community-wide effort that will ensure our future success,” added Cedric.

Trina and Cedric are the proud parents of three daughters and one son, all of whom attended Buffalo Public Schools. “Our children could’ve gone to any school, but we made a conscious decision to send them to public schools. We knew firsthand that the system works, and we are very happy with the decision we made. I encourage other parents to do the same and feel encouraged about their children’s future because Say Yes and other community organizations are here to ensure they have opportunities after graduation,” said Trina.
TASK FORCES

The Say Yes Buffalo Partnership is focused on strengthening outcomes by directly engaging the community. To that end, a group of community-based Task Forces were created. Today there are six Task Forces working on behalf of Buffalo students focused on a range of issues, including access to fair legal representation, leveraging relationships in the religious community to reach Buffalo families, and access to mental and physical healthcare. Each Task Force is led by volunteers from the community and staffed by members of the Say Yes Buffalo administrative team.

PRIMARY HEALTH

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

Chaired by: Dr. Gale Burstein, Erie County Health Commissioner; Paul Hogan, The John R. Oishei Foundation

RELIGIOUS LEADERS

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

Chaired by: Rev. Tommy Babbs, Thankful Missionary Baptist Church; Rev. Chantell King-Beckwith, Saint Luke AME Zion
Members of the Say Yes Buffalo Religious Leaders Task Force
MEET JEAN MICHEL, JR.
SAY YES BUFFALO SCHOLAR

Cancer sucks … but you won’t hear Jean Michel Jr. spend too much time dwelling on the disease that caused him to take a semester away from his studies so he could spend six months in treatment at Roswell Park Cancer Institute. “I was diagnosed almost two years ago, and at that time I felt like the world was falling apart all around me, but now I’m feeling good and in high spirits.”

Jean is a fighter, and he plans to take that tenacity all the way through the criminal justice system so he can fight for others as a judge. A senior at Buffalo State College, Jean is on his way to achieving his career aspirations. He’s majoring in Criminal Justice with a minor in Legal Studies, and when he’s not in the classroom you can find him in any State, County and Federal court room as part of his internship with Judge Susan Eagan through the Say Yes Buffalo Internship and Career Pathways Program. “I’m loving this opportunity to network with all of the professionals in the criminal justice system. It’s such a small community, so I’m getting an opportunity to meet lots of great people while building my reputation and laying the groundwork for my future in this industry,” said Jean.

Jean learned about the internship program from Say Yes Internship and Career Pathways Program Supervisor Johanna Caplan. But despite her constant reminders, Jean didn’t act until his colleagues in the Mayor’s Summer Youth Program encouraged him to connect with Say Yes for internship opportunities. “I’m glad I listened. Sometimes you need to hear things a few times before they stick. Beyond the networking, it’s been great because it’s expanding on what I’m learning in the classroom and really helping to bring the content to life. I’m so thankful to Say Yes for this amazing experience,” added Jean.

Jean has been working with Say Yes for quite some time. He was one of the first students to participate in the Say Yes Buffalo Scholar Mentoring Program with Daniel Robertson, and now volunteers at events whenever he’s asked. “The mentoring has been great. Johanna was a tremendous help when I was applying for internships. She reviewed my materials and made sure every word was spelled correctly and every punctuation was in place. I really appreciate her persistence,” said Jean.

Graduation is in the near future, and Jean is looking forward to completing his degree so that he can pursue Law School here in Buffalo or back home in Syracuse. Not forgetting the importance of interning, he is hoping to work in The United States Attorney’s Office while in this next phase of his academic career … and maybe even find an affordable music school so he can continue to sing and play the clarinet.
TASK FORCES Continued

BIRTH TO THIRD GRADE
Mission - Strengthen Pre-K programs so that students are ready to succeed in Kindergarten
Chaired by: Anne Ryan, Read to Succeed Buffalo; Jessica Sipes, Buffalo Public School District

BOYS AND MEN OF COLOR COALITION
Mission – Support Say Yes and Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo’s racial equity work for boys and young men of color
Chaired by: Rev. George Nicholas, Lincoln Memorial United Methodist Church; Rev. Rachelle Robinson, Deep Wells Ministry

LEGAL TASK FORCE
Mission - Link Buffalo Public School families to free and affordable legal services for non-criminal matters
Chaired by: Robert Elardo, Esq, Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project; Hon. Judge Hugh Scott, U.S. Magistrate Court Judge

MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE
Mission - Improve access to mental health services for Buffalo Public School students
Chaired by: John Greico and Lynn Karczmarowski, Erie County Department of Mental Health
MEET NICK SINATRA
ANGEL DONOR

Born and raised in Buffalo, Nick Sinatra is the youngest of three children. He came from humble beginnings, but never felt his opportunities were limited. Today, he is best known as the founder and President of Sinatra & Company, a real estate firm dedicated to putting people first through shared sustainability. When asked how he got his start, Nick explains, “Neither of my parents went to college, but despite that I still had the opportunity to attend great schools throughout my life. The relationships I built throughout my upbringing were critical to my journey. I learned so many important lessons from educators and mentors who I still call upon,” said Sinatra.

After speaking with Nick, you get the feeling that the optimism he felt as a child might be the reason he’s drawn to Say Yes. “This organization is special because it gives you hope. It doesn’t matter if you come from a lower-income family. Because of Say Yes you can see an opportunity to get beyond your current circumstance,” added Sinatra.

A generous supporter of Say Yes, Sinatra contributes a percentage of his projects to the scholarship program and is currently serving as chair of the 5-year endowment campaign, “Say Yes Forever.”

“Getting my investors on board to contribute a portion of our profits is about helping them understand that our long-term success depends on it. We want to see more people with stronger incomes staying in the area and sending their children to city schools. That’s a tangible economic benefit that they can feel good about. Simply put, if you’re investing in properties in Buffalo, you must care about the growth in the community, and keeping an organization like Say Yes around forever is critical to that story.”

Beyond his financial support, Nick also spends time with the scholars. Recently spending the day at McKinley High School, he witnessed students building a house in the gymnasium. “As a developer, I was pretty impressed by the amount of trade education in the Buffalo Public Schools. These carpentry and electrical skills can be immediately applied in the workforce and can allow them to support their families,” added Nick.

Nick is a big believer in Buffalo and encourages others to join his optimism. Nick will tell you that hope is a transformative idea for people who aren’t used to having it. “The fact that we can promise the kids in this community an opportunity to go to college without the financial burdens that come along with it is special and important work,” said Sinatra.
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL CO-CHAIRS 2017-2018

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, New York State Senator and New York State Assemblyperson for our region and the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Board Chair. This body meets three times per year to tackle barriers to the work of Say Yes Buffalo, 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 80 local, state and federal elected officials, business and community leaders, parents, teachers and administrators (including union leaders).

The 2017-18 Community Leadership Council was chaired by:

HON. MAYOR BROWN
City of Buffalo

DR. CATHERINE COLLINS
New York State Board of Regents

HON. TIM KENNEDY
New York State Senate

ALPHONSO O’NEIL-WHITE
Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship

HON. CRYSTAL PEOPLES-STOKES
New York State Assembly

DR. BARBARA SEAL-S-NEVERGOLD
Buffalo Board of Education

MARIA WHYTE
Erie County
OPERATING COMMITTEE 2017-2018

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

OTIS T. BARKER, SR.
Deputy Commissioner
City of Buffalo

CRYSTAL BOLING-BARTON
Buffalo Council of School Supervisors & Administrators

MARIE CANNON
Commissioner of Social Services,
Erie County

DR. KRINER CASH
Superintendent, Buffalo Public Schools

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. THERESA HARRIS-TIGG
East District Representative, Buffalo Board of Education

MOLLY HIRSCHBECK
Communications Director,
Office of Senator Tim Kennedy

DR. DAN HOCOY
President, SUNY Erie

DR. KENNETH M. MACUR
President,
Medaille College

DR. WILL KERESZTES
Chief of Intergovernmental Affairs, Buffalo Public Schools

BLYTHE T. MERRILL
Senior Vice President for Programs, The John R. Oishei Foundation

SAM RADFORD
President, District Parent Coordinating Council

PHIL RUMORE
President, Buffalo Teachers Federation

DR. BARBARA SEALS-NEVERGOLD
President and Member-at-large, Buffalo Board of Education

JERRY TURCOTTE
Co-chair,
Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization
SCHOLARSHIP BOARD MEMBERS
2017-2018

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 and administrative guidelines and advocate on behalf of the program.

MELISSA BAUMGART
CLOTILDE PEREZ-BODE DEDECKER, Secretary
DANIS J. GEHL, PH.D.
ROGER HUNGERFORD

PETER HUNT
JEREMY JACOBS, JR.
LUKE JACOBS
WILLIAM L. JOYCE, Vice-Chair

DANIEL LEWIS
ALPHONSO O’NEIL-WHITE, Chair
GARY QUENNEVILLE
REVEREND RACHELLE ROBINSON

HUGH RUSS III
MARY ANNE SCHMITT-CAREY
KATIE SCHNEIDER
HON. HUGH SCOTT

NICK SINATRA
STEPHEN SWIFT, Treasurer
THANK YOU TO OUR FORMER GOVERNANCE AND TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The Say Yes Buffalo Partnership is grateful to those individuals who served with our leadership bodies and community task forces in the 2017-18 school year.

NANCY DAVIS
Former Scholarship Board Member

BLYTHE T. MERRILL
Former Scholarship Board Member

REV. RACHELLE ROBINSON
Former Co-chair, Religious Leaders Task Force
MEET MALIK STUBBS
SAY YES BUFFALO SCHOLAR

Please meet Malik Stubbs, a graduate of McKinley Vocational High School and, more recently, Canisius College where he majored in political science and urban studies. During the summer of 2018, Malik was paired with Say Yes Buffalo through the AmeriCorps VISTA program and My Brother’s Keeper Alliance. Since joining Say Yes Buffalo, Malik has worked with the Boys and Men of Color initiative, which is aimed at accelerating positive outcomes for boys and young men of color across the cradle-to-career continuum.

Malik’s time with Say Yes Buffalo was formative and provided him with the opportunity to establish life-long mentors who have helped shape his ability to balance his professional and personal life. Like many young professionals, learning to manage his time was a challenge for Malik as he progressed through college and into the workplace. Time management and personal discipline—skills learned from his mentors—will be particularly useful when Malik pursues his goal of running for political office in Buffalo. When asked what advice he has for future students and graduates of Buffalo, Malik recommended that each person find a mentor who “can give the guidance you need to be successful.” We look forward to witnessing Malik’s continued success and the positive impact he will have on the city and its young people.
SAY YES FOREVER...
FOR EVERYONE.
FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.
Providing financial support for Buffalo’s students to attend college is only part of what we do at Say Yes. In fact, more than half of our staff work in the Buffalo Public Schools as Family Support Specialists. The work that these men and women perform day in and day out is crucial to the success of our scholarship program and the future of our students. Their work focuses on the needs of the whole family. Tamara Smith is one of those parents who recently found support from her daughter’s school principal and Family Support Specialist.

Tamara’s daughter was having trouble in school. The principal called home on multiple occasions, but on one afternoon Tamara found herself breaking down and sharing their family’s recent troubles with the administrator. Tamara had recently lost her job, couldn’t pay rent and found herself in a cold home in the middle of winter. She was just beginning her studies at Bryant & Stratton and was under a mountain of pressure to get her children in a stable place. But on this particular afternoon she had finally thrown in the towel and shared her stress. Tamara didn’t expect what would happen next …
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.

BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- 47% Black or African American
- 19% White
- 9% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- 20% Hispanic or Latino
- 1% Multiracial
- 4% American Indian or Alaska Native

Of students receive free or reduced lunch (2016-2017)
- 79%

Of students are English Language Learner/Limited English Proficient. (2016-2017)
- 16%

BUFFALO PUBLIC DISTRICT ENROLLMENT

- 30,750 (2012-2013)
- 31,815 (2013-2014)
- 31,359 (2014-2016)

PUBLIC SCHOOL GRADUATION AND COLLEGE 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.

- 49% to 64% increase in high school graduation rate since the launch of Say Yes Buffalo
- 57% to 67% increase in postsecondary enrollment rate since the launch of Say Yes Buffalo
Say Yes programs and operations are funded through a grant from Say Yes to Education, Inc. and funding from public and private partners including the City of Buffalo, Erie County, Buffalo Public School District, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, Citi Foundation, Cullen Foundation, and Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation.

In addition to monitoring the outcomes stated in the Impact Dashboard, Say Yes is also committed to regular evaluation of the program it supports. Below are outcomes from the 2017-2018 year.

### OPERATIONAL BUDGET (2017-2018)

Say Yes programs and operations are funded through a grant from Say Yes to Education, Inc. and funding from public and private partners including the City of Buffalo, Erie County, Buffalo Public School District, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, Citi Foundation, Cullen Foundation, and Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FAFSA Completions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,474</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

85% Goes towards student supports (Programs & Program Personnel)

15% Goes toward overhead costs (Administrative Personnel, Office Expenses, Communications, Events)

$9.5M

### LEGAL CLINICS

407 FAMILY MEMBERS received help
93 LOCAL ATTORNEYS volunteered services

### PREVENTIVE SERVICES PROGRAM

+5%

### MENTORING PROGRAM

134 SCHOLAR PARTICIPANTS
95% matriculated to college
80% persisted from Year 1 to Year 2 of college
(Compared to 65% and 71%, respectively, for all Say Yes Buffalo Scholars)

### MENTAL HEALTH CLINICS

Served 800 INDIVIDUALS in 2017

### INTERNSHIPS AND CAREER PATHWAYS PROGRAM

39 STUDENT INTERNS PLACED
100% completed internships
60+ students received one-on-one support through internship application process

### K-6 SUMMER CAMPS

1,747 students had the opportunity to participate in free 6 week camps
“That stability and assistance helped our family in so many ways and allowed us to turn things around.”

The principal at Harvey Austin School introduced Tamara Smith to Say Yes Family Support Specialist Marissa Wolf. “Marissa was a true blessing to my family. I didn’t even know that I could get that kind of support from Say Yes or the school. She helped me to obtain housing and counseling services to help my daughter learn coping strategies,” said Tamara.

Tamara recently completed her associate’s degree from Bryant & Stratton. She found the courage to share her story at a Say Yes Community Leadership Council Meeting, and has been blown away by all of the support that she received from the community. From the interview clothes that were donated by a Community Leadership Council Meeting attendee, to the gifts her children received at Christmas. And the extra support couldn’t have come at a better time either. The apartment she secured was in a house that was recently sold and she found herself back at square one. “I felt depressed and defeated all over again. But this time, I moved in with relatives so that I could finish school. I can now proudly share that we are living in our very own three-bedroom apartment. It’s been a journey, but we’re going to succeed and truly appreciate all of the help. As a single mom you want to seem like you always have it together. But I’ve learned it’s okay to share your struggles,” added Tamara.

Tamara is now employed at Kaleida Health as a certified medical assistant. In the Fall, she will attend Daemen College, where she received a merit-based scholarship to study public health education. She was also nominated for a widely coveted academic transfer scholarship and received a scholarship from the Zonta Club of Kenmore. She is also taking steps toward homeownership.

Tamara’s daughter is also doing much better in school and recently told her that she is looking forward to finishing high school because she is going to get a Say Yes scholarship and attend Daemen College.
Tamara Smith and her two children, who both attend Buffalo Public Schools.
ENSURING THE FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE SAY YES BUFFALO PARTNERSHIP

With the launch of Say Yes Buffalo in December 2011, a $15 million technical support grant was awarded from Say Yes to Education, Inc. to support the creation and implementation of the Say Yes Partnership and its programs in Buffalo during its first five years.

From day one, Say Yes Buffalo’s leadership focused on building relationships necessary for long-term sustainability of our work beyond year five. As we begin our sixth year of work we, are pleased to share that Say Yes Buffalo partners have absorbed almost 90% of the Partnership’s operations and programs.

Critical to reaching this goal has been the commitment of Erie County, the City of Buffalo, Buffalo Public Schools and local foundations like the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, the John R. Oishei Foundation and the Tower Foundation. Collectively, these entities have re-allocated more than $40 million to support our Partnership’s collaborative efforts.

Looking ahead, the number one priority is securing the final dollars of a “local match” necessary to fully sustain our school-based preventive program. Historically, Say Yes to Education has provided the matching funds required to access a line of funding from New York State that funds a staff person in every school building dedicated to 1:1 case work and support for our district’s students in families with the most needs. Over the past two years, the City of Buffalo has begun to assume these costs and has committed to doing more.

In addition, because of the progress and achievements of our chapter thus far, the board of Say Yes to Education, Inc. has approved an annual grant moving forward to cover the basic operational and administrative functions of the Partnership in the amount of $1.4 million.
Say Yes Buffalo Programs that are 100% funded & sustainable:

**OPERATIONS/ADMINISTRATION:**
- Development/fundraising for scholarship fund
- Partnership governance
- Administrative staff

(SUSTAINABLE FUNDING SOURCES)
- Anonymous Donor
- Say Yes to Education, Inc

**SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL/PHYSICAL SUPPORTS:**
- Mental Health Clinics
- Mobile Health Unit
- Boys and Men of Color Initiative
- Early Childhood Program

(Erie County; Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo)
- Buffalo Public Schools
- EdTrust-NY; Executive's Alliance; The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

**SCHOOL DAY:**
- After School
- Community Schools & Parent Centers
- College Access

(Buffalo Public Schools)
- Buffalo Public Schools
- Say Yes to Education, Inc

Programs that still require sustainable funding:

**SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL/PHYSICAL SUPPORTS:**
- School-based Preventive Program (Family Support Specialists)
- Legal Clinics
- Summer Camp
- Internship and Career Pathways Program

(CURRENT SOURCES OF FUNDING)
- New York State/Erie County; City of Buffalo; Say Yes to Education, Inc.; Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation
- Say Yes to Education, Inc
- Cullen Foundation; Buffalo Public Schools
- Citi Foundation
OUR DONORS

Thank you to the individuals, families, foundations, businesses and organizations that have made gifts to fund annual Say Yes college scholarships for public and charter school students in Buffalo.

INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES
Anonymous (36)
Jeffrey Adams
Dr. Kevin Ahuna
Durgham Alyasiri
David Alfred
James and Kristin Allen
Joyce and Stuart Angert
Monica Angle and Sam Magavern
Esther Annan
Glenn Arthurs
Charles Balbach
Tereka Baltimore
Allan and Melissa Baumgart
Betsy and Scott Behrend
Ms. Gina Bellavia and Mr. Eric Frank
Ericka N. Bennett
Joanne and James Biltekoff
Peter and Judith Biltekoff
Anne L. Bird
Ann and Dennis Bischof
Mr. Robert Blue
Brandon M. Boudreault
Belmore H. Bridgford
David & Jeri Brooks
Dr. Peggy Brooks-Bertram
Willow and Gary Brost
Henry and Martha Bruner
Ruth D. Bryant and Earl M. Lynch
Robert and Mary Ann Budin
Jessica Burgholzer
Kara Burke
Timothy Bush
Bruce Buyers
Johanna Caplan
Jeanne M. Cheney
Dr. K. Kent and Susan Chevli
Elizabeth G. Clark
Kathryn L. Clune
Mary Ann Clune
Babs Conant and Camille Cox
Susan and Robert Conklin
Brian Conley
Robert and Janie Constantine
Margot Copeland
Beuline Crawford*
Cathy Creighton and Sean Ryan
Michael Cross
The Cross-Viola Family
Kari Cunningham
LaToya Cunningham
Paul Cunningham
The Employees of Curbell, Inc.
Alfonzo and Tara Cutaia
Richard W. Cutting*
Erik J. Daniels
Dr. Nathan Daun-Barnett
Mark and Nancy Davis
Valerie J. DeBerry
Clotilde and Adrian Dedecker III
Genevieve DeCarlo
Beth and Peter Demakos
Kevin Demme
Scott Dempsey
David and Janet Desmon
Richard and Cornelia Dopkins
Timothy Dowdell
Anne Downey
Amy S. Downing
Missy and Ryan Dunn
Henry and Bonita Durand
James* and Gayle Eagan
Hon. Susan and James Eagan
Ross and Mary Alice Eckert
Robert Elardo and Elizabeth Tommaney
Judy Ervin
Christopher Fattey
Christopher Faus
Wendy Fechter
Joshua Feinstein
Delaware District Council Member
Joel P. Feroletto
Paula and John Feroletto
Denise Fiallo
Lawrence and Deborah Franco
Kimberly Frank
Andrew J. Freedman
Nina and Bob Freudenheim
Fay Friedman
Kathy Gardner
The Garman Family
Angel Donors participating in a tour of Buffalo’s Public Schools to learn more about Say Yes efforts in those buildings
MEET SYLVIA SMITH
ANGEL DONOR

Sylvia Smith spent more than 30 years teaching in the Buffalo Public Schools, but now donates to Say Yes to ensure that future generations of students can pursue higher education.

Sylvia learned about Say Yes during a conversation with Reverend Rachelle Robinson, Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Board member, at First Shiloh Baptist Church. “I had seen advertisements for the program on billboards but didn’t know much beyond that. When I met with Reverend Robinson and she told me more about the program and the opportunity to become an Angel Donor, I had to get involved,” said Smith. “I believe that when children can see that the financial barrier of college has been removed, they will aspire to achieve it and know that it’s now possible. This is why I choose to donate.”

Sylvia attended Buffalo Public Schools all her life before graduating with her bachelor’s in African American Studies at Brockport. She later received her master’s degree from Buffalo State College.

A huge believer in the community school concept, Sylvia recalls her upbringing – when children went to the school in their neighborhood and getting an education wasn’t a choice. “Back then,” Ms. Smith said, “if you misbehaved at school, you didn’t have to wait to get home to get your discipline. Your upbringing was a collective effort, and we need to get back to that and understand that we have to work together for the benefit of our children.”

Each year, Sylvia attends the Say Yes Angel Donor breakfast and enjoys meeting the students who benefit from the scholarship program and wrap-around services. “I especially enjoy meeting the African American males who are in the program. So few of them graduate from high school, and it’s always a pleasure to see them take this next step in their education,” said Smith.

If you ask her, Sylvia will passionately remind you that the children are our future, and challenge you to think about this; “If we don’t educate them now, where will they be?” The world is changing and evolving,” she added, “we have to continue to grow with it. If we don’t give our time and assistance to organizations like Say Yes, our children won’t be prepared.”

When asked what advice she would share to her former students and those who are currently working toward college, Sylvia says “stop depending on your friends, and watch out for distractions. Determine what you want to do, take the initiative to pursue your own goals (as many of them as you have) and don’t limit yourself. You won’t always know what you want to do at 18 years old, but give yourself options so you can take care of yourself while you decide.”
Robert A. Scharf and Dr. Lawrence Van Heusen
Linda Schineller
Jake and Katie Schneider
Susan B. Schoellkopf
Dr. Mary Schohn and Dr. Larry Lantinga
Susan and Jeffrey Schwartz
James C. Schwegler
Carole and Joseph Sedita
Kevin and Gail Sexton
Judy and Steve Shanley
Anne Simet
Dr. John and Susan Siskar
Gellenia Smallwood
Sylvia Smith
Nicholas and Caitlin Snyder
Jennifer Snyder-Haas
Adrienne and S. Marcus Stanfill
Tanya Staples
Vykktoria Staufenberger
Joyce Stilson
Joel A. Stubbe
Michael and Marsha Joy Sullivan
Steve and Nicole Swift
Tiffany Swink
Diana Jo Syracuse
Gene Szerbiak
Maria Testa & Tom Petrocelli
Mr. and Mrs.orrin D. Tobbe

Nancy Tobin and David* B. Filvaroff
LindaMarie and Michael Todd
Jeremy C. Toth
Brian* and Martha Townson
Jennifer B. Tritto
Dr. Francisco and Janet Vasquez
Matthew Venhaus
Assunta Ventresca
James Wadsworth
Mark and Jennifer Wallace
Connie* and Jack Walsh
Debbie and Michael Walsh
Mr. and Mrs. Steven Weiss
Carol Anne Whitaker
Edward and Claire White
Cort and Denise Williams
Peter Witenburg
Janet and Wayne Wisbaum
Emily and Brad Wyckoff
Kevin Wyckoff
David and Susan Zbro
Michael and Elizabeth Zeisler
Benjamin M. Zuffranieri, Jr.
The Reverend Vicki Zust

IN HONOR
Anonymous in honor of Courtney Stott and Nicholas Sinatra
Susan and Edwin Bean in honor of Dr. Matthew Phillips
Tish Brady and Paul Cesana in honor of David and Jennifer Rust
Adrian and Clotilde Dedecker in honor of George Weiss
Gisel Family Fund in honor of Molly McFarland Wade
Molly and Rob Greene in honor of Emily Wyckoff
Beverly Jones in honor of Carsheenah S. Jackson and Diane McLaughlin
Lake Shore Savings Bank in honor of Dr. Ellen Grant
Tony and Kate Masiello in honor of Dr. Elizabeth Conant and Ms. Camille Cox
Scott and Mary Newman in honor of Harry and Phyllis Newman
Judson T. Price Jr. in honor of First Shiloh Baptist Church
Linda Ray in honor of Mark Gawronski
Rich Products Corporation in honor of Kathy Gardner
Dr. Mary Schohn in honor of Betsy Behrend
Drs. Mary Schohn and Larry Lantinga in honor of Ruby June Behrend
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Chip Berry
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Kevin Brinkworth
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Gary Burns
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Kent and Susan Chevli
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Christopher and Mary Collins
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Philip M. Corwin
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of John Miltelio and Duane Cady
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Walid Daham
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Edmund Eaves
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Daryl Ehlenfield, MD
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Todd and Cindy Goldstein
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Gordon R. Gross
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of John Grabski
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Mark Jauquet
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of JHP, LLC
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Kenneth Edwards Barrett
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Kert King
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Lee Marc
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Larry Mattar
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Luis and Natalie Mendez
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Michael Weihsman
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Michael Militello
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Anthony Nanula
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Phil Nanula
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Steven Nanula
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Christopher O’Donnell
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Mark J. Ogiony
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Paul Nanula
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Eric Reich
Sinatra & Company Real Estate in honor of Dr. Sam Weissman

Angel Donors Michelle Parrish and Melissa Baumgart visiting Lafayette High School during the Say Yes Buffalo Angel Donor Field Trip
MEET BEVERLY JONES  
ANGEL DONOR

Beverly Jones is a Say Yes donor and grandmother of a current scholar. But that’s only part of her story. One conversation with Beverly and you’ll soon realize that she is a true giver, and a woman who doesn’t believe in wasting time, money or the opportunities that Say Yes provides.

Beverly attended Buffalo Public Schools from K-12 before leaving high school early to get married and raise her children. Never forgetting the importance of education, she returned to school later and attended evening classes, which lead to her successful completion and high school diploma. “I remember the day I received my cap, gown and diploma. I hurried home, burst through the door and proudly showed off my accomplishment,” said Beverly. She continued her education at Hilbert College, where she studied nursing, in the hopes of one day becoming a surgical nurse. While she didn’t complete her degree program, she still feels optimistic about returning to finish what she started.

Today, Beverly is a proud grandmother and plays an integral role in her grandchildren’s lives. In many families, grandparents often take on parental roles and embody the old adage, “it takes a village to raise a child.” Beverly is actively involved in the life and education of her granddaughter, Carsheenah Jackson, a Say Yes scholar studying Psychology at Medaille College.

“Growing up, Carsheenah loved school and was always well liked by her teachers and peers. Despite that, I still taught her that you have to earn everything,” Ms. Jones said. “We learned about the Say Yes program from Ms. McLaughlin, the Say Yes representative at Erie Community College. I really owe her a lot. She helped to educate us about the scholarship program and served as a tremendous guide,” she added.

Beverly began contributing to Say Yes after hearing a mother speak about not being able to afford college, and how Say Yes gave her son the opportunity to continue his education. “I was inspired by the mother’s story,” she said, “and will always encourage people to support Say Yes because we are short on people for today’s careers, especially in the science and technology field.”

When asked what advice she would offer students, Beverly said, “after you graduate from high school, look toward your future. I always say, if you don’t work when you’re young, you will work when you’re old. What I mean by that is you need to have a plan and see it through. Life will happen, but you can’t wait until you’re older, or you’ll need to work harder than you want to. Parents also need to be part of this conversation with their children, and never stop talking with them about their future. I tell my grandchildren that everybody starts from the bottom and works their way up, but you have to start.”
Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
William and Carol Lorenz

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
Lisa Williams

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
Tony Zinaty

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
Mariam L. McCarthy

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
Rachid Cheaib

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
George Churasos

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
Michael Hook

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
Savino and  
Virginia Nanula

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
Roger Hungerford

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
Karen Pritzker and  
Michael Vlock

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
Bill Paxon

Sinatra & Company  
Real Estate in honor of  
Lee O. Signs

Thomas Tomaka in honor of  
David and Jeri Brooks

Thomas Tomaka in honor of  
Patti and  
Dominic Montaldi

Beth Vandenberg  
and Dennis Walczyk  
in honor of  
Luke  
Bradley Rust

Debbie and Michael  
Walsh in honor of  
Emily Wyckoff

SAY YES BUFFALO  
LEGACY SOCIETY

Anonymous (5)

Charles G. Duffy Jr. and  
Virginia Leahy Duffy  
Scholarship Fund

IN MEMORIAM

Jeffrey Adams in  
memory of  
Clarence E.  
and Audrey C. Adams

Daytuan & Betsy  
Antonetti in memory of  
Ines Serrano Rivera  
& Alberta Gibson

In Memory of  
Charles Billups

Mrs. Beverly Blue in memory  
of  
Mrs. Sandree Blue

In Memory of Janet Board  
Sue S. Gardner in  
memory of  
Arnold B. Gardner

Cutler and Julie Greene  
in memory of  
Finley R. Greene, Jr.

Amy Martoche and Tim  
Hoover in memory of  
Sofia Grace Hoover

Dr. Juanita Hunter in  
memory of  
Archie L. Hunter

Yvonne James in  
memory of  
Doris James

Diana Morrow  
Johnson, in memory of  
Dr. Cherita M.  
Johnson-Morrow

Diana Morrow  
Johnson in memory of  
Eli Morrow

Dr. Barbara Nevergold in  
memory of  
Dr. Kenneth Seals, MD

The Nyamekye  
Foundation in memory of  
Gregoria Daniel

In memory of  
Anita Sandecki

Susan and David  
Schubbe in memory of  
Vincent and Mary Walsh

Richard Tobe and  
Susan B. Tobe in memory of  
Arnold B. Gardner

FOUNDATIONS

Anonymous (2)

Amgis Foundation

The Baird Foundation

The Balbach Family  
Foundation

Bell Trust

Richard W. Bowen Fund

Buffalo Bills Foundation

Charles A. & Anne L.  
Bird Fund

Children’s Foundation  
of Erie County, Inc.

Chur Family Foundation

The Louis P. Ciminelli  
Family Foundation

Community Foundation  
for Greater Buffalo

Peter C. Cornell Trust

James H. Cummings  
Foundation, Inc.

D-B Trust

Paul P. Dosberg  
Foundation

East Hill Foundation

Robert J. and Martha  
B. Fierle Foundation

First Niagara Foundation

Josephine Goodyear  
Foundation

The Carlos and Elizabeth  
Heath Foundation

James M. Wadsworth,  
Trustee

Hunt Charitable  
Foundation

Foundation for Jewish  
Philanthropies

Joy Family Foundation

The Seymour H. Knox  
Foundation, Inc.

Kenneth L. and Katherine  
G. Koessler Family  
Foundation

Kreher Family Fund

Patrick P. Lee Foundation

Stanford Lipsey  
Philanthropic Fund

Marks Family Foundation

The Mulroy Family  
Foundation, James M.  
Wadsworth, Trustee

Nyamekye Foundation

The John R. Oishei  
Foundation

The Pierce Family  
Charitable Foundation

The Pinto Family  
Foundation
Angel Donors visiting Lafayette High School Parent Center during the Say Yes Buffalo Angel Donor Field Trip

*Deceased*
Citibank has been in Western New York for more than 40 years. Starting out as a 10-person team handling check cashing, the financial services company now boasts 1,800 employees focused on providing financial support to the business community.

Beyond its expanded team and brand-new facility in Amherst, Citi is also working hard to increase its position as a dedicated global citizen. Through the Citi Foundation “Pathways to Progress” program, the company is making every effort to fulfill the needs of the communities in which they operate.

In the case of Say Yes, Citi Foundation recently made a $250,000 contribution to the organization as part of its “Youth Workforce Fund” grant. The goal of the program is to promote economic progress by connecting youth (ages 16-24) to workplace skills AND employment opportunities. When asked why Citi Foundation choose Say Yes to assist them with this work, Vice President and Communications Officer Robin Wolfgang said, “We wanted to do more than just give people skills. It was important to us to find a community partner who understood the importance of connecting those individuals to jobs. Say Yes is the right partner for that second part because they’re already making measurable strides in this area, and most importantly they were looking to grow in this area.”

Thanks to the Citi Foundation grant, Say Yes was able to hire two new staff members who are charged with employer and student recruitment for its expanded internship program.

But what makes Citibank special is that they didn’t just want to write a big check to Say Yes; they are taking their commitment seriously and investing real time with the Say Yes staff and scholars. From inviting students to job fairs and tours at the office, to participating in Say Yes workshops, their team of volunteers offer skills training and mentoring that allows students to understand their career paths.

“Thanks to Say Yes, all of the young people who never thought about college are now exploring the possibility,” added Wolfgang. “We are proud to be part of that story and look forward to assisting Say Yes with its goal of making sure that every child in the city of Buffalo has the opportunity to pursue their academic and career goals.”
Citibank staff and proud Say Yes volunteers at their headquarters in Williamsville (left to right): Robin Wolfgang, Joseph Foti, Irina Leonova Downing, Neil Mussett, and Myroslava Senkiv
SAY YES BUFFALO TEAM CONTRIBUTORS

Current and former Say Yes Buffalo team members are donors to the scholarship, too! We are proud to recognize them and their commitment to advancing the mission of Say Yes Buffalo.

CURRENT STAFF
Durgham Alyasiri
Esther Annan
Tereka Baltimore
Betsy and Scott Behrend
Brandon M. Boudreault
Johanna Caplan
Cross-Viola Family
Kari Cunningham
LaToya Cunningham
Nathan Daun-Barnett
Yolanda Gatewood
Ellen E. Grant, Ph.D, LCSW-R
Sarah Hanley
Michael Katilus
Aaron Lowinger
Lachandra Martin-Rodgers
Kirk and Carol Maurer
Tommy McClam
Elizabeth Mins
Nadia M. Moore
Amanda Paul
Stephanie Peete
Linda Ray

Talia Rodriguez
Daphne Ross
David and Jennifer Rust
Gellenia Smallwood
Tanya Staples
Joell A. Stubbe
Tiffany Swink
Emily and Brad Wyckoff
Daytuan & Betsy Antonetti, in memory of Ines Serrano Rivera & Alberta Gibson
Sharrell Billups In Memory of Charles Billups

FORMER STAFF
Mark Gawronski
Jill Ann Robbins-Jabine
Michael and Meghan Lynch
Justin Metcalf
Allison D.Newman
Joyce Stilson
LaTanya Pitts
OUR STAFF

Aziza Abdul-Alim  
Graphic Design and Communications Specialist

Rashida Abdul-Malik  
Family Support Specialist

Abdi-Kani Aden  
Family Support Specialist

Ahlam Ahmed  
Community School Navigator

Durgham Alyasiri  
Northeast Zone Leader

Osa Amadasu  
Family Support Specialist

Esther Annan  
Program Director

Daytuan Antonetti  
Community School Navigator

Shara Armprester  
Family Support Specialist

Tereka Baltimore  
Scholar Mentoring Supervisor

Laura Bannon  
Family Support Specialist

Betsy Behrend  
Senior Director for Operations and Communications

Sharrell Billups  
Office Manager

Brandon Boudreault  
Development Associate and Executive Assistant

Alex Brady  
Family Support Specialist

Kirby Briggs  
Community School Navigator

Amanda Brown  
Family Support Specialist

LaShawn Brown  
Family Support Specialist

Amedria Byrd  
Family Support Specialist

LeRondra Byrd  
Family Support Specialist Supervisor

Johanna Caplan  
Internship and Career Pathways Program Supervisor

Jessica Correa  
Family Support Specialist

Thomas Cranston  
Family Support Specialist

Dan Cross-Viola  
Extended Learning Time Supervisor

Kari Cunningham  
Family Support Specialist

Gretchen Dade  
Community School Navigator

Van Daniel  
Community School Navigator

Leah Daniel  
Parent Center Liaison

Kissena Frazier  
Family Support Specialist

Danielle Galenski  
Early Childhood Supervisor

Yolanda Gatewood  
Scholarship Coordinator

Debbie Gil  
Family Support Specialist

Hector Gil  
Community School Navigator

Marshawn Goodrum  
Community School Navigator

Wil Green  
East Zone Leader

Sarah Hanley  
Family Support Specialist

Aaron Jackson  
Family Support Specialist

Nikia Jackson  
Family Support Specialist

Michael Katilus  
Family Support Specialist

Jon Krol  
Family Support Specialist

Lameyci Ledbetter  
Family Support Specialist

Sylvia Lloyd  
Family Support Specialist Supervisor

Aaron Lowinger  
Family Support Specialist

Kelly Luce  
Family Support Specialist

Tabatha Lumley  
Family Support Specialist

Courtney MacVie  
Family Support Specialist

Eric Maldonado  
Compliance Supervisor

Lachandra Martin-Rodgers  
Family Support Specialist