



Youth Programs & Initiatives



FY 2021 Annual Report

"The future promise of any nation can be directly measured by the present prospects of its youth."

- President John F. Kennedy

Executive Summary

County Executive Stuart Pittman has pledged to make Anne Arundel County The Best Place - For All and doing so requires that government engage with and listen to constituents. Youth make up a large percentage of county residents and they are our future leaders.

Because youth engagement is a priority for the Pittman Administration, the County Executive's Office has instituted or reinvigorated several programs specifically for youth. These include the Youth Corps, the Youth Advisory Council, the County Executive Office Intern Program, and a new summer Government Academy.

The Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap has continued its work in partnership with Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS), and several new collaborative programs were created over the past year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report is a compilation of data and information about the youth programs administered by the County Executive's Office from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. The report concludes with a list of goals for the upcoming year.

Any feedback or questions about this report or the many youth engagement opportunities in county government can be submitted via email to Dr. Jennifer Purcell, Director of Special Projects, at expurc99@aacounty.org.

Youth Engagement Opportunities

All programs can be found at aacounty.org/youth or on the new Youth Engagement Activity Hub (YEAH!)

Youth Corps

Open to any youth in Anne Arundel County. Register online
Bi-weekly newsletters and 2 annual events. All groups below are automatically members of the Youth Corps.

Youth Advisory Council

Competitive Application
Monthly Meetings
Advise County Executive

Internship

Year-Round Opportunities
Paid/Unpaid Office Tasks
Curriculum

Government Academy

6-wk summer program
Paid/Unpaid
Intro to Government

Other County Programs

Department of Health
AACPD Minority Youth Advisory Council
AACPS Let's Talk Justice
AACo Public Libraries
Partnership for Children, Youth & Families
Department Internships

Background

Anne Arundel County has always offered programs and services that impact youth, but direct engagement opportunities have varied from administration to administration. The County Executive (CE) recognizes the importance of interacting with and listening to a constituency that includes almost 20%* of county residents.

Funding for an internship program was approved in the FY20 budget, but was removed in FY21 when the COVID-19 pandemic demanded that the county tighten its belt.

The Youth Advisory Council, proposed by the FY20 interns, was modeled after a similar council that met under the Owens administration. Due to the overwhelming response to the call for applications, the CE created the Youth Corps and a more formal internship program overseen by the Director of Special Projects.

Funding for COVID relief supported Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation’s (AAWDC) FutureSuccess and job training programs. With this funding, the CE’s Office was able to partner with AAWDC to develop a 6-week Government Academy.

The response to COVID also strengthened the relationship among the CE’s Office, government agencies and the school system and resulted in enhanced supports for youth in need of food, technology, and other services.

The Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap continued its work throughout the pandemic and will provide opportunities for youth to participate on formal boards and commissions.

Finally, several departments and agencies also work with youth. There are many opportunities to collaborate, share resources, and meet shared objectives in the future.

* 18.5% of county residents are ages 10-24.



YAC member, Leonardo Acosta, was featured in a video promoting COVID-19 vaccination.

“Until now, County government has failed to institutionalize a process to ensure that the perspectives of younger county residents are considered. Young people are experts when it comes to knowing and to advocating for what is important in their lives and to their futures. Support for these programs is an acknowledgement that county youth have the largest stake in creating a strong community.”

**- County Executive
Steuart Pittman**



ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY YOUTH CORPS



The Youth Corps is open to anyone under the age of 23 who is interested in engaging with the county government or their community.

The purpose of the Youth Corps is to connect with the County Executive's Office, keep up-to-date with issues pertaining to youth in the county, and build a network of individuals committed to improving the county for everyone who lives here.

Members receive regular communications from the County Executive's Office and invitations to participate in special events and learning experiences. There is no requirement for participation, so members can be active in community initiatives or simply learn about community programs and resources. There are 146 members in the Youth Corps.

The County Executive's Office plans two events each year exclusive to Youth Corps members. The winter event was hosted online on January 6, 2021, and featured presentations about policing, mental health, and the environment. Twenty four members attended and feedback was positive, but many requested more interactivity.

Loosening of COVID restrictions and the availability of vaccines for youth ages 12 and up allowed the Youth Corps to meet in person for their second event. The Summer Kickoff was held at Quiet Waters Park on June 12, 2021. Twenty members participated in hands-on activities with three different departments, met with the County Executive, won swag, and completed a service project.

Youth Corps members also joined the County Executive in Fourth of July parades around the county.

“Youth Corps’ exploration of area resources and the useful e-newsletters full of information make me feel more involved in my community. I really like being part of it, and it’s educational and inspirational for youth learning about their world at a local level.”

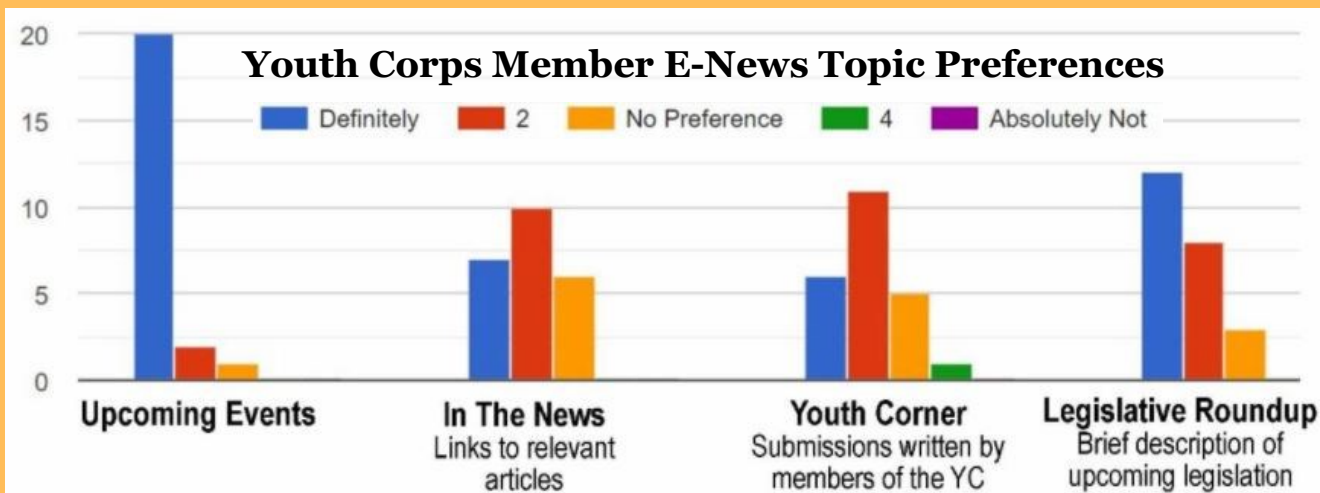
- Zelda Miller





The first step in promoting and supporting youth engagement is communication. Youth Corps members received 20 issues of E-News, an electronic newsletter that includes up-to-date information on county issues like the budget, body worn cameras , Plan 2040, libraries, internship opportunities, the Census, and vaccinations.

A survey of members in January 2021 resulted in new E-News features including legislative updates, trivia, and upcoming events. Readership rates began to decrease in May 2021, so a texting platform is being considered for next year.





Youth Advisory Council



The Anne Arundel County Youth Advisory Council (Council) was established by Executive Order in August 2020 to give young people in the county the platform to discuss concerns and provide feedback and recommendations regarding county policies and issues that affect them.

Advisor: Laila Jones, Community Engagement Officer

The Council includes homeschool, private school, and higher education students as well as representatives from each AACPS high school. Up to twenty youth serve one or two year terms.

2020-2021 Accomplishments:

- Reviewed the Mental Health Agency’s website and made recommendations for a redesign that would be more user-friendly and retain a reader’s attention.
- Developed and hosted a 2-week Financial Literacy Academy. Eleven students participated.
- Researched single-use plastic bags and cutlery in preparation to submit testimony at the local and state levels.
- Completed the first stages of planning a “Youth Knowing Your Rights” symposium that will be hosted in Fall 2021.
- Submitted written testimony on Climate Solutions Now Act (SB 414), Student-Organized Peaceful Demonstrations (HB 753), and Excused Absences for Mental Health Needs (HB 461).
- Participated in the youth COVID-19 “I Mask Up For” awareness campaign in partnership with the Department of Health.
- Participated in two press conferences with the County Executive.
- Served as Health Ambassadors, part of a DOH grassroots campaign to promote the COVID-19 vaccinations in areas with the lowest vaccination rates.
- Assisted in the production of a promotional video for the spring Youth Corps event.

COVID-19 restrictions prohibited in-person meetings, but the Council made progress via online platforms. This is a screenshot of their first meeting in August 2020.



“The Youth Advisory Council has given me a great opportunity to connect and network with students and officials across Anne Arundel County as well as collaborate with them on projects that contribute to the improvement of the county for all.”

- Assata Hanif, YAC Member



Internships

The County Executive's Internship Program is designed to identify and develop the talents of our county's youth and young adults. There are opportunities for high school juniors and seniors as well as college undergraduate and graduate students throughout the year. The program provides students with an opportunity to experience the fast-paced nature of a professional office, to build networks and relationships, to experience the role of public service in communities, and to develop new knowledge and skills that may give direction to their professional lives.

Advisor: Dr. Jennifer Purcell, Director of Special Projects

2020-2021 High School Intern Program Outcomes

- Attended 13 sessions with county departments and staff to expand knowledge of local government
- Researched, proposed, developed, and launched the YEAH!
- Managed Youth Corps recruitment and communication
- Co-authored and distributed 20 issues and 12 special editions of E-News
- Planned and facilitated two Youth Corps events
- Acted as the internship and Youth Corps liaisons to the Youth Advisory Council
- Assisted in selecting the 2021-2022 CE Office interns (reviewed 25 applications and interviewed 9 candidates)

"I am honored to be a part of Mr. Pittman's push to amplify youth voices. Being part of the CE family gave me a newfound appreciation of local government."

- Edward Awe

"I learned that the best solution to a problem doesn't come from a single official, it comes from listening to what the community has to say."

- Anthony Morgan



Interns, Eddie Awe and Anthony Morgan, check out the driving simulator at the summer Youth Corps event. Interns are responsible for planning two events each year.

Other Youth Programs

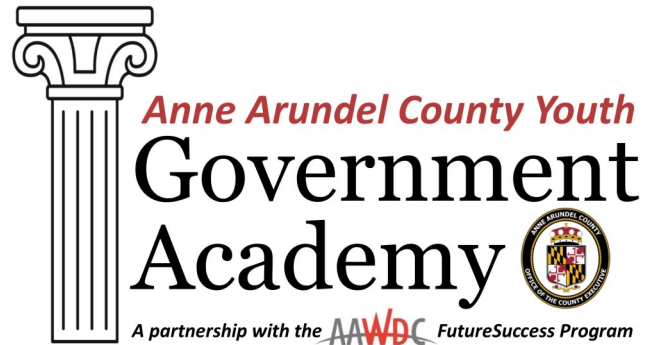


The Youth Engagement Activity Hub (YEAH!) is the result of the CE Office's 2020-2021 interns' civic engagement project. They began research in Fall 2020 and presented the concept to the CE's Leadership Team in December 2020. Upon approval, they worked with the Office of Information Technology to design a platform that was for youth, by youth. Activities fall into 8 categories: Activism, Charitable events, County-wide events, Education, Environment, Government programs, Mental health and Other.

Interns currently populate the site with events, but the process will shift to county youth after a marketing campaign coinciding with the return to school.

Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC) offers a summer internship program for youth. In March 2021, the CE's Office hired a part-time Youth Engagement Coordinator to develop and pilot test a program for youth interested in county government. The content focused on 3 C's: community engagement, COVID's impact on our work, and career opportunities.

Twenty one students were interviewed for 10 positions. The program runs June 28, 2021 to August 6, 2021. A full report will be available at the conclusion of the program and highlighted in next year's annual report.



“Thank you for all of the time and effort that’s gone into this internship. My son is one of the participants and this has been an amazing opportunity for him!” - Meryl Tseng (on Facebook)

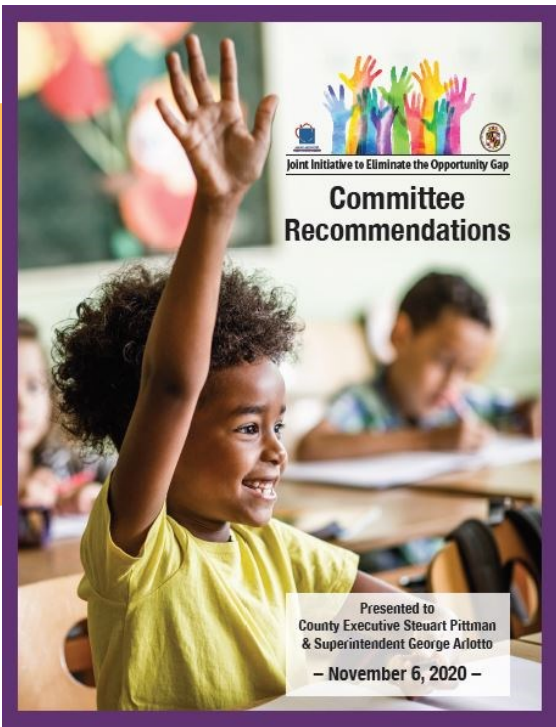
Youth Engagement Partners

Several county departments and agencies also engage youth in their work. Partners began meeting monthly in March 2021 to share information, resources and ideas for collaboration.

- Anne Arundel County Public Schools
- Anne Arundel County Department of Health
- Anne Arundel County Police Department

- Anne Arundel County Public Libraries
- The Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families

The Office of Emergency Management facilitated Youth and Education Services meetings to address pandemic-related needs since October 2020.



Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap

Addressing persistent disparities in academic performance between White and Black students

School system and county employees, parents, and community members continued their work throughout the pandemic and identified 14 goals, 78 strategies, and four priority recommendations to help eliminate the opportunity gap. The report was presented to the public on November 30, 2020. The Board of Education and the County Council later gave unanimous support for the initiative.

Since then, members of the County Executive's and Superintendent's teams have moved forward with recruiting individuals to serve on the Joint Commission on the Opportunity Gap (JCOG), which was created by Executive Order #47 on May 18, 2021, in response to the committee's first priority recommendation. The formulation and future work of the JCOG is immensely important. By acknowledging and addressing the social, health, economic and racial disparities that are embedded in the opportunity gap, we create a real future for all of our children.

"I believe in my heart that the work of this commission will move us several steps closer to making Anne Arundel County the Best Place - For All."

***- Dr. Pam Brown, Executive Director
Partnership for Children, Youth & Families***



Joint Commission Membership

Six members appointed by the County Executive:

- A County employee
- A County resident between the ages of 18 and 24
- Representatives from: the Anne Arundel County NAACP, the faith community, and an education-focused non-profit
- An individual with life experience of inequities

Six members appointed by the Superintendent of AACPS:

- A youth representing the student body
- Staff including an early childhood specialist, a Pupil Personnel Worker, a school nurse, a Principal from a Title I school
- A representative from the AACPS Citizen Advisory Committee

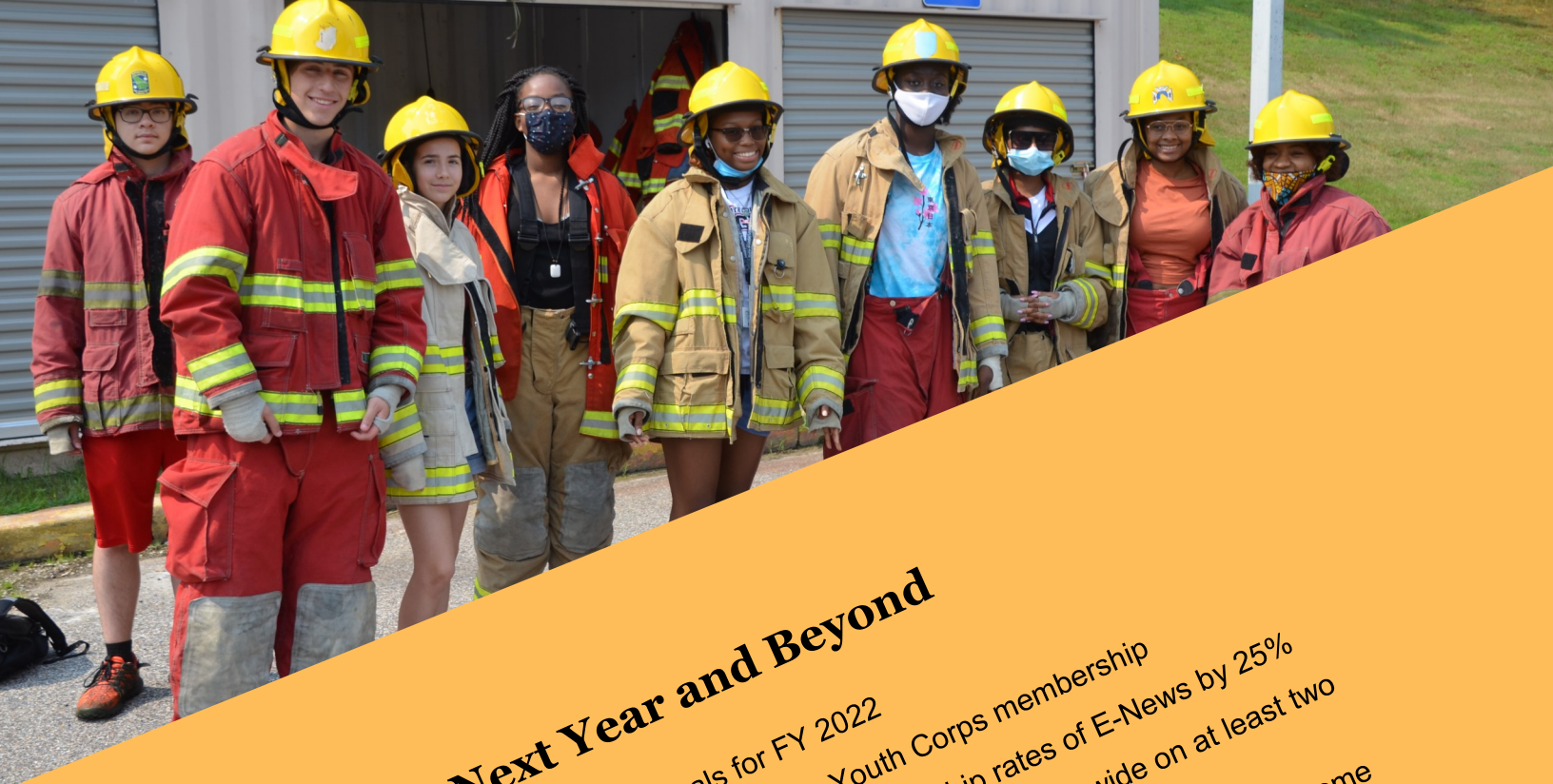
Three members appointed by the Commission once it is seated.

Eight ex-officio (non-voting) members appointed based on their position and expertise in equity and education.

Priority Recommendations

- Establish and empower an **independent coalition of stakeholders**, including those with lived experience of the issues, to provide ongoing review and oversight of structural and systemic racism that contributes to the opportunity gap in AACPS and the County, and to recommend changes to address equity issues in academics and discipline.
- Engage government agencies and community partners to **mitigate the effects of social determinants of education** in low income communities, thereby increasing readiness for school and achievement throughout school.
- **Increase transparency and accountability** by improving the public's ability to locate, read, and interpret available reports on progress toward opportunity gap goals.
- Establish a practice within the Board of Education, the AACPS Central Office, the Anne Arundel County Government, and the Anne Arundel County Council of preparing a **documented equity analysis** to accompany all proposed policies and decisions.





Looking Ahead to Next Year and Beyond

The programs for youth listed in this report are new, many created just this year. The County Executive's team is pleased that so many young people chose to get involved with county government in one way or another.

We welcome input on how these programs can be improved and look forward to continuing our work with youth and for youth in the years to come. The voice of younger generations needs to be heard.

Together, we will make Anne Arundel County...

The Best Place - For All

Goals for FY 2022

- Increase Youth Corps membership
- Increase readership rates of E-News by 25%
- Collect youth input county-wide on at least two legislative issues
- Market YEAH! so that the events posted come from constituents
- Expand and improve the Government Academy program
- Make the Youth Engagement website more interactive
- Add youth membership to select Boards and Commissions

aacounty.org/youth