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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Project Vote & Live launches Youth Educating and Advocating for Voting Campaign (YEAV)**  
*High school students across New Orleans develop city-wide campaign to increase voter registration, turnout*

**NEW ORLEANS [Sept. 3, 2020]** — The student-driven Youth Educating and Advocating for Voting (YEAV) campaign, a city-wide initiative to inspire and mobilize their peers to vote, kicked off with a press conference today at McDonogh 35 High School.

“I am so happy to be here today and represent my peers on this very important campaign,” said Laci Jones, a senior at Landry-Walker High School and YEAV Youth Representative. “This year has been a rough one for many people, especially people of color. We know it is now time to stand up and let our voices be heard. We must register to vote and become informed voters.”

As part of Project Vote & Live, a special program launched by the Alliance for Diversity & Excellence in July, YEAV is the initiative created by about 20 students selected from public and private high schools in New Orleans.

“Today is a very special day. These students standing behind me are targeting other students and youth age 18-25 to vote and really getting them energized around voting,” said Jamar McKneely, InspireNOLA Schools CEO and Alliance for Diversity & Excellence Founder. “We are looking forward to seeing our youth galvanize our city for voting and change.”

The campaign is the result of a four-week boot camp this summer where Project Vote & Live participants met with current and former political leaders, community leaders, and community activists. The students developed a nonpartisan voter awareness campaign with a mission to ensure that every New Orleanian who is eligible to vote is registered, especially youth between the ages of 18-25 years old; and that registered voters understand the importance of voting in every election.

“All the activities we have planned are geared to having 16-25-year-olds participating in the voting process,” said Gavin Johnson, a senior at St. Augustine High School and YEAV Youth Representative.

Events planned include a drive-in movie night where admission is a voter registration card voter pledge card for 16-17-year-olds, a virtual candidate forum, and a food truck watch party on election day as results are announced.

“We will help our peers get to the polls,” Johnson said, adding that YEAV is working with partners to provide busing for early voting and they are organizing a bike ride to polling locations.

The teens are also taking to social media to help spread the word. Follow YEAV on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to get more information such as Friday Facts about past elections and Running Man Tuesday featuring candidate platform information.

They are also launching a text initiative. If you text YEAV to 31996, you will receive automatic updates on the voting process, including information on registering and voting locations.

“Voting is one of the most important things that we can do. We are so excited about this initiative. We encourage everyone to follow all the YEAV social media platforms so you can be a part of this as well,” said Kevin Barnes, Jr., KIPP New Orleans Schools Managing Director of Engagement, who also worked directly with the students in the summer.

“We all have a civic responsibility to make sure our students understand the democratic process,” added Kendall Crawford, St. Augustine High School Associate Director of Athletics and Activities.

“Being able to have leaders like these standing behind me, I’m clear that we are going to be okay,” said Ethan Ashley, a member of the Orleans Parish School Board. “They are the leadership for tomorrow that we need today. To see this project come alive like it has, I am elated.”

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#### *About The Alliance for Diversity & Excellence*

The Alliance for Diversity & Excellence is a group of African-American educators and community leaders who advocate for quality schools and autonomy for school leaders to inspire all students, parents, and leaders. The primary goal of the ADE is to develop and train senior leaders that will be prepared to lead high-performing charter networks that achieve results for students.

#### *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.

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