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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

InspireNOLA students aim to increase youth voting with YEAV

New Orleans [September 24, 2020] — A group of 20 students selected from public and private high schools in New Orleans, including 11 from InspireNOLA Charter Schools, participated in a four-week boot camp this summer, sponsored by the Alliance for Diversity & Excellence, during which they met with current and former political and community leaders and activists.

As a result, the group, now known as Youth Educating and Advocating for Voting (YEAV), launched Project Vote & Live, a city-wide initiative to inspire and mobilize their peers to vote and is engaging young voters across the city through a series of student-organized events leading up to the national elections on November 3.

“It’s important to get young adults to vote because our voices deserve to be heard,” said YEAV Chairperson Taylor Pittman, a senior at McDonogh 35. “We are the next generation of masterminds and geniuses that will rule the United States and that just starts from voting.”

“It’s vital we vote because we make up a lot of today’s population,” added McDonogh 35 Senior Amani Pittman. “I’m constantly asking those around me how old they are and if they are registered to vote.”

The idea of increasing voter participation in youth inspired Edna Karr senior Taylor Wardsworth, who also made it her mission to ensure those she knows are ready to go to the polls this November.

“It’s important because the majority of the government decisions made for the public truly effect our demographic in the long run,” she said. “I constantly post on my social media and bring it up in casual conversations with my friends and young family members. I want to see how many people truly care about this cause and take the initiative to learn about voting rights in different ways.”

Wardsworth isn't the only one actively advocating participation in this year's elections. For most YEAV participants, educating their family and peers on voting has become a second-nature conversation.

Kylie Henry, a sophomore at Karr, said she is also sharing information on voting with those she knows and reminding everyone to register and vote.

"Voting is important because all votes matter. Most young people aren't worried about voting but I think they need to get out and vote to make change," Henry said.

Denim Williams, a senior at Karr, said she's also been actively informing family and friends who are eligible to vote about the registration process.

"It's important for young adults to vote because we are the future and if we want our future to be better we must use our voice in the best way we can," Williams said.

Another way YEAV is getting the word out about Project Vote and Live is through an SMS campaign that YEAV members hope will increase voter turnout across the city. By texting YEAV to 31996 to opt-in for automatic updates, voters can stay up-to-date with the latest election information via mobile alerts.

Their first event will take place this Saturday when YEAV host a Drive-in Movie and Register to Vote night at 6 p.m. in the parking lot of McDonogh 35, 4000 Cadillac St. Entrance to the showing of "Just Mercy" is free by either showing a voter registration or voter pledge card or by registering to vote at the event. YEAV members will be on hand to assist with the process.

"I'm excited for the Drive-In," Williams said. "I can't wait to see all the people who support us and what we are trying to build."

Other events planned include debate watch parties, bike rides and bussing to polling locations, virtual candidate forums, a food truck fest, and a results watch party on November 3.

Amani Pittman said she's most excited for YEAV's election watch results party.

"I want to educate my generation on voting to try and make a change in our systems," she said. "I want to see if we made a change."

Williams said getting to know others through YEAV has been amazing and that she has hopes for a promising outlook for her generation.

"I've learned that there are many other young black people out in the world who actually care about their future and want to make it great," Williams said.

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About InspireNOLA Charter Schools

InspireNOLA Charter Schools operates a network of seven public charter schools in New Orleans, Louisiana. Founded in 2013, InspireNOLA is currently the highest performing open-admission charter management organization in New Orleans and is the only network with one A-graded school and two B-graded schools. InspireNOLA currently serves more than 5,200 students in prekindergarten through 12th grade.