

100% of YEP grads move on to college

JANS - Operation Shoestring, in partnership with the Jackson Get2College Center, has released impact data that shows exceptionally positive results of its Youth Employment Program (YEP).

YEP provides leadership training, professional work experience, and individualized help navigating the college application and financial aid process to a select group of rising Lanier High School seniors each year. Currently in its fourth year, the program has consistently seen 100% of its graduates complete high school on time, which is noteworthy in a school and state in which rates are well below that number.

The numbers show that the average ACT score for YEP graduates is higher than the Mississippi average, 100% have been accepted and enrolled in college, and more than \$460,000 in financial aid has been awarded to YEP students in total. "It is especially encouraging to note that 70% of the YEP scholars are the first in their family to attend college," said Robert Langford, Operation Shoestring Exe. Director.

The purpose of YEP is to build students' confidence and encourage them to set career goals and create a vision for themselves that may be beyond their current reality.

Selected through a rigorous application process during their junior year, students are held to a high standard of attendance and performance as they practice interview skills, creative thinking, and problem solving, and learn the importance of individual responsibility and integrity.

They put these skills to the test in summer jobs in workplaces such as Butler Snow, UMMC, Barksdale Cadillac, Bradley Arant, Parents for Public Schools, and Monroe Street Animal Clinic. Students also learn money management skills with a portion of the money they earn from their summer jobs going into a savings account to help with senior year expenses such as graduation.

The Get2College Center plays a critical role in the program by providing students with assistance preparing for the ACT (national college admission exam) and individual-

ized help navigating the college application and financial aid process. The Center also tracks students' performance throughout college.

"Large thanks must be attributed to the Barksdale Foundation for our success to date, as a significant amount of the financial assistance for college has come from the Barksdale Foundation once the students meet all the necessary requirements," noted Stacy Sneed, Get2College Center College Advisor who works with the YEP Students.

Jwaski Beverly, age 17, is working this summer at the Bradley Arant law firm and says the program is helping him prepare for success in college and after. "I want to be a lawyer and this job has opened my eyes to the reality of everything that's involved behind the scenes. It's a lot more paperwork and things like that than you think," he said. "It's really getting me ready for real-world experiences in the workplace."

When I get out of college I think I'll be able to adapt quicker than other students who haven't been able to do this."

