

Youth Leadership St. Louis

A program of FOCUS St. Louis®

Student Leaders Today • Regional Leaders Tomorrow

About the Youth Leadership St. Louis Program

Youth Leadership St. Louis (YLSL), a program of FOCUS St. Louis, empowers the region's youth to become future community leaders. Founded in 1989, YLSL is an internationally respected program for high school juniors that develops leadership skills, promotes teamwork among diverse groups, and provides a deeper understanding of the St. Louis region.

YLSL is based on seven leadership objectives – to inform, to involve, to inspire, to challenge, to empower, to promote action, and to value diversity. The program was designed to provide students with hands-on experiences in the St. Louis region's political, arts, medical, social service, and criminal justice fields. Students have the opportunity to learn and practice leadership skills such as collaboration, facilitation, problem-solving and public speaking. Each high school team is accompanied by a teacher/YLSL advisor who is trained by FOCUS as a leadership coach.

How is this program unique?

YLSL brings students together from approximately 30 urban, suburban, rural, public, private, and parochial schools from throughout the region, as well as Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri. In partnership with Saint Louis University, YLSL teams apply their leadership skills by identifying a challenge they see in their schools, learning research methods, and developing and implementing a plan to create positive change.



Opportunities

Completion of the YLSL program is an impressive addition to any resume and often an avenue to scholarships. YLSL graduates have the opportunity to do the following:

- Serve on an allocation panel of the United Way of Greater St. Louis.
- Serve as one of two youth representatives on the FOCUS board of directors for a one-year term.
- Serve on the curriculum development team for YLSL.

Student Commitment

YLSL participants meet one to two times per month during the school year. The nine-month program begins with an overnight retreat in September and ends with a graduation ceremony in April. Workshops, held during school hours and select weekends, include a combination of team building exercises, conflict resolution models, experiential learning, and dialogue with community leaders.

How Students Join

Applications are distributed by the YLSL advisor at each participating school in spring, and interviews to select program participants are conducted by community leaders.

Program Cost:

Funding from various companies, foundations, and individuals enables FOCUS to offer the YLSL program for only \$500 per student. In most cases, the fee is paid by the school or district.

YLSL Program Schedule

- Overnight Retreat
- Experiencing St. Louis
- Exploring Health Care
- Criminal Justice: Jails, Courts & the System
- Valuing Diversity
- Understanding the Effects of Discrimination
- Realizing Poverty
- Leadership Models
- Power of Education
- Leadership, Creativity and the Arts

“YLSL has been the best experience of my high school career. It not only provided me with a cultural awareness of St. Louis but also the skills to be a leader and facilitator in my school and community.”

Michael Burke, Ladue Horton Watkins High School, YLSL 2015-16

Program Support

FOCUS St. Louis thanks the following donors for their generous support of the YLSL program:

Bank of America
Boeing Employees Community Fund
Cardinals Care
The Jordan Charitable Foundation
MOHELA
Nestle Purina PetCare Company
Saigh Foundation

About FOCUS St. Louis

FOCUS St. Louis is the region's premier leadership development organization that connects diverse leaders from public, private, and civic sectors and empowers them to work together to build a thriving St. Louis community. As a neutral convener and facilitator, FOCUS engages citizens to deliberate on critical regional community issues in a trusted, nonpartisan space.

FOCUS offers a continuum of seven leadership programs to engage leaders at every stage of their journey, from high school students to senior executives. More than 8,000 individuals have completed our programs, and FOCUS alumni and members are leaders who make a difference.



2017 - 2018 YLSL Teams

Barat Academy
Carnahan High School of the Future
Central Visual Performing Arts Academy
Chaminade College Preparatory School
Gateway STEM Academy
Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri
Grand Center Arts Academy
Incarnate Word Academy
Jennings Senior High School
Ladue Horton Watkins High School
Lafayette High School
Marquette High School
McCluer High School
McCluer North High School
McCluer South-Berkeley High School
Nerinx Hall High School
Normandy High School
Parkway North High School
Pattonville High School
Soldan International Studies High School
St. Louis University High School
St. Mary's High School
University City High School

For more information or to participate in Youth Leadership St. Louis, contact Shalia Ford, YLSL Director, at 314-657-4021 or shaliaf@focus-stl.org.