

A young Black woman wearing a brown patterned headscarf and a brown knit cardigan is smiling warmly at the camera. She is sitting at a desk with a laptop. In the background, another woman is working at a computer, and a chalkboard with various writings is visible.

CONNECTING TALENT TO OPPORTUNITIES

A PUBLICATION OF EPISCOPAL COMMUNITY SERVICES



Letter From Our Program Director

In 2014, Episcopal Community Services began providing workforce development for young adults ages 14 through 25. For many, workforce development means pairing people with jobs, but at ECS, it means so much more. In fact, workforce development means something different to each young person we serve.

To put it simply, we focus on strengthening talent and providing opportunities — opportunities that build skill, boost self-esteem, create pathways, and promote sustainability for each participant.

For many youth, this is their first time entering a professional setting, their first time going on a job interview, or their first time practicing their networking skills. With the education and mentoring support we provide, these smart and talented young people leave our programs with a better sense of what it means to be committed not only to their professional development, but also to their personal growth.

In a sense, we are at the beginning of our journey as we build these initiatives. Similarly, our participants are at the beginning of their journeys, too. And as there is much possibility for our programs to grow, there is also great possibility in the future of each and every young person we serve.

Onward and upward,

Arley Styer, MSS, MLSP
Director,
Youth and Workforce Development Initiatives



Preparing Tomorrow's Workforce

At some point in each of our professional lives, we need to call for some help. We tap into our network of connections to advance ourselves.

When you're young and looking for your first job, that help could be asking a friend to put in a good word if their employer is hiring. Help could be as simple as practicing your firmest handshake with somebody before a big interview. And, if you're lucky, you have a mentor to turn to for support — someone who can teach you the ropes as you chart your career path.

Episcopal Community Services serves as that friend and mentor to our youth participants. In a city like Philadelphia where the poverty and unemployment rates are staggering, the odds are stacked against many young people hoping to secure employment and financial stability.

To confront these barriers, we ask ourselves, "What do hardworking youth need to launch into the careers they deserve?" The answer varies.

ECS' workforce development initiatives are tailored to meet young people where they are and offer services that are both proficiency-level and age appropriate. These programs build skills, provide career exposure, and offer paid work experience — each individualized through thoughtful case-by-case management.

Seeing Youth Succeed (SYS) serves youth ages 14 through 18. Rather than building technical competencies, its primary focus is on the soft professional skills gained through project-based learning activities — promoting critical thinking, accountability, and ultimately, preparing each teen for adulthood. The R.I.S.E. Initiative supports young adults ages 18 through 25 with one-on-one employment and career coaching as they move through the steps necessary to gain employment, such as resume building, submitting job applications, interviewing, and networking.

Through The ECS Employment Center, qualified participants are

connected to internships, boosting their resumes and offering real-world experience. And since internships are often unpaid, ECS covers compensation, providing interns with a fair, sustainable wage and transportation costs. ECS has developed strong bonds with various employers who inform us of the skills they seek in their employees, allowing us to tailor-fit our training of participants — leading them to long-term, meaningful employment. While some offer jobs, others, just as valuably, provide mentorship to participants.

Navigating one's way through a competitive job market and landing an entry-level position is no easy feat. Job listings often remain hidden and leave even the most eligible candidates in the dark. At Episcopal Community Services, we believe that every person deserves a life of stability, wellness, and independence. By providing the skills and resources necessary for sustainable employment and financial security, our workforce development initiatives honor that notion, and honor each person served.

CONTACT US

For more information or ways to get involved, contact Jessica Main, MSW, LSW, program manager, at 215.351.1406 or jessicam@ecsphilly.org.

Investing In Brighter Futures

As privately-funded programs, Seeing Youth Succeed and The R.I.S.E. Initiative depend solely on the support of our generous investors. These individuals, parishes, and institutions make what we do possible. As partners in this work, together, we have been able to make a lasting impact in the lives of young people with ambitious dreams and unwavering determination.

ECS is tremendously appreciative of the commitment, dedication, and exceptional financial support received from:

Fay Patterson Bullitt

Caroline Alexander Buck Foundation

Church of the Redeemer, Bryn Mawr

The Lenfest Group LLC

The McEwen Family Scholarship Fund at Modern Group Ltd.

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Peer-to-Peer Support

When you first meet Victoria and Dhameer, you'd think you were among longtime friends, but, in fact, they just met today. That's one of the draws of ECS' Seeing Youth Succeed (SYS) program — peer-to-peer support and immediate friendships. Both teens are extremely bright and share ambitious dreams.



Dhameer, a high school junior, joined SYS last week, but Victoria, a sophomore, has been involved since participating in WorkReady, a city-wide initiative led by the Philadelphia Youth Network which pairs city youth with summer jobs. Along with working the traditional nine-to-five, she attended ECS' professional development workshops, which came complete with career mentors to support the teens during their first work experiences.

"I tell her all the time, 'I want to be like you!' She's such an inspiration."

"It taught me the little stuff," Victoria said. Her boss was tough on her, but "she gave me insight. [It] made me have to persevere." While enjoying their summer vacations, Victoria's friends would try to get her to hang out, but she would decline because "[you] got to do what you got to do," as she puts it. The same can be said for her involvement in SYS. "I really enjoy coming here. It's not a hassle for me to get up on a Saturday morning. I'm really connected to this program. I feel like this is my little job ... my duty."

Dhameer said, "My main focus was on being a paid intern, but then I got here and bonded with all the other kids. And today, meeting her (Victoria) ... she really brought me out of my shell."

Dhameer is starting to look at colleges to attend, and at the top of his list are Julliard and Chapman University. "I like the arts in general, but dance is my calling," he said. "My end goal ... is to own my own dance studio and then branch off from a dance studio into a performing arts high school."

As a talented athlete, Victoria hopes her favorite sport allows her to travel. "I want to play soccer in college ... [and] go to the University of Seattle," she said. "My godsister inspired me to do a lot. She plays soccer, too. All these colleges want her ... I tell her all the time, 'I want to be like you!' She's such an inspiration."

With her ambition, there's no doubt that Victoria will be just like her role model. In fact, and better yet, Victoria will be just like Victoria. And Dhameer, he'll be just like Dhameer. Saturdays at ECS are better with these two.

CONTACT US

For more information or to sign up for Seeing Youth Succeed and/or The R.I.S.E. Initiative, contact Tamika Holder, program coordinator, at 215.351.1443 or tamikah@ecsphilly.org.

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Rising To Success

Chris is a determined guy with a good head on his shoulders. His goal has always been to work in the information technology (IT) field, but he wasn't exactly sure of how to launch his career.

He first heard about The R.I.S.E. Initiative through his brother-in-law who had participated in Seeing Youth Succeed (SYS). “I saw it as an opportunity to find employment, make a better resume, and [have] more effective interviews,” he said.

When it comes to interviewing, Chris says his nerves can sometimes get the best of him, so the mock interviews conducted virtually and in-person at ECS were especially helpful. “I built more confidence ... they made me feel more prepared,” he shared.

“I don't know where I would be if I didn't know about this program. I'm just so grateful that I have been told about this place.”

His in-person mock interview, fittingly, was with ECS' senior director of information technology and innovation. Chris did so well that what was meant to be practice, turned into an actual interview, landing him a paid internship where he gained first-hand experience of working in an IT department.



“I learned a ton. I wanted to be challenged a little bit. They said, ‘Okay, we're going to give you this server, you'll have to break it down, learn all its components, and try to put it back together.’ And I figured that out!”

Today, Chris works as a sales associate at Target, trying to perfect his “customer service skills and learn how to adapt to different sorts of people.” His next goal is to earn his CompTIA A+ certification, which he refers to as the ‘Holy Grail’ of the IT world.

Looking back at his time with R.I.S.E., Chris added, “I don't know where I would be if I didn't know about this program. I'm just so grateful that I have been told about this place.”



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