2015
OLDER YOUTH RETREAT

WE CAN
WE WILL

YOUTH ALWAYS BELONG

AUGUST 10-14, 2015
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH,
JOHNSTOWN CAMPUS
RETREAT WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE
OLDER YOUTH RETREAT STEERING COMMITTEE:

Thank you for your interest in the 2015 Pennsylvania Older Youth Retreat. This retreat was planned by a steering committee comprised of youth who were or who are in substitute care, representatives from county and private provider Independent Living Programs, the Office of Children, Youth and Families, and staff from the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work’s Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center. We are excited to present this week-long opportunity for you to meet new friends, work together, experience new things, and demonstrate our theme, Youth Always Belong!

Please read over the information in this brochure carefully. Our hope is to provide you as many options as possible. Whether it’s participating in the sports experience, stained glass or in the talent show, there’s something at the Older Youth Retreat for everybody!

We look forward to seeing you at UPJ in August!
Sincerely,

MEMBERS OF THE 2015 OLDER YOUTH RETREAT STEERING COMMITTEE
WHAT IS THE OLDER YOUTH RETREAT?
The Older Youth Retreat is a week-long experience where youth from Independent Living (IL) Programs from all over Pennsylvania live on a college campus and participate in group discussions, structured activities, sports/games, and hear from guest speakers. Youth along with IL staff from around the state plan the Older Youth Retreat which means that everything about the retreat was designed for youth by youth.

WHERE IS THE OLDER YOUTH RETREAT?
The Older Youth Retreat is held at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown (UPJ). UPJ has great facilities including indoor gymnasiums, a pool, and dorm suites. Youth will live with a roommate for the week and have a private bathroom shared by another pair of roommates in the dorm suite.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?
Youth should expect a fun and extremely busy week. This is not a vacation or camp. Youth will be pushed to learn new things, participate in activities, and meet new people. Check out the rest of this brochure for more information.

WHY SHOULD I COME TO THE OLDER YOUTH RETREAT?
Why not? If you’re looking to have fun, learn new things, meet new people, and work hard, then this is the event for you! Check out the retreat page on the Youth Advisory Board website to see videos of past retreats:
http://www.independentlivingpa.org/ILRetreat.htm
PEER GROUP SESSIONS

Small Peer Groups:
Each youth participant at the retreat will be paired with a small peer group. Peer groups will meet in classrooms throughout the week. All peer group sessions are attended by youth only, with the exception of the staff co-facilitator. Throughout the week, youth will be encouraged to discuss personal goals and experiences as well as engage with their peers through different activities.

Youth and Alumni Facilitators:
The peer group sessions are facilitated by a youth and staff from the Retreat Steering Committee. Peer group facilitators will serve as group leaders and support each session, which follows a curriculum developed by the retreat steering committee.

Youth Developed Curriculum:
Youth on the Retreat Steering Committee developed the peer group curriculum. The peer group sessions will focus on this year’s theme, “Youth Always Belong!” Youth will be challenged to work together, recognizing their unique contribution and unlimited potential. Youth will also draw inspiration from and share experiences with their peers.

Large Peer Group Sessions:
There will be two large group sessions at the 2015 retreat, where all youth and staff will gather together to learn about relevant issues facing the child welfare system. There will also be a generational activity to assist youth and staff in learning more about each other.

The peer group sessions promise to be an experience filled with learning, sharing, and fun!
ACTIVITY SESSIONS

Would you like to create stained glass, learn the art of DJ’ing, or make your own jewelry? Then the older youth retreat is the place for you! Below you will find the different activity sessions that are available:

- Canvas Creations: Painting 101
- Fun Furniture: It’s a DIY (do it yourself) Thing!
- Hip Hop Dance
- Jewelry Making: A Rolling Stone
- Reverse Painting: Creativity from the Inside Out
- Stained Glass
- Expression through Music
- Snapshots and Scrapbooking
- Banners of Expression
- Decorate Your World: Funky Arts & Crafts
- Developing the Leader Within
- All Star Sports Experience

SPECIAL EVENING EVENTS

Monday, August 10, 2015
Volleyball Tournament/Pool

Tuesday, August 11, 2015
Tournaments/Pool

Wednesday, August 12, 2015
Dance and Movie Night

Thursday, August 13, 2015
Banquet and Talent Show
Jeff Yalden is a Celebrity Teen & Family Life Coach, Teen Author, Parent Communicator, and Teacher Mentor. He’s been the host of MTV MADE and has a show coming out this summer on SpikeTV. What makes Jeff special is that he is “Real.” He is very “Real”, and that is why his audiences love him. For 23 years, Jeff has traveled all 50 states and 48 countries working with teens, parents, and educators. Over 4 million people have heard Jeff speak. Jeff specializes in Teen Depression and Teen Suicide. He is also the person schools go to when they need a shot of motivation and a morale boost. Jeff speaks to the hearts of his audience as he talks candidly about his past struggles as a student who learned differently and the challenges he faced in life as a result of his own self-respect. For more information on Jeff, please visit www.JeffYalden.com. You are sure to enjoy Jeff and his energy.
STAFF TRAINING SESSIONS:

Jeff Yalden
This intimate workshop will focus on the importance of “Why” and “Who” we are in their lives. We touch hearts and change lives. Learn how to speak in a way that they will listen. Learn how to deal with teen drama, teen depression, expectations, and anxieties. Jeff will share with you the struggles and challenges of today’s teens and teach you how you can understand and influence them.

JLC: How to Conduct “Know Your Rights” Trainings for Older Youth in Foster Care
Kacey Mordecai, Esq. and Jean Strout, Esq.
Learn fun and interactive ways to teach older youth about their rights in the foster care system with respect to education, independent living, transition planning, extension of care and re-entry so that youth better understand how and why decisions are made, have more trust in the system, and better cooperate and collaborate with workers and the agency towards better outcomes.
COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

Youth will experience life on a college campus for a week including the excitement of living in a dorm, managing roommate issues, and utilizing campus facilities independently. This experience has motivated older youth to pursue a college education and reach their full potential.

Rules and Expectations
1. Attend the retreat with a positive attitude and a willingness to participate in assigned activities.
2. Carefully read registration materials and ask questions if you don’t understand.
3. Show respect for others and their property and privacy.
4. Attend all peer group sessions, activities and special events.
5. Be attentive to speakers and listen politely. Please turn off cell phones during presentations.
6. Follow your retreat schedule at all times; get to peer group sessions, activities and events early if possible.
7. Remember that we are guests of the University of Pittsburgh – please respect others on campus.
8. When in doubt, direct questions to your staff or the Retreat Steering Committee members (always located in the Student Union outside of the Cambria Room).
The **Youth Retreat Steering Committee** is made up of youth, who were or are currently in substitute care, representatives from county and private provider Independent Living Programs, the Office of Children, Youth and Families at the Department of Human Services, SWAN and staff at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work’s Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center.

Special thanks to the 2015 Older Youth Retreat Steering Committee members!