

Charity Spotlight on:

COLORADO — YOUNG — LEADERS

Exploring a new way to lead

We are proud and excited to feature [Colorado Young Leaders](#) (CYL) as one of our first Giving Back Group nonprofit partners. CYL continues to make positive impact within our communities by training high school students to be servant leaders through a dynamic, community-driven curriculum and local service learning model.

Colorado Young Leaders (CYL) was established in 2013 to define a new generation of leaders – young people with a clear purpose, a heart for others, and the tools to get the most out of life. As a student-driven organization, CYL is grounded in the belief that young people can change the world and animated by the core values of community, service, adventure, leadership and legacy.

From her experience teaching low-income and affluent youth, CYL's founder Nicole Mahobian remedied the level of apathy among students through experiential education. At Montbello HS, she had students share their dreams then arranged field trips to expose them to those fields and the skills they'd need. Youth saw for themselves that education was a path to living their passion, and 80% of those students improved their reading levels by up to 6 years. Later in the private sector, it was through international service trips that students found confidence and purpose, yet many disconnected after returning home. From these experiences, CYL was born.

CYL believes all adolescents deserve to live a life of purpose as they define it. Youth from low-income families' experience greater barriers, from hunger, safety concerns, and limited access to medical and mental health care to one of many factors that reduce the likelihood they will graduate from college. However, given Mahobian's experience teaching in the private sector, CYL considers *all* high school age youth "at risk." The growing understanding of human development and mental health during adolescence supports this. Furthermore, these issues cut across socio-economic, gender and cultural lines directly impacting well-being: positive emotion, engagement, relationships (connectedness), meaning (purpose), and accomplishment.

CYL's goal is for young people to live out their discovered passions and purpose as conscious leaders and change makers. In 2016, an online platform has been created to build a participant profile that follows participants from high school through early career experiences (e.g. have they continued to volunteer, do they have a professional job, have they held a leadership position in their community, organization or a nonprofit board). This platform will

provide baseline data by 2017 on outputs and outcomes to inform long-term goals (e.g. high school and college attendance rates). An organizational goal for CYL is to build financial sustainability to ensure that youth in all 64 counties have access to CYL or a program of similar quality.

“Colorado Young Leaders helps bring students into the community to make a positive impact, about what they’re passionate about. It builds leaders and leadership skills to help us youth be stronger leaders in the future. CYL has given me more opportunities to volunteer and network in my community. It has taught me how to actually be a leader...and a better one at that, I have made more friends, become more confident, and I’ve really been able to find my passions and pursue them. It’s given me the outlet to get things accomplished, and I think that’s mostly because CYL doesn’t limit us. We say ‘How high?’ and the staff says, ‘As high as you want’. They let us explore things and make our own mistakes.” (Maddy Gawler, South HS)

Your high school students can plug into CYL in a few different ways:

- **Learning Exploration Meetings (LEMs)** meet twice monthly in the evenings during the week. These sessions consist of introducing 12 leadership themes that converted into curriculum. Second, youth apply these themes through meaningful service learning opportunities called Service Adventures. Youth are asked to reflect on these experiences and then to take action on behalf of the people and organizations they serve. Request CYL’s newsletter [here](#) to learn of the latest LEM meeting schedule.
- **Service Adventures** are service learning activities that challenge students outside their comfortable zones in the community. These activities comprise of both a service/volunteer and leadership development component. Students typically volunteer 50 hours a year at nonprofits or businesses by participating on a Service Adventure. The schedule for upcoming Service Adventures is [here](#).
- **Legacy Days** are customized service learning days for middle and high schools. For instance, CYL worked with the GALS Charter School on an alley clean up in the Baker neighborhood near Denver Health’s main hospital. Afterward, and similar to Service Adventures, CYL facilitated a leadership discussion with staff and students to tie the activity to bigger issues, and also recommended ways for the teachers to integrate this experience into the classroom. If interested in bringing a Legacy Day into your school, please contact Jessica Harper [here](#).

High school students can join CYL in any grade at any time. There is no cost to be part of this amazing organization. CYL is simply looking for incredible youth who are interested in making a difference within our communities. Chapters have been established in six counties (Denver, Arapahoe, Douglas, Jefferson, El Paso and Summit counties). CYL balances supporting current participants, partnerships, infrastructure and sustainability with growth.

In the News:

- **October 7, 2016 – Colorado Young Leaders’ Charles Schwab Pro Bob Challenge Team Nominee –** [CYL](#) was selected to complete a high level intensive business development project with Charles Schwab team.
- **September 8, 2016 – Students Connect to Academics and Adventure** – YourHub Denver Post Article – By Melissa Reeves. To read more, click [here](#).
- **August 16, 2016 – Colorado Young Leaders Benefit from new Learning Management System -** [iCita](#) announced the completion of a LMS system. Click [here](#) to read more.
- **August 9, 2016 - Colorado Young Leaders Making Teen Leadership “On Fleek” in Denver and Beyond –** Innovators Speak Article – By Kelley Birschbach. To read more, click [here.http://innovatorspeak.com/colorado-young-leaders-making-teen-leadership-on-fleek-in-denver-and-beyond/](http://innovatorspeak.com/colorado-young-leaders-making-teen-leadership-on-fleek-in-denver-and-beyond/)

For more information about LEM meetings and Service Adventures, please contact Jessica Harper, Program Director, at Jessica@coloradoyoungleaders.org. For corporate sponsorships or funding opportunities, please contact Nicole Mahobian, Founder, at nicole@coloradoyoungleaders.org.