

SYF Friends and Partners,

Happy 2025! As we begin the new year, I reflect on the amazing growth that SYF experienced over the past twelve months, including exceeding our \$3.2 annual campaign goal, which has launched us into 2025. Students and teachers are the heart of our mission, and for 26 years, SYF has been committed to changing the lives of those underrepresented and underserved through education.

**THANK YOU** to our SYF communities, donors, volunteers and partners throughout our 12-state network for your year-over-year investment at all levels. Your time, expertise, resources and love have changed the lives of nearly 30,000 SYF alumni over the past 26 years.

I look forward to writing SYF's next chapters in fulfilling our mission over the next 365 days with all of you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrea Neely".

Andrea Neely, President and CEO, Simon Youth Foundation

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## SYF Board: Honoring Departures, Welcoming New Members

SYF extends gratitude to three dedicated individuals, Reid Searles, Sarah Beeson, and Collin Sam, who are saying goodbye as they complete their board terms. Their commitment and impact have been invaluable, and we are deeply appreciative of their service and support.

At the same time, SYF is pleased to welcome six new members to our board of directors, whose diverse expertise and passion for our mission will help guide us into the future as we prepare our three-year strategic plan. The new board members include Stephanie Bothun and Chief Judge Tanya Walton Pratt. Additionally, we are pleased to recognize the contributions of committee members who are stepping into board roles. This includes Megan Blasing (Advancement Committee), Matt Impink (Program Services Committee), Danielle Parker SPG (Mkt, Branding, and Comms Committee), and Anita Silverman (Program Services Committee).



## SYF Celebrates 288 Winter Graduates From Simon Youth Academies



*SYA winter graduates proudly stand ready to take on their next adventure!*

Simon Youth Foundation (SYF) proudly celebrated the success of 288 students who graduated from Simon Youth Academies (SYA) across the country this winter. Ceremonies were held at SYA on Cochran, SYA at Sugarloaf Mills, SYA at Phoenix High School, SYA at Avon, SYA at Hickory Hollow, SYA at Old Cockrill, and SYA at Opry Mills.

Each graduate's journey reflects the core mission of SYF: to provide educational opportunities that inspire students to stay in school and prepare for future success. These graduates have shown remarkable determination, resilience, and dedication to academic achievement.

"We are so proud of our newest graduates," said President and CEO, Andrea Neely. "Their commitment to overcoming challenges exemplifies the very best of our mission. We look forward to seeing the impact they will have in their communities."

## Civil Rights Journey Trip: Empowering Students & Expanding Thinking



**Academy students and educators were able to explore firsthand, through visits to historical landmarks, how and why the Civil Rights movement happened.**

Students were empowered on the 2024 Civil Rights Journey (CRJ) as they explored America's history and the fight for Civil Rights. Traveling just before the U.S. Presidential Election, students reflected on the relevance of history to current events. Several students who had just turned 18 committed to voting if they had not already. During this four-day experiential trip using history and current issues as a launching pad, students and educators visited multiple museums and historical sites displaying artifacts including life-sized sculptures, powerful exhibits, and preserved dwellings of enslaved people.

## Student Spotlight: Lewis Myers' Transformative Experience



**Lewis shares his powerful artwork inspired by his CRJ trip.**

Lewis Myers, a senior at Simon Youth Academy at Options Noblesville, blossomed during his two years at the academy, thanks to his teachers and the supportive learning environment. Due to his leadership, Lewis was selected to attend the Civil Rights Journey with SYF.

Lewis shared how the Civil Rights Journey forever changed his viewpoint. Reflecting on the journey, he said, "It changed my perspective on the country permanently, and I hope to go on learning to be a better person from these experiences." Lewis shared more about his thoughts at SYF's Annual Thank You event in December. Lewis, who enjoys drawing and reading, plans to study History in college.

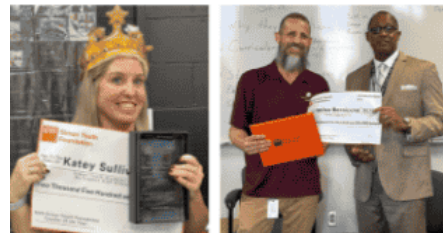
## 2024 SYF National Educator Conference

On October 25, SYF hosted its annual and first ever non-Covid virtual National Educator Conference, featuring regional hubs in Indianapolis and Nashville for learning and networking opportunities. This alternative educator focused conference provides participants with tools to enhance their teaching and inspire students. Highlights included a keynote from Ronnie Harvey, Jr., a motivational speaker, and author of *Principles for Principals*, breakout sessions on best practices, and strategies for navigating challenging conversations (led by Close Up Foundation).

One of the conference highlights is the naming and recognition of the Administrator and Teacher of the year. SYF proudly recognized the following Academy staff: Administrators of the Year, Kellie Rodkey (Simon Youth Academy at Avon, IN) and Idowu Ikudabo (Simon Youth Academy at McKinley Alternative School, IN), Teachers of the Year, Katey Sullivan (Simon Youth Academy at Burlington High School, MA) and Mike Bernicchi (Simon Youth Academy on Cochran, FL). Each honoree received an award and a monetary gift of \$2,500 for their dedication to educational excellence in serving Alternative Education students. Congratulations to our honorees!



***Excited Academy staff participating in the virtual conference.***



***Administrators of the year, Kellie Rodkey and Idowu Ikudabo. Teachers of the year, Katey Sullivan, and Mike Bernicchi.***

## 2024 Educator Exchange Fellowship

The 2024 Educator Exchange Fellowship welcomed six fellows to visit academies across the U.S. for an all-expense paid development opportunity, sharing best practices, and strengthening alternative education strategies. Kevia Rucker from [Simon Youth Academy at BETA](#) visited Kellie Rodkey at [Simon Youth Academy at Avon](#), where both support pregnant and parenting students with on-site nurseries. Kevia noted, "Seeing similarities in challenges and solutions across regions helped broaden my perspective." This program fosters collaboration, enabling educators to improve student outcomes through shared experiences and innovative ideas. "When we talk about alternative education, we're in the relationship business. So, when we are able to bring those folks in and build relationships with other educators that share the passion, it helps both entities, not just the person that's visiting and learning, but also the person that is hosting and being able to learn and build a relationship with that person." Josh Amyx at Simon Youth Academy at Richmond High School talking about his Academy's experience in the program.



*Educators from SYA at McKinley Alternative School, SYA at Richmond High School, SYA at Shelbyville Central Schools, SYA at BETA, SYA at Avon. SYA at Options Noblesville and SYA at Burlington.*

## Academy Spotlight: Simon Youth Academy at Baldwin



*SYA Baldwin students get hands on learning through programs such as recording studio arts and barbering.*

The [Simon Youth Academy at Baldwin](#) in New York, has been part of the SYF network since 2018. They offer students in grades 9-12 both academic, Career and Technical Education (CTE) credits through programs such as Barbering, Medical Administrative Assisting, Criminal Justice, Recording Studio Arts, and the new Future Jewelers Academy. These are two-year programs in which students acquire the knowledge, skills, and requisite hours required to take licensing exams in their areas of study. The goal is for students to graduate with a NYS Regents diploma with CTE credentials.

## SYF Partnership with Carmel Rotary Club Leadership Program



Through a partnership with the Carmel Rotary Club, Indiana Academy students participated in the 2024 Leadership Connection program, engaging in community service and leadership development. Since 2021, the Rotary Club's Leadership Connection program mission has been to connect today's leaders with the next generation to build stronger communities.

Participating students are eligible to receive a post-secondary scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 and a new laptop. The scholarships and laptops have been graciously donated by Danny Portee, President, and CEO of Professional Management Enterprises, who works closely with the Carmel Rotary Club.

## Partner Spotlight: CVS Supports Indiana Academies with Essential Donations

SYF wants to recognize CVS for their generous donation of essential supplies to our Indiana academies. From hygiene products and food to school supplies, the contributions are making a meaningful impact on students and teachers. "We are so thankful for CVS' support," said a teacher at one of the Indiana academies. "These donations help alleviate stress for our students, giving them the tools and confidence they need to thrive." Partnerships like this highlight the power of community collaboration to create opportunities for students to succeed. Thank you, CVS, for your dedication to education and for helping us build brighter futures!



*Indiana educators happily picking up items donated by CVS.*

## SYF Scholarship Opportunities

SYF announces the Greg Saunders Legacy Program Scholarship in honor of Tim Earnest. The Tim Earnest honorary award celebrates resilience, leadership and excellence and recognizes the legacy of one of SYF's founding board members, who passed away in 2022. The award will go to one student per year starting in 2025. Learn more about the three Simon Youth Foundation scholarship programs, including how to apply, [here](#). The deadline for applications is February 14, 2025. If you have questions about an open application or an active scholarship award, please contact our third-party scholarship provider Kaleidoscope at [help@mykaleidoscope.com](mailto:help@mykaleidoscope.com) or 800-278-8762.



## Fundraising Update: Crayola Flowers Partnership



SYF is excited to announce a partnership with Crayola Flowers, creating a colorful, year-round fundraising initiative. When you purchase flowers from our custom shop, Crayola Flowers will donate 10% of sales to SYF. Spread joy while supporting our mission to empower students. Learn more at SYF's [Crayola Flowers Shop](#).

## 2024 Employee Contribution Campaign (ECC) Wraps-Up



As SYF closes the 2024 Employee Contribution Campaign, we are proud to announce we raised just under \$400,000 toward our \$450,000 goal. A huge thank you to all Simon Property Group employees, Executive Co-Chairs Brian J. McDade, Executive Vice President, CFO, and Lee Sterling, Chief Marketing Officer, and SYF Regional Champions for their efforts. Every dollar raised directly supports scholarships, capacity-building grants, and experiential trips, helping students stay in school and succeed. Thank you for believing in the power of education!

## SYF Thank You Event Celebrates Community Support and Student Success

Recently, SYF hosted a vibrant *Thank You* event that brought together partners, donors, board members, and SPG colleagues to celebrate our collective achievements. The SYF Administrators of the year, Kellie Rodkey and Idowu Ikudabo, along with Lewis Meyers, a student at SYA at Options Noblesville, inspired the crowd with powerful stories that highlighted their experience with SYF. SYF is grateful for everyone's support and looks forward to creating more transformative opportunities in 2025.



*Administrator of the Year - Idowu Ikudabo, SYF board members, Student Lewis Meyers, and Administrator of the year - Kellie Rodkey*

## 2025 SPG Regional Events

**NEW** Event!

Minneapolis      Mini Golf      Feb 19

## 2025 Summer Events

SYF Simon Youth Foundation



### Save The Dates!

July 25, 2025  
Tees for Education  
Pebble Brook Golf Course  
Noblesville, IN



July 26, 2025  
Founders Celebration  
Brickyard 400 @ Indianapolis Motor  
Speedway  
Indianapolis, IN

**Simon Youth Foundation (SYF), a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit headquartered in Indianapolis, is committed to helping students graduate. SYF believes that all youth, no matter their personal circumstances, should have the opportunity to pursue their dreams through education.**

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Learn more about [SYF Staff](#) and [our mission](#) at [syf.org](http://syf.org).

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