

Inside YCS

A NEWSLETTER
BY AND FOR ALL YCS EMPLOYEES



VOLUME 19 | March 2025

PRESIDENT/CEO
TARA AUGUSTINE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
JANIS NICOLOSI-ENDO

ART DIRECTION
BARBARA MAY

INSIDE YCS

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CONTACT

JANIS NICOLOSI-ENDO
201-678-1312
or jnendo@ycs.org

Cover photo: Erica parks, Andrea Mayes,
Regina Rodriguez, and Elizabeth Frayne

Seated Irma Gorham,
Executive director of Paterson HUD



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President's Message

Dear Colleagues,

Spring has finally arrived—a season of hope, renewal, and fresh beginnings. I look forward to sharing the warmth of the sunshine and the beauty of blooming flowers with all of you and the participants we serve. Often, the seeds we plant in someone's life take time to blossom. But I am confident they will, because I see the unwavering dedication, compassion, and resilience each of you brings to your work every single day.

Recently, I received a handwritten letter from a former YCS participant—a 26-year-old young man—whose words moved me deeply. I shared a portion of his message with you on Employee Appreciation Day, but it is worth repeating here, because it is a true reflection of your impact: "This letter is to show my appreciation for YCS and all that was done to help me in my navigation to find myself... I want to thank YCS and the staff who never let my light dim and who remained for me. I won't let you guys down. Second chances do not come often, and I was granted one. So, thank you."

There are days when the demands of paperwork, deadlines, and reports can feel overwhelming. But at the heart of everything we do is a simple, powerful truth: our responsibility—and our privilege—is to care for the child, student, or adult standing in front of us, depending on our guidance and support. Over the past month, many of our programs have faced an intense period of audits and unannounced state licensing visits. You met these challenges with professionalism, grace, and determination. I cannot be prouder.

I am keenly aware that you are all anxious to meet your own high expectations. This process has been a reminder that our own best effort, given wholeheartedly and transparently to the youth and staff, is enough. In the end, these are opportunities to meet our own goals we set for our programs and walk away with a deeper appreciation for our growth and accomplishments.

I hope we can all hold onto that message: showing up with care, doing our best, and striving with heart is what truly makes a difference. Every day you are sowing seeds of potential, and it is truly my wish that you can all see the fruits of your labor.

This month's newsletter is full of examples of your extraordinary efforts during one of the most demanding times we've faced at YCS. Words will never fully capture my gratitude—but from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

With respect and appreciation,

Tara



Tara Augustine

Welcome New Employees

New Employees and Interns who completed 90 days by March 30, 2025

Anderson Jr., Nihym Shift Supervisor DCF-PCH Vineland	Dudley, Nicole Board Cert BehavAnalyst HealthSvc-Behaviorists-S	Kliesch, Skylar M. Intern - UnPaid DOE-George Washington	Ramirez, Maribette Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	Steward, Kareese Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U
Barnes, Emily V. Personal Assistant DDD-Buena Vista	Dyer, Asante Teacher Aide DOE-George Washington	Krakallah, Amina System Analyst Info Management Systems	Rosario, Ana K. Nurse RN HealthSvc-ResidentNurse-N	Walcott, Kabirah Y. Personal Assistant DDD - Davinchi
Black, Aquella Personal Assistant DDD-Walnut	Flint, Bianca Board Cert BehavAnalyst HealthSvc-Behaviorists-S	Lebron, Jackie Personal Assistant DDD-Echohill	Salem, Mariam A. Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	Wise, Raheem R. Board Cert BehavAnalyst HealthSvc-Behaviorists-N
Campbell, Shamoya Residential Assistant DCF-PCH Phoenix	Foreman, Elijah Shift Supervisor DDD - Cavan House	Lizarazo, Silvia Development Associate Foundation	Seebeck, Elizabeth Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	
Chavez, Claudia G. Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	Golabek, Ellenmarie Board Cert BehavAnalyst DOE-George Washington	Lopez, Marlene Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	Serrano, Genesis Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	
Coyotecatl, Mariana Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	Gomez, Belinda A. Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	McClan, Nahji Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	Shakes, Annika Residential Assistant DCF-PCH Coopers Crossing	
De La Rosa, Mayra Administrative Assist CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	Jeter, Chaz Residential Assistant DCF-PCH Phoenix	Oladele, Busola Service Coordinator CBP – Passaic Svc Coord U	Shaw, Alyssa Clinician DCF-CSAP Hammonton	

Promotions

Congratulations!!!

*Your dedication and hard work have truly paid off.
Wishing you all the best in this new chapter of your career.*

Caitlin Corlett-Jacoby, Principal, DOE-Sawtelle Learning Ctr

Imany R. Herald, Teacher Assistant, DOE-Sawtelle Learning Ctr

Jordan B. Eglow, Teacher Stud w Dis TSWD, DOE-Sawtelle Learning Ctr

Work Anniversaries

Congratulations!!!

40 YEARS

Tyrone Bagley, Shift Supervisor, DCF-PCH Fisher Hall

35 YEARS

Janice Reid, Shift Supervisor, DCF-IRTS Holley Muller

25 YEARS

Elizabeth Torres Santiago, Housekeeping Supvr, Facilities - N

20 YEARS

William Heins, Teacher Assistant, DOE-Sawtelle Learning Ctr

15 YEARS

Lourdes Maisonet, Teacher Aide, DOE-George Washington

Theodore Mayo, Technology Technician, Info Technology

Senica D. Rogers, SRT Supervisor, SRT - N

10 Years

Yadira A. Ruiz, School Kitchen Aid Cook, DOE-George Washington

Cassandra R. Smith, House Manager, DDD-Blackwood

Shoutouts

To All Our Amazing Employees!

- ★ **Shanaya Battle, Malcom Rease, Lamar Yancey and Isabella Festa** for keeping Vineland so organized and looking good for OOM inspections. Your work did not go unnoticed.
- ★ **Christinia Bell**, system analyst, for emailing every day before the eight PCH/IDD and CSAP inspections with log in credentials for the Office of Licensing – Staying on top of this made our process run smoother!
- ★ **Jahmani Dean-Bailey**, PA supervisor, has been doing an amazing job in her role as lead PA Supervisor at Walnut.
- ★ **Tiffany Diaz**, PA, completes what is required of her with no questions asked. Tiffany is awesome with the individuals and always goes above and beyond and is always a team player.
- ★ **Sasha Henriquez, Val Dillard, and Ayana Fields** – The way your team continues to work with difficult situations has been nothing short of amazing. I see no discouragement or quit in this team!
- ★ **Matthew Hopkins and Aja Wallace** for taking the extra steps to help the PCH/IDD programs prior to and during the March Inspections is immeasurable!
- ★ **Tah'janay Johnson** has worked as a CRS at Davis House for one year. She demonstrates strong leadership, and commitment to our program every day. We appreciate Tah'janay, and couldn't do it without her!
- ★ **Dr. Michelle Lapine** is always willing to help and listen to any issues or concerns. She is a fierce advocate that I for one am glad is on our side.
- ★ **Barbara May and Janis Nicolosi-Endo** for all that you do. We appreciate you.
- ★ **Uzoamaka Njoku**, House Manager at Sawtelle Walnut House, was promoted from PA Supervisor to House Manager in December 2023. Assuming duties in her new role, Amaka had only one full-time staff. During this time Amaka expressed her frustration, sought out guidance, and had faith that times would get better. Amaka covered shifts, interviewed, and ultimately hired. It is with great appreciation to announce that by way of Amaka's consistent dedication and perseverance, Walnut is fully staffed!
- ★ **Southern Region Maintenance Team** for doing an amazing job completing all EOC maintenance requests and repairs for the PCH/IDD and CSAP Inspections.

Shoutouts

To All Our Amazing Employees!

- ★ **Brad Vetterly** for being a great leader and for always supporting your programs. You've been doing an awesome job as a one man show! We appreciate you!
- ★ **Kyle Wdzieczkowski** for all you do for Sayre and making sure the kids are well taken care of. We love your baked goods and cooking groups! We're all so thankful to have you on our team!
- ★ **Aja Wallace** from QAPI for always working with the programs to ensure a thorough Clinical and EOC audit is conducted at each site.

Employee Snapshot



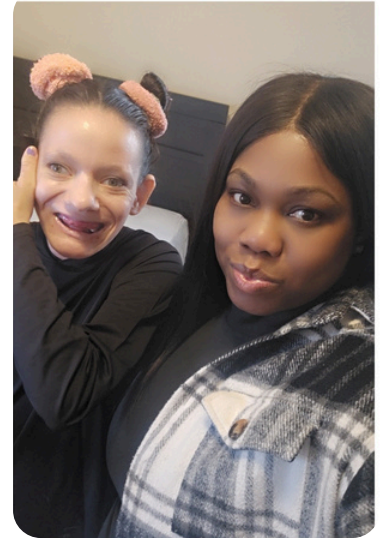
Residential Assistant Supervisor, Cedarbrook Home

Shoutouts



To All Our Amazing Employees!

★ House Manager **Keena Woolley** at Sawtelle Haledon for the incredible care and compassion she shows in supporting VF. Her dedication to not only meeting the physical needs but also providing the emotional support VF so desperately needs has made a profound impact. It takes a special kind of person to step up in such a challenging situation, and your kindness, patience, and commitment have not gone unnoticed. You and your Haledon team have truly made a difference in VF's life, and we deeply appreciate everything you all have done.



★ **Sahmir Session** is a wonderful staff member. He is reliable, kind and a hard worker. I'm so grateful to have him at Davinchi.



Moving On

Alan Schwartz



For more than 25 years, Alan Schwartz, managing partner of Premium Digital Office Solutions, has been a vendor and true advocate for YCS. He has worked closely with YCS programs to ensure that every site's copy machines were up-to-date and maintained. He often visited programs - north and south - to install machines or assist staff having a tough time navigating equipment. Whether over the phone or in person, Alan was always truly kind and patient. As one of the founding volunteer members of the Fore the Kids Golf Outing committee, he has raised funds and awareness for YCS. Recently, Alan announced his retirement. We wish him health and happiness as he begins this new chapter of his life and look forward to seeing him at this year's golf outing.

Above and Beyond

Employees Who Go Above and Beyond in Their Program

Anthony Williams, A True Life Hero and Lifesaver

Anthony saved the life of one of the youths at Estell Manor who was choking on an orange. Anthony was able to successfully dislodge the orange from her airways using abdominal thrust (Heimlich Remover).



Olanrewaju Sholaja (left)
Jean Toussaint (right)



UC at the table.

Jean Toussaint, House Manager at Forest Group Home in West Orange and Olanrewaju Sholaja, Personal Assistant.

These staff members care for the Forest individuals as if they were their own family. Client, UC, has been out of the day program for over 5 years, as he was aggressive and refused to attend. Thanks to Jean and Olanrewaju's hard work in locating and working with UC, they have found a program suitable at UC Four Corners Day Program full-time. Great Work Jean and Olanrewaju.

Milestones

Professional Accomplishments



Grey Cubano, intern at Estell Manor, has been accepted into the Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research (GSSWSR). In the acceptance letter, Grey was praised for their "outstanding achievements" and awarded a scholarship to cover 45% of tuition fees. We wish Grey all the best as they continue their journey towards fulfilling their career goals.

Birth Announcements



Christine Jones gave birth to a beautiful baby boy, Michael, on 2/20/2025 at 9pm. He was 2.5 lbs. Both mom and baby and doing well.

Clinical Rounds



**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
FOR CLINICIANS**

The YCS Clinical CARE Rounds (Collaborative Assistance and Restorative Education) program offers monthly specialized training for mental health clinicians on advanced therapies like trauma-informed care, play therapy, and EMDR. Each session enhances clinical skills, improves client outcomes, and fosters collaborative learning.

To enhance TF-CBT implementation, follow-up training and case presentations are crucial. Focusing on ongoing consultation, case-based learning, and addressing challenges in applying the model, particularly for clinicians who have completed initial training are very beneficial. The Initial TF-CBT training provides a foundation, but ongoing support helps clinicians maintain fidelity to the model and address challenges encountered in practice. Case presentations allow clinicians to learn from each other's experiences, particularly when dealing with complex or challenging cases. Come join us for this important training for those that are using TF-CBT in their treatment and also for those interested in hearing about how to apply this model in case examples.

TRAUMA-FOCUSED COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOLLOW-UP & CASE PRESENTATIONS

**With Sue Heguy, LCSW
May 1, 10:00-12:00pm
Online Training**

**PLAY-BASED ENGAGEMENT,
RAPPORT BUILDING,
AND ASSESSMENT
TECHNIQUES FOR CHILDREN**
With Crystal Zelman, LCSW, CCLS, RPT-S
June 27, 10:00-12:00pm
Online Training

Play therapy is a therapeutic approach that uses play as a means for children to express emotions, process experiences, and develop coping skills in a safe and supportive environment. Through techniques such as storytelling, role-playing, and the use of toys, art, and sand trays, clinicians help communicate thoughts and feelings that may be difficult to verbalize. This training will provide strategies to engage children in developmentally appropriate ways, fostering emotional regulation, problem-solving, and self-expression. By integrating play-based interventions, therapists can support children in processing trauma, managing behavioral challenges, and building resilience in a way that feels natural and empowering.

Questions? Contact your clinical supervisor for additional information!

Employee Spotlight

James Lee Malcom House clinician



After earning a master's degree in counseling from Seton Hall University, James Lee was very happy to be offered a position as clinician at Malcolm House in May of 2023. While he says that the work at times is very challenging, he believes that his inner love for the field and compassion for others is what keeps him motivated. "I will say an extra challenge that I faced early on in my career at YCS was the fact that I was a new clinician in the field and was still learning more about myself as a clinician," explains James.

He is very grateful for the support of all his co-workers in helping him adjust to the job. "The relationship between me, my co-workers, and senior staff has helped me truly explore the type of clinician that I want to be. Their support and insight have been an invaluable resource for me to further help the youths in the program," says James, adding, "The co-worker I aspire to be is one who is truly collaborative and strives for the best results for each participant."

As a new employee James says some of the difficult issues he confronted on the job revolved around paperwork. He credits the flexibility of both Nicole Ciencin, his program director, and Jennifer Stratton, VP, and clinical supervisor, for helping him not only navigate reports but also provide support and guidance.

Overall, James says he is convinced he is in the right place doing the right work every time a youth is successfully discharged.

Off the job James loves to relax by gaming. All the youths in the program know that I am an avid fan of nerdy things, particularly board, video, and card games. "This hobby has helped me connect to a community of positive people that have positively impacted my mental health and work life balance," concludes James.

James' hard work, dedication, collaboration, and professionalism are what make him a special member of the team. ~ Jennifer Stratton, VP

Mr. James has helped a lot of us youth get a lot better with our mental state. And when arguments break out, he helps us monitor them and helps us talk things out. ~ AJ, Malcolm House participant

Intern Corner

Daniella Scaglione

George Washington School Speech Therapy Intern



"Daniella is a welcome addition to the GWS staff this semester. The students love going to speech with her. She prepares fun activities to target their goals and is always happy to welcome them into the speech room. Ms. Daniella has introduced some of the students to books with symbols to assist with their ability to comprehend stories. She also prepares scavenger hunts for them to help build vocabulary and improve articulation. We are so appreciative of all Ms. Daniella does to help our students."

Lauren Hunt, M.S., CCC-SLP
Supervisor of Speech - Language Services
YCS George Washington School

1. What college do you attend and what is your major there? When do you plan to graduate?

I am currently pursuing a Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) at Rutgers University and am set to graduate in May 2025.

2. What exams have you taken recently to further your career?

I recently took the Speech-Language Pathology PRAXIS exam as part of the requirements to become a licensed speech-language pathologist.

3. How has your experience interning at YCS been? How has this internship helped you better confirm your career goal of being a speech pathologist?

My internship at YCS has been a valuable experience to further my goal of becoming a SLP. The staff has been welcoming and supportive, and working with the students has been truly rewarding. This opportunity has allowed me to enhance my clinical skill set by working with children with diverse needs and support levels. I have gained invaluable knowledge from both my supervisor and the children, helping me grow both professionally and personally.

Intern Corner

4. What have you learned about yourself through this internship and what have you learned from your students?

Through this internship, I have learned a great deal about myself, particularly my ability to adapt to different situations, build meaningful rapport with others, and exercise patience. Working with children of varying needs has strengthened my adaptability, as I have had to adjust my approach based on each child's unique requirements. I have also developed a deeper understanding of the importance of building trust and connections, which has been essential in working effectively with the students. From them, I have learned resilience, creativity, and the power of small moments to make a difference.

5. Was there a time where you faced a particular challenge in the internship, and how did you overcome it?

During my internship at YCS, a particular challenge I faced was learning how to effectively adapt my treatment sessions when a child exhibited refusal behaviors. It was important to remain calm, flexible, and patient in these situations. To overcome this, I worked with my supervisor to develop new strategies, such as adjusting the structure of the sessions and incorporating more engaging activities. Over time, I learned to recognize triggers and respond in ways that reduced the refusal behaviors, ultimately helping the child stay engaged and progress in their treatment.

6. How important is your relationship with your supervisors?

My relationship with my supervisor is extremely important to me. Open communication has allowed me to ask questions freely and receive constructive feedback, which has been instrumental in helping me grow as a more effective clinician.

7. What are your future goals after completing this internship and getting your masters?

After completing this internship and earning my master's degree, my goal is to secure a job working with children in either a school or outpatient clinic setting. I am passionate about providing support and care to help children thrive, and I look forward to applying the skills and experience I have gained to make a meaningful impact in their lives.

Leading with Heart

Driss Ouhdou

Gets to the heart of what it means to be successful on the job.



In 2010, the same year YCS opened its first group home for developmentally disabled youth in Camden, Driss Ouhdou immigrated to the states from Morocco. He never imagined that several years later, he would be managing the Camden home and helping a Moroccan youth, who spoke Arabic, return to his mother in his homeland. To say that Driss went the extra mile to help the young man is beyond an understatement.

Although his initial career goal was law, Driss found his true passion while volunteering at an orphanage for disabled children. According to Driss, the children he cared for back home, who often felt angry, abandoned, and unloved, prepared him for his true calling at YCS.

Driss prides himself on building a good rapport with new participants from day one. He often sees himself as a father figure. "The best way to diffuse a child's anger is to listen to them, talk to them, and gain their trust," Driss explains, adding, "I am not there to discipline them; I am there to understand them and give them hope for their future."

Coming up in the ranks at YCS from a residential assistant to Regional Director, Driss has keen advice for being successful on the job:

- First, leave your problems at home. When you come to work you must be ready to give your all to the kids - that means being patient and kind.
- If you are having a rough day, don't hesitate to ask a colleague for help.
- Be willing to help others. If you are doing this job only for a paycheck, it is not the right job for you.
- Holding grudges only holds you back. Always look ahead and have something to strive for - that is the way to be happy.

Leading with Heart

Driss is the epitome of a leader. Ask anyone he works with- they feel supported, not only in words but in his actions. Driss will show up when things are heavy, and he shoulders the load alongside them with a smile on his face. ALWAYS with a smile. He builds lasting, caring relationships with the Youth and Staff in our programs, and our region is stronger because of the time he spends fortifying it. He is a great friend and ally in the work that we do, and one can only hope he knows how valued he is.

~Michelle Robbins, LCSW, Clinical Director

Driss' professionalism and strategic vision have been truly inspiring. Under his leadership, I have gained valuable insights and learned important lessons that have contributed to my personal and professional growth. Driss' ability to foster a positive and motivating work environment has made a significant impact, and I deeply respect the way he leads with integrity and commitment. I would like to thank Driss for his encouragement, mentorship, and the trust he places in the Hammonton CSAP team. I look forward to continuing to learn from Driss and contributing to our shared goals.

~Charles A Wiseley, PD Hammonton CSAP

Driss has provided immense support to CSAP over the past several months! Despite supporting several locations, Winslow never feels as though we are left behind. Driss is always responsive to our calls, keeps up to date on changes with individual clients, and follows through when it comes to both staff and client needs. He has ensured the program is always staffed (which is a challenge when you have several open positions) and the kids make it to each appointment, outing, and activity. The Winslow clients ask for Driss daily and they get so excited when he comes to the program. Winslow sees how hard Driss works, and we appreciate all that he does for us!

~Lauren Marks, BCBA, LBA, Behavior Analyst

I have enjoyed working with Driss over the past 9 years. He has displayed determination, growth and support. Starting out as a Per Diem employee at Sawtelle Camden, under Driss, to now me being a Program Director and still working under Driss as Regional Director has been rewarding. Driss is always ready to assist whenever and wherever he can, especially during licensing and when a driver is needed for long distance traveling. We can always count on Driss support and encouragement.

~Chanae Maynard, Program Director, YCS Sawtelle Home Sewell

Happy Birthday!!

March Birthdays

Aliyah N. Wakler	Darneil Serales	Joy Pagano	Michele Laipne	Sivonne Lynn
Altanita Clveeland	David Ruhterford	Juarez R. Sanuders	Mohammad Paetl	Sojourner Sullivan
Amina Krkaallah	Deanna Okjoie	Juliana L. Kamlowitz	Monica T. Capmbell	Stephanie Vaelntin
Ana K. Roasrio	Debra S. Tillman	Kabirah Y. Waclott	Myesha M. Eustey	Taiwo F. Ojleade
Andrea Y. Morrison	Devone Fldud	Kasheim Bulter	Nigeria Thmopson	Thomas P. Phlaen
Anna Talyor	Djabia A. Kalbansi	Kiana Barrett	Olivia Moilnari	Tiffany Batpiste
Annette Fuller	Dominique E. Diwlorth	Kyle F Jonhson Sr.	Patrick D. Rihcards I	Tyesha E. Wrgiht
Ayana T. Fileds	Dominique Williams	Lidvina Meija	Quinice Anhtony	William N. Roibnson
Barbara V. Matrin	Donna Gibbons-Davis	Lisa B. Guraiglia	Rachel Dryaton	William Smtih Jr.
Bradshaw Vetterly	Donte Roibnson	Lorenzo S. Brwon	Raphael Lee	Yakima C. Daniels
Brittany Wokrs	Ebenezer Abcuhi	Lourdes Maisonet	Rebekah Roberts	Yvette Yokr
Bruce Thmopson Jr.	Elizabeth Sebeeck	Louvon Sneed	Renee Hutner	
Caroline O. Corvino	Ellen H. William-Lindsey	Lynnel Bani	Risa Kibmrough	
Cathy Crmoelin	Emely Llfire	Mabel A. Numaah	Samantha Lictfield	
Chante Sctot	Emily V. Banres	Marcielle Rihcards	Sarah Poylnice	
Chawnte M. Lewis	Genesis Serrano	Martina Vi,l Ma	Shakida S. Fainel	
Christenson P. Mattoon	Imany R. Hearld	Mary Jane Askew	Shalik Yonug	
Christina Cooln	Jashon Daswon	Maurese Chnadler	Shaneika S. Fotrenberry	
Daise Carol	Jasmine A. Brtio	Melissa Prtat	Sheri L. Brwon	
Danielle DeePri	Jelson D. Decoampo	Melissa Urnea	Shona Little	



HAPPY
Birthday



Highlights

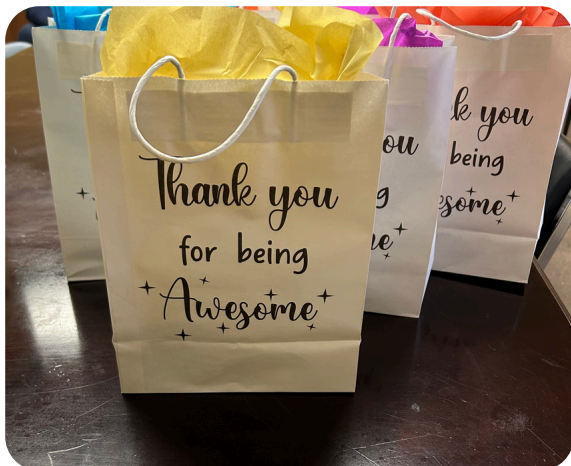
Employee Appreciation Around the Agency

For Employee Appreciation Day, each YCS program did something special for their staff. Several programs had parties and luncheons, others went bowling, and some gave thank you gifts.



The **Sayre staff** goes bowling to celebrate employee appreciation day! "I am thankful to have such an amazing team who shows up each day for the program and our youth. I appreciate you all!" - Aimee Briscoe

"Because **QAPI's staff**, Aja Wallace, Matthew Hopkins, and I were all working in different places, I sent them Panera gift cards to thank them." - Jaimie Fox



Treatment Homes gave 'Thank you' gift bags to each of their staff.

Highlights

Employee Appreciation Around the Agency



School-Based Youth Services Program
Regina Rodriguez, Andrea Mayes, and Elizabeth Frayne show off their gift bags.



Laurie Haven Staff Appreciation Luncheon



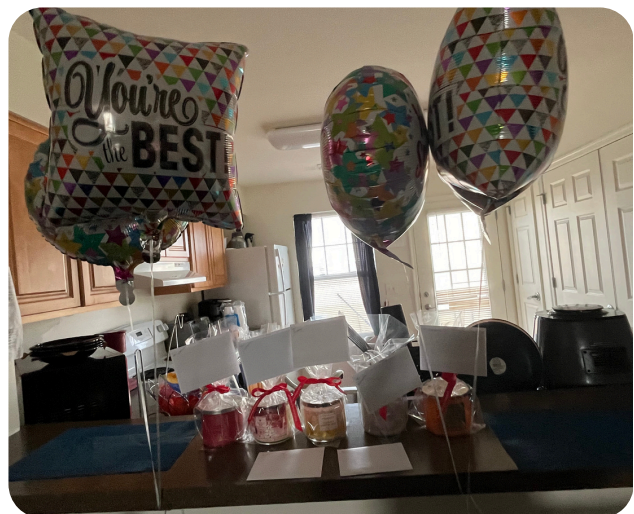
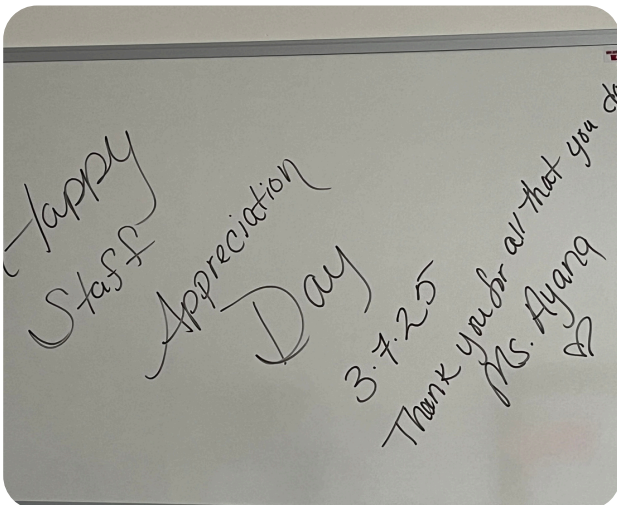
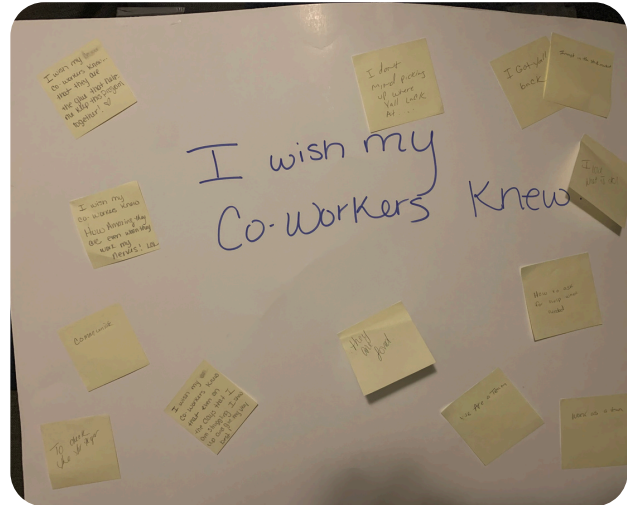
Sawtelle Learning Center Staff Luncheon
Erica Donovan, Meg Daniels, Gabriela Lakhman, L. Sue Nicholas



Appreciation Luncheon for Program Directors and Clinicians at Lawnridge, Bright Start, and Phoenix
Front: Candace Thom-Rogers, Shaylah Counts, Sherene Rogers, Jasmine Woodard, Yesenia Fulgencio
Back: Korey McKeever Clark, Mark Robinson, Tameka McMillan

Highlights

Employee Appreciation Around the Agency



Sawtelle Absecon's Staff Appreciation Luncheon

We took the time to honor our dedicated team for their hard work and commitment to the individuals we serve. During the luncheon, we engaged in team-building activities to boost staff morale and foster a positive work environment. Additionally, we created a space for staff to anonymously share any concerns about our program, allowing us to identify areas for improvement while ensuring their voices are heard.

Highlights

Spirituality Graduation March 2025



Jonathan proudly shows off his graduation certificate.

YCS PCEISC Ribbon Cutting



The YCS Passaic County Early Intervention Service Coordination Unit (PCEISCU) opened its doors and got off to a running start in January. In less than three months, the program's staff assisted more than 1,400 families who are concerned about their young children's development. On March 14th, the PCEISCU had an official ribbon cutting celebration in its Clifton office with special guests Josephine Shenouda, DrPH, NJEIS Executive Director, Patty Green, LCSW, NJEIS SC Manager and Kendra Taggart, NJ DOH. During her opening remarks, Ms. Green emphasized the importance of early intervention services to empower and support parents to help young children thrive.

Highlights

School Based Youth Services Tea Party



SBYS held a formal Tea Party to celebrate Women’s History Month in March. They wanted to teach the girls the importance of being accountable by receiving and responding to invitations and following through by attending. Irma Gorham, Executive Director of Paterson HUD, was a guest speaker who talked about growing up in Paterson and finding her own gifts and strengths, overcoming challenges, and working hard to become a successful leader. All food was prepared by the staff.

Buffalo House “Shenanigans”



Celebrating St. Patrick’s Day



Attending a Seton Hall basketball game



On a trip to the bowling alley

Agency Tips

Basic Steps For Food Safety

by Carlos Actos, Director of Food Services

- 1. Check:** Always check dates of food in cupboards, fridge and freezer.
 - Check expiration dates.
 - Check cupboards and rotate items (newest in the back, oldest in front).
 - Check food in freezers and fridge for frostbite or mold.
- 2. Clean:** Always wash your food, hands, counters, and cooking tools.
 - Wash hands in warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds. Do this before and after touching food.
 - Wash your cutting boards, dishes, forks, spoons, knives, and counter tops with hot soapy water. Do this after working with each food item.
 - Rinse fruits and veggies.
 - Clean the lids on canned goods before opening.
- 3. Separate (keep apart):** Keep raw foods to themselves. Germs can spread from one food to another.
 - Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs away from other foods. Do this in your shopping cart, bags, and fridge.
 - Do not reuse marinades used on raw foods unless you bring them to a boil first.
 - Use a special cutting board or plate for raw foods only.
- 4. Cook:** Foods need to get hot and stay hot. Heat kills germs.
 - Cook to safe temperatures: Cook beef, pork, lamb and fish to 145 °F; Cook ground beef, pork and lamb to 160 °F; Cook turkey, chicken and duck to 165 °F.
 - Use a food thermometer to make sure that food is done. You can't always tell by looking.
- 5. Chill:** Put food in the fridge right away.
 - 2-Hour Rule: Put foods in the fridge or freezer within 2 hours after cooking or buying from the store. Do this within 1 hour if it is 90 degrees or hotter outside.
 - Never thaw food by simply taking it out of the fridge. Thaw food: In the fridge, under cold water or in the microwave. Marinate foods in the fridge.



Innovations

Emerging Leader Program

Two years ago, the YCS Leadership Team became aware of a desire among direct care supervisors for training that would help them increase effectiveness in their current roles and prepare them for additional responsibilities in the future. Mike Baguidy and Yvonne Montemurro, then former AVP and VP of training, started working with Phil Janson, a consultant from The Mahler Co., to develop a six-sessions, module leadership pilot project. The team worked for six months to build the curriculum. Two cohorts of nine employees each were formed based on recommendations from agency VPs. The project was launched in January with the cohorts meeting alternatively between the north and south once per month for four hours over the next six months. Mike, Yvonne, and Phil are the instructors.

Topics include:

- Who Am I as a Leader?
- Who Do I Want to Be?
- Communication and the DISC Assessment: Understanding Behavior for Effective Communication
- Management Conversations: Performance Feedback, Career Development, Discipline, Termination
- Management Rhythms: Putting Communication Processes into Practice to Increase Effectiveness
- Establishing Visual Management for Team Success

This is an interactive program. Participants are given assignments to read and prepare in advance and collect feedback from their colleagues. The sessions start with a very short lecture, and the remainder of the time is devoted to team discussions of common YCS management challenges. Role playing, group exercises and video productions to reinforce the management tools are utilized.

The first two cohorts will graduate in June.



Participating in the Emerging Leaders Program with my cohort has been an incredible experience, allowing me to grow both professionally and personally. Collaborating with like-minded leaders has given me new perspectives on leadership, decision-making, and team development. Through interactive discussions and real-world applications, I've gained valuable skills that enhance my ability to lead with confidence and impact. This journey has not only strengthened my leadership approach but also fostered connections with my cohort, creating a network of support and shared growth. I wish it didn't have to end but I look forward to the remaining classes.
~ **Octavia Green**, Training Manager

It's one thing to think you know who you are, but to scientifically understand yourself as a leader opened my mind to new possibilities! The Emerging Leaders cohort has given me the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, allowing iron to sharpen iron. Together, we share tools, support one another, and collaboratively problem solve, creating countless opportunities to improve solutions to our everyday challenges; what a blessing! ~ **Rafael Lee**, SRT Supervisor



Innovations

Navigate the Impossible

Nothing is impossible when you have the right life tools to succeed



Navigate the Impossible is a dynamic youth empowerment program designed by Brandi Pettiford to equip the youth with tools, techniques, and skills to face their challenges with confidence and resilience. The project was launched as an allied therapy at the Holley Center by Ms. Pettiford, a contract group facilitator. She crafted the interactive program for the youth to focus on fostering self-awareness, self-worth, and actionable strategies for the youths' success in their personal and academic lives.

Through interactive workshops, engaging activities, and meaningful group discussions, the youth developed strategies for life challenges, created affirmations for self-empowerment, and identified actionable steps by creating SMART goals to turn their visions into realities, fostering a sense of accomplishment and purpose. This program empowers youth to see challenges as opportunities for growth, helping them build confidence, develop a success-oriented mindset, and take charge of their future. Upon completing this program, the youth will be inspired to dream big, believe in themselves, and achieve the impossible.

I love the kids! I've watched them evolve. Some of them were quiet and shy and not as interactive in the beginning. Once they got comfortable with me, they've blossomed, grown, and are extremely open to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. I've been working with Holley for over a year and have seen them grow in so many ways.

Brandi Pettiford, founder of Navigate the Impossible

Agency Updates

The Agency By the Numbers

Over the last two months, several programs hit compliancy in Clinical Services, Life Skills/Community Meeting, and Groups. There are eleven programs in compliance range. Kilbarchan IRTS was compliant in every category!

Compliancy Categories

Clinical Services for 2 Consecutive Months	Bright Start, Farmingdale (Sayre), Fisher Hall PCH, Holley RTC, Kilbarchan I IRTS, Kilbarchan RTC, Laurie Haven (Edison), Lawn Ridge, Muller IRTS, Paterson Kilbarchan, Phoenix, Sewell Residence, Sicklerville, Vineland	91% Agency Wide Compliancy
Life Skills/Community Meeting	Bright Start PCH, Kilbarchan SPEC, Sayre PCH, Kilbarchan RTC, Kilbarchan IRTS , Holley RTC	Compliant for last 2 months
Groups	DCF-RTC Kilbarchan, DCF-RTC Holley , DCF-PCH Haddon Heights, DCF-PCH Coopers Crossing, DCF-IRTS Kilbarchan	Numbers up from last 2 months
Programs in Compliance Range	DCF-RTC Holley, DCF-PCH Vineland, DCF-PCH Sicklerville, DCF-PCH Sayre, DCF-PCH Malcolm House, DCF-PCH Laurie Haven, DCF-PCH Fisher Hall, DCF-PCH Davis, DCF-PCH BHDD Estell Manor, DCF-IRTS Kilbarchan, DCF-IRTS Holley Muller	Numbers up from last 6 months

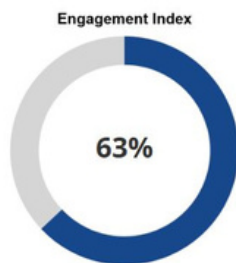
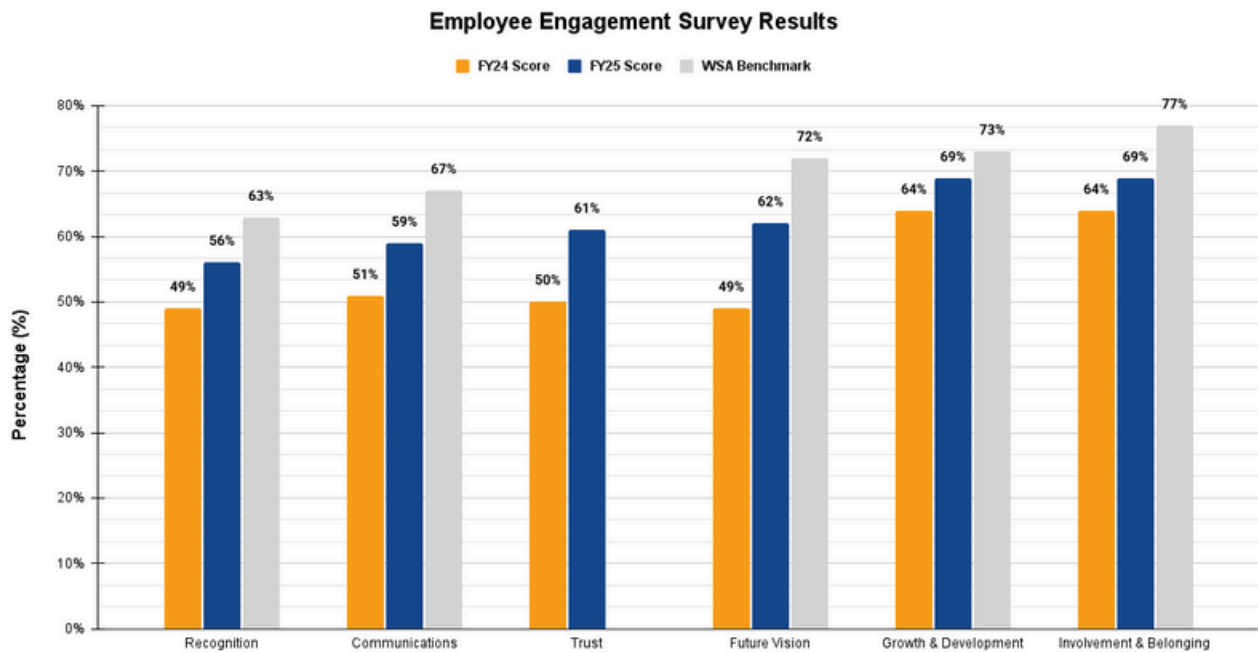
* Programs in yellow compliant in both Life Skills/Community Meeting AND Groups

Allied Services Compliancy (%)

Bright Start PCH	Jones, Niema	143%
Davis PCH	Barry, Elizabeth A.	92%
Estell Manor PCH	Ragland, Dawn	129%
Haddon Heights PCH	Rudisill, George	106%
Kilbarchan IRTS	Mejia, Lidvina	102%
Kilbarchan RTC	Captain, Lissa	127%
Kilbarchan SPEC	Muse, Jesse	108%
Laurie Haven PCH	Sample, Etta	111%
Malcolm House PCH	Ciencin, Nicole	166%
Phoenix PCH	Bartley-Rogers, Sherene	173%
Vineland PCH	TBH	122%

Agency Updates

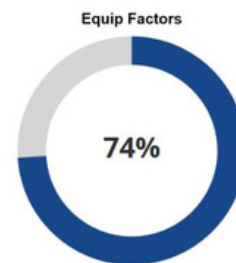
Employee Engagement Survey Results



YCS Overall: 63%
FY24 Score: 52%
WSA Benchmark: 72%



YCS Overall: 75%
FY24 Score: 71%
WSA Benchmark: 74%



YCS Overall: 74%
FY24 Score: 65%
WSA Benchmark: 79%

Engagement Index: 63%

- Increased from 52% in FY24, demonstrating improved overall motivation and commitment among employees.
- While still below the industry benchmark of 72%, the 11-point increase indicates significant progress.

Manager Effectiveness Index: 75%

- Improved from 71% in FY24 and now aligns with the industry benchmark of 74%.
- Feedback suggests managers are more effective in communication, support, and leadership.

Equip Factors: 74%

- Increased from 65% in FY24, which is close to the industry benchmark of 79%.
- Employees feel better supported with tools and resources to perform their jobs effectively.

Agency Updates

Agency-Wide Training Completion Percentages

The overall total training completion rate for the agency currently stands at **75.3%**. In January we were at **76.2%**. This is an increase of **0.9%**.

Mike Baguidy
VP of Training

[Click to view
FULL REPORT](#)

Mike's Note of the Day

Training Fatigue:

It's natural to feel overwhelmed when faced with a large number of trainings and racing towards completion dates. However, remember growth happens one step at a time. Focus on tackling each task steadily, knowing every bit of effort is building your skills and confidence for the future. We all have the strengths and the abilities to stay ahead of deadlines and due dates. Prioritize your responsibilities and exercise your talents at encouraging your team to stay on top of their training obligations. The rewards will offer a sense of peace and tranquility along with one less stressor off your list of things to do. I understand that these words may sound easier said than done but these goals are certainly attainable.



Managers Meeting Bulletin

Summary of Key Points from the February Monthly Cabinet Meeting

Finance

Gas Cards: There is one gas card per vehicle for tracking mileage and maintenance needs. Please be sure to put in the actual mileage for accurate tracking. Regular vehicle maintenance is often included in the service. Please check with Barbara in the Transportation Department at barbara.franklin-winsor@yycs.org if you're being charged for anything because vehicle maintenance is covered with our service plan.

Human Resources

UKG performance reviews will be available beginning April 15 and must be completed for all your employees by June 15. If you have any questions about this, please reach out to Djabia at djabia.kablansi@yycs.org or Steve at steven.kessler@yycs.org.

HR is working on updating procedures to address poor performance and misconduct issues. The goal is to have a system in place that helps all employees understand what areas they are deficient in and are given the opportunity to make corrections or improvements. If an employee is having difficulty fulfilling all their tasks, it is important you provide them with concrete measurable goals.

The new performance warning process includes:

1. Identifying the performance issue and clearly stating expectations going forward.
2. Offer support if an employee needs it.
3. A warning memo outlining the consequences if expectations are not met.

HR will be working with the VPs to finalize the performance improvement process with templates which will then be rolled out to the managers.

Note: Progressive discipline is not applicable for employees in their probationary period. In this case, a manager may extend the probationary period for an additional three months to give the employee time to satisfactorily meet all their work requirements. It is important to write a list of competencies not being met so the employee understands what areas they need to improve.

Termination of an employee's employment must be approved by HR.

Managers Meeting Bulletin

The Administrative Review Committee (ARC) handles matter regarding employees' misconduct issues relating to YCS clients. ARC meets weekly to review the facts provided by the VPs and decide the right corrective actions.

Note: In instances where an employee's behavior has been egregious, a program manager has the authority to send the employee home immediately.

Training

Call to action: We are currently trending in the wrong direction with completed training. In the past month, 76% of all employees have completed their training. This is down .9% from last month. It is imperative that the managers work with their staff so that they complete their training every month to make sure that your employees are current with their training, if the number of training courses due for an employee begins to add up, it will be very difficult for them to finish all the trainings within a given month. Progressive action will be taken for staff who are not completing training.

Note; If an employee has not completed essential lifesaving training like CPR, they will have to be removed from the schedule until they are satisfactorily completed.

Remind staff that if they are unable to complete the training during their shift, they can do it on off hours and put in the time for extra pay.

IMS

All new employees will be required to download the UKG app during orientation to punch in and out to record their time. This is a requirement for employees moving forward as using the punch tile on one's laptop doesn't always register the accurate GPS location. Geofencing Reports are being reviewed biweekly. Please remind your staff the acceptable distance for punching in and out is in the driveway or on the program site.

Open Shifts: Reminder to please adjust your staffing to your program census using the Workload Planner. There were 123 Open Shifts this pay period a high number that reflects the Workload Planner is not being utilized accurately. This can create issues with Medicaid and the Office of Monitoring when YCS is asked to produce schedules and the whereabouts of staff.

If an employee is on vacation or out sick, please be sure to adjust this in their time schedule, so that SRT knows which shifts need to be filled. If you need more training on managing open shifts, please contact Dina Sundberg.

Managers Meeting Bulletin

Food Service Report

Beginning in April, Newark Campus, KB campuses and the Holly Center will no longer be outsourcing to CSG food services. All food services in the agency will be done in-house from this point forward, please refer to the March newsletter for all food safety tips. If you have questions or concerns regarding how to address a client's dietary needs and/or restrictions, please contact Carlos Acosta, Food Services Director at carlos.acosta@ycs.org

IT

A simulated phishing email was sent out to all staff on March 14th through Microsoft 365 to evaluate employee's attention to cyber security guidelines. 122 employees opened this email, 20 opened the attachment and entered their credentials. All those people were instructed by Microsoft 365 to complete additional training. Only 3 of these employees have taken this training. All employees must take this training to protect the agency from any dangerous or foreign breaches. If you have any questions, please contact Ed Mercer Edward.mercer@ycs.org or helpdesk@ycs.org

Note: Always check the email address of the sender before opening an email. This is usually a strong indicator if it is spam. If you're unsure do not click on the email and report it to the IT department through helpdesk reminder, please be sure that all employees are taking their annual cyber security training.

Adoption User report: YCS' threshold for maintaining our contractual agreement with Microsoft 365 is 85%. This past month 56 programs exceeded 85%, 27 programs were under 85%. For a full report on the standing of every program visit: <https://ycsorg.sharepoint.com/sites/YCSEmployeeSecuredSite/SitePages/YCS-Employee-Secured-Site.aspx>

Practice integration

Virtual Clinical Training Thursday, 5/1--Topic TF-CBT narrative therapy. A virtual presentation on Play Therapy will directly follow.

Internship program

YCS partners with 48 Colleges if you would like to have an intern assist you at your programs, please contact Laurie Levin llevin@ycs.org See details in March newsletter.

Managers Meeting Bulletin

QAPI

Smoke detector and carbon monoxide batteries: must be replaced now - at the start of spring.

Fire Drills: Be mindful of completing all fire drills at various times during a 24-hour period to comply with car and office licensing requirements. Aja Wallace has created an emergency procedure calendar with blocks of time for various shifts. For more information contact Aja at aja.wallace@ycs.org

Note: All disaster drills will be completed throughout April. For more information an email from Jaime Fox will be coming shortly.

Parents Satisfaction Surveys: have been sent out to all families of individuals in our DD and DCF residential programs. Each program has received copies electronically that they can print out to give to parents on visits.

Allied Therapy & Community Engagement

Many programs are taking the opportunity to bring their participants out into the community for community events. Please be sure to document these activities

Note that cleaning chores and homework are not considered Allied therapies

If you have direct care staff who are facilitating allied therapy groups or enlisting external service providers, email Caitlyn at caitlyn.yerves@ycs.org.

Foundation

The YCS Charity Golf Outing will be September 15, 2025, at Edgewood Country Club. Please note Programs are encouraged to create raffle baskets and attend the evening dinner.

Communications

Note: Beginning in March, the monthly Inside YCS employee newsletter will be distributed the first week of the following month