

PROGRAM SUMMARY

1 BROTHERHOOD EMPOWERED

TEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



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 <https://www.lazeracommunity.org/>

LAZERA Ministries

COMMUNITY-CENTERED
OUTREACH & ADVOCACY

WELCOME

Friends and supporters, we are excited to share the latest progress in supporting the youth living along Richmond Highway in Fairfax County, Virginia. This year, we launched the LAZERA Teen Leadership Initiative to create a peer-led training and mental health program tailored to our teens' unique needs. Our teen leadership team has conducted peer support groups, postsecondary support, and sound therapy sessions to address issues like depression, anxiety, and stress.

We gathered insights from a focus group with 15 teens and a survey of 39 teens. Their candid feedback and valuable insights have been instrumental in shaping our approach and led to them hosting over 125 teens at their Summer Jam.

We also hosted a retreat where 10 teens participated in a rites of passage ceremony and a rejuvenating experience to further support their mental well-being and foster a sense of empowerment, belonging, and leadership.

Thank you to all our supporters, volunteers, and community members for making this possible. Together, we are building a brighter future for our teens.

With Gratitude,
Yolonda Earl-Thompson, Executive Director
LAZERA Teen Leadership Team

ABOUT LAZERA MINISTRIES

LAZERA Ministries was founded in 2019 by Rev. Dr. Lee A. Earl and his wife Zandra Earl to provide support to those who were experiencing financial and emotional hardship in their community. Following the untimely passing of Rev. Earl in 2020, his daughter Yolonda Earl-Thompson assumed leadership of the organization and currently serves as LAZERA's Executive Director. LAZERA Ministries' mission is to provide human-centered support services and programs that educate and bring restoration to the marginalized communities in the Franconia-Mt. Vernon districts in Northern Virginia. The organization's specific focus is to increase access to and availability of affordable and culturally competent mental-health services and youth enrichment programs for teens residing in zip codes 22306 and 22309.

ABOUT 1 BROTHERHOOD EMPOWERED

1 Brotherhood Empowered, founded in 2023 by Ms. Yolonda Thompson alongside Andrew Poindexter, Anthony Thompson, DeMari Patterson-Jones, Damonte Bynum, Hollan Moore, Isaiah Green, and Mussie Aregay, is a selective youth-led mental health and leadership program within LAZERA Ministries on the Route 1 Corridor in Fairfax County, Virginia. It's tailored for Black middle and high school males aiming to become community leaders. Participants commit to 10-20 hours monthly from March to February, engaging in leadership training, mental health support, peer groups, sound therapy, nature retreats, and cultural enrichment. The program fosters resilience and leadership skills, preparing the teens for mentorship and impactful community roles.

MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

The mission of 1 Brotherhood Empowered is to empower a cohort of Black male teens through leadership opportunities, exposure to career and mental health support, communication enhancement, advocacy, and peer support in a safe space. The program aims to support teens in gaining:

- A sense of belonging
- A shift in perspective regarding community engagement
- Plans for future steps in life
- Leadership skills
- Planning abilities
- Time management skills
- Access to educational opportunities
- Enhanced employment prospects
- Boosted cultural capital
- Expanded social capital



1 BROTHERHOOD EMPOWERED STRUCTURE

LAZERA Leadership

Trainings: Teens develop self-efficacy and confidence through training to work towards improving their community.



Mental Health Support: Teens are exposed to various mental health support, tool, and professionals.

Teen Leadership Team

Mental Health: Teens participate in sound baths, Qui Gong, mental health talks, and more to help build resilience.



Summer Jam: Teens plan and execute an annual gathering to discuss the needs of teens at to develop equitable solutions.

Field Trips: Educational, cultural, and social events, provide teens with valuable experiences, building cultural wealth



Volunteering: Teens make an impact on their community and develop skills through volunteering at local community events and organizations.

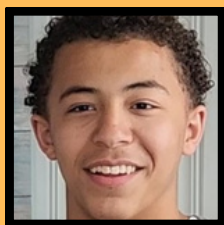
Family Engagement: Family bonds are strengthened through increased engagement with parents and siblings at family events

Teen Community

(Richmond Highway)

MEET THE 2024-2025

TEEN LEADERS OF 1 BROTHERHOOD EMPOWERED

**Charles Campbell**

Age: 15

West Potomac

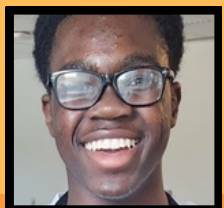
Sophomore

My Why: Because it lets me talk more freely about what's going on in life more than anywhere else.

**Kofi Martin**

Age: 16

Mount Vernon High School
Junior

**Joshua Osei-Nimoh**

Age: 16

Mount Vernon High School
Junior

My Why: I want to better my leadership skills in general. I also want to support my community somehow.



Not pictured

Noah Brown

Age: 15

Mount Vernon High School
Junior

My Why: Because I want to become a better leader. I also joined to make my community better.

**Zander Thompson**

Age: 13

Carl Sandburg Middle
Grade: 8th

My Why: To help the community and make a safe space for black people



Not pictured

Frederick Obinim

Age: 15

Mount Vernon High School
Sophomore

**Robert Lattimore**

Age: 16

Mount Vernon High School
Junior

My Why: Because I wanted to be a part of something that betters my environment for years to come. I feel like we are the change because we are the future adults.

MEET THE 2023-2024

FOUNDATIONAL TEEN LEADERS OF 1 BROTHERHOOD EMPOWERED

**Anthony Thompson**

Age: 17

Freshman - Morgan State University

My Why: Because I love seeing positive growth in my community and having the sense of brotherhood.**Andrew Poindexter**

Age: 19

Apprentice for Skills Trade

My Why: Because I was tired of asking people for change and their answer was always the same - delayed or pushed back. So, I became my own answer and change.**Hollan Moore**

Age: 18

Freshman - James Madison University

My Why: To better the young minds of the people living in our community by broadening their perspectives with empowerment, unity and respect of each other.**Isaiah Green**

Age: 18

Midshipmen - U.S. Naval Academy

My Why: To create a sense of unity and empowerment that uplifts myself and my peers as we strive for collective progress. Also, to see my community grow and help people change their lives.**Damonte Bynum**

Age: 18

Health Care Aide

My Why: It was a lot of things I was confused about and didn't know a lot of stuff I should be doing as a teenager, and I needed a safe space to learn and grow. Also, I wanted to change the community I was raised in and make it better place for the future teens!**DeMari Patterson-Jones**

Age: 18

Freshman - Virginia State University

My Why: Because I wanted my voice to be heard on the highway and find ways to helping Richmond Highway become a better and safe environment for the upcoming generation and families. Not just by stability but find opportunity for youth to try and explore for their future as well. I also continue to be a part of it because of how big of an impact the program has made on me as a leader and older brother.**Mussie Aregay**

Age: 18

Freshman - George Mason University

My Why: Because of its direct impact on the community I live within daily. Being able to contribute and attend to the issues of those who are around me better the well-being of not only myself, but my family and friends. If I hadn't found my purpose before, I definitely have now that I've joined this group.

Not pictured

Kyron Walker

Age: 18

My Why: To impact the lives of the youth and give back to the community.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Members of the teen leadership team participated in trainings about social design, event planning, mental health, emotional intelligence, community engagement, advocacy, and postsecondary preparation. These trainings equipped them with important skills and tools to uplift themselves, their peers, and their community.



EVENT PLANNING

Students learned how to plan, promote, and implement a teen- focused event.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY

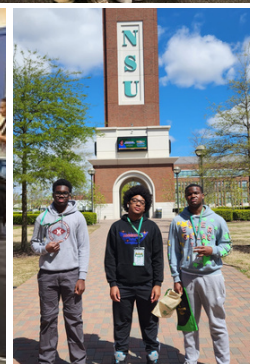
The teen leadership team learned about utilizing community voice and creating services and programs. This included planning, promoting, evaluation, and advocacy. They learned the importance of engaging with county leaders and community organizations to elevate teen voices and create equitable outcomes to support their social, emotional, academic, mental, and physical health.

POSTSECONDARY PREPARATION

Students met with a postsecondary mentor to learn about postsecondary options and create a plan for their futures, and had opportunities to attend college and career conferences and fairs. They also engaged in campus visits.

SOCIAL DESIGN

In a training provided by Social Innovators for Americans Association, teens learned the fundamentals of Community-Driven Social Innovation practice. Teens learned about the role of community leaders, conducting community needs research, managing social design hackathon, and implementation management. Teens spent three months planning a social design hackathon.



MENTAL HEALTH SESSIONS



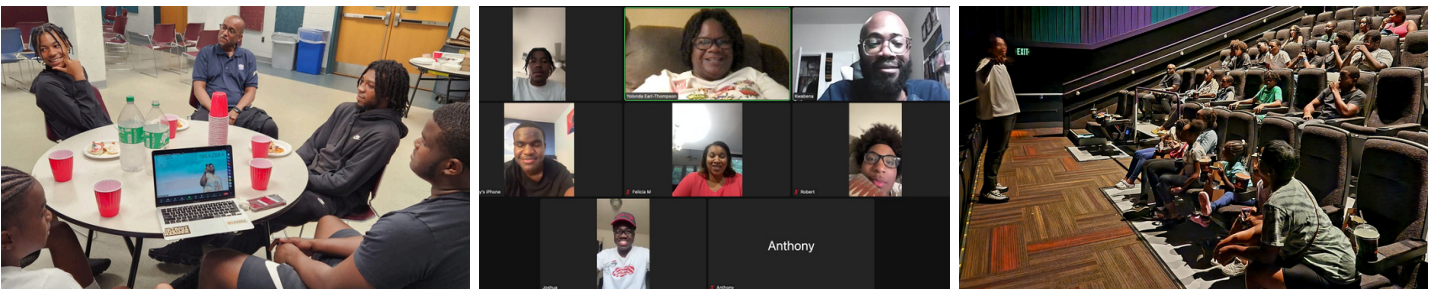
Alongside mentorship and skill-building workshops, the Teen Leadership Team underwent mental health training, equipping them to address emotional needs effectively and act as peer mentors. These leaders created supportive environments, advocating for issues and organizing activities that promote mental well-being among middle and high schoolers in their community. Dante Baker led students in sessions about the use of breathwork, sound therapy, Qi Gong, and other tools for manage their mental and emotional health.

QI GONG TRAINING



Students participated in a comprehensive 4-week Qi Gong and Breathwork Training Program designed to deepen their understanding of ancient Chinese healing practices and practical techniques for holistic well-being. This program combined the fundamentals of Chinese medicine, learning basic Qi Gong exercises, and transformative breathwork practices.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



Students participated in monthly conversations and field trips to explore their emotions and learn how the elements of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, empathy and social skills) support their ability to manage their own emotions and understand others.

SUMMER JAM 2023

SUMMARY

In 2023, the LAZERA Teen Leadership Team hosted the Teen Summer Jam, an event for teens, particularly black male teens, that aimed to encourage community engagement and celebrate the end of summer. The event drew over 125 teens, with 90% of the participants being black males.

The day began with a teen-led panel and table conversations focused on community improvement. This resulted in the identification of five priority areas:

1. Creating support systems for safe social and emotional engagement.
2. Recognizing family and community achievements.
3. Providing emotional and mental health support.
4. Increasing the availability of professional mentors and role models.
5. Enhancing college, career, and financial planning support.



AGENDA
August 19, 2023

4 pm – 7 pm

Family Fun Activities

- Moonbounce
- Photobooth
- Face Painting
- Game Truck
- Basketball Tournament
- Giveaways and more

Free Food and Snacks

- Hot Dogs
- Pizza
- Popcorn
- Cotton Candy
- Sno Cones

Teen Youth Awards Ceremony will begin at 7:00 pm

2 pm – 4 pm

Teen Summit (ages 12 - 18)
Youth-led conversations that seek to create solutions for how stakeholders can better support youth who live along Route 1

Adult Summit
Conversations that seek to understand how to better support youth who live along Route 1

All activities will be held at:
Hybla Valley/WISH Center

Contact Information:
info@lazeracommunity.org

Six founding members received leadership awards named in their honor, recognizing their contributions to Entrepreneurship, STEM, Public Health, Visual Arts, and Leadership. These awards were presented by local county leaders and community partners. Each awardee also received a \$500 scholarship.

The day concluded with a family community event featuring food, a moon bounce, a game truck, a DJ, a photo booth, and a 3-on-3 basketball tournament. Local community organizations attended to provide health, school, and community resources, including voter registration information.

JUNETEENTH RESILIENCY AWARD



The LAZERA teen leadership team received the Fairfax County Resiliency Award for their community advocacy and commitment to creating equitable change in their community. The teen leadership team focuses on developing leadership and mental health skills to support themselves and their peers.

OUR PARTNERS



Interested in partnering with us? Do you want to join our movement to empower youth on the Rt. 1 corridor? Contact us today!

HEALING COMMUNITIES TO CREATE HEALTHIER LIVES

No matter how you choose to support our work we are grateful. All donations are tax deductible and directly support our initiatives, programs, and general operating expenses.

Executive Board Members

Yolonda Earl-Thompson, Executive Director;
Zandra M. Earl, Co-Founder; Jennifer Bristow,
Development/Fundraising; Kathy Lehner,
Treasurer; Qiana Barnes, Community
Engagement; Felicia Moore, Youth
Programming; Dr. Jay Coleman, Community
Development; Mercedes Huffman, Secretary

Advisory Board Members

Tyree Anderson, Jimmie Staten, Linda Smith



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