

# THE GULFSOUTH YOUTH ACTION FUND

A PROGRAM OF OPERATION REACH, INC.'S GULFSOUTH YOUTH ACTION CORPS



## YOUTH CAN CHANGE THE WORLD!

The Gulfsouth Youth Action Fund is a leading youth philanthropy and leadership training program that empowers youth in meaningful ways to address the interests and social concerns impacting their peers through support of youth-led service initiatives that model healthy youth developmental opportunities and foster communities in which young people can live, learn, LEAD, thrive and grow. The program, founded in 2007 by Operation REACH and a number of community stakeholders, gives a select group of outstanding young people the knowledge, know-how and desire to become leaders of change in their communities by empowering them with the tools and training to make strategic investments in their peers.

Since its inaugural year The GYAF has endeavored to help young people chart courses of action for themselves, their peers and their communities. Research suggests that philanthropy strengthens communities and families by providing much needed support and resources necessary to sustain a community. The GYAF has successfully provided youth with philanthropic training and inspired in them a sense of the value of philanthropy, leading to increased knowledge of this valuable field, as well as increased knowledge of grant-making procedures and significant boosts in confidence in themselves as leaders.

## THE GYAF PROCESS

Youth invited to serve on the GYAF's prestigious Youth Advisory Board are nominated by community organizations and successfully complete an in-depth panel interview. They participate in bi-weekly training sessions, led by community mentors/partners, focused on fiscal management, organization, public relations, and the art of reading and writing business proposals. In addition, the youth learn how philanthropy relates to economics, geography, government, history and civic engagement; understand why people give, serve and act for the common good; discover what their rights and responsibilities are as citizens during these sessions; and learn fundraising techniques in order to replenish their Fund.

Throughout their time with the GYAF, Youth Advisory Board members put their new knowledge to use, planning and hosting Special events, including an annual fundraiser — the Youth Change Campaign — and undertaking every aspect of the grant-making process, including:

- Deciding funding priorities
- Reviewing grant applications
- Deciding on grant amounts
- Awarding the funds
- Leading technical assistance workshops
- Conducting site visits and other oversight efforts after grants have been awarded

By the end of their year-long term, Youth Advisory Board members and other participating youth contribute their time, talent and treasure to their peers and their communities. Additionally, they will have learned why acting philanthropically is good for their community, state and nation and will have hands-on experience putting those values into practice.

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-GYAF Member

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## GYAF BY THE NUMBERS

Since 2007, the program has trained more than 50 young philanthropists and empowered them to make more than \$20,000 in strategic grants and support efforts to youth-led, youth-driven community initiatives that have impacted more than 500 of their peers.

- 2008 program assessment



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Other values and knowledge gained include:

n NETWORKING & COLLABORATION: Through interaction with a variety of groups, donors and community leaders, GYAF members gain a unique knowledge of how agencies can work together to achieve beneficial to their young people.

n Through the annual Youth Change Campaign, a coin collection drive to raise funds for GYAF grant-making efforts, GYAF members learn the value of and avenues for mobilizing community support for philanthropic efforts, as well as ways to represent and mobilize support for worthy social causes.

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- GYAF Member