



focus on
IMPACT

the Learning Web

Learning by doing...youth becoming adults

Learning from the Past — Advancing to the Future

Delicate, yet strong, beautiful and often-unseen – that's how we might describe a web. The founders of The Learning Web conceptualized an organization that would empower young people by creating a network or web of support for youth, who may not have the social ties to successfully navigate their journey into adulthood. Diverse and inclusive social networks are thought to provide advantages to individuals through ties with others within the same network or community. By creating opportunities for reflection and learning – outside of school, our vision is that all young people can *learn by doing* with the help of adult mentors, easing their transition and helping them to become self-sufficient and successful adults.

As The Web's new Executive Director, I've spent time reflecting on our past and current mission – thinking especially about how we convey the impact of our programs. I wanted to hear from participants about their experiences. After only a short time I've learned that our reach is widespread, and the meaningful relationships forged through our programs remain strong over time. Some of these connections and their impact are highlighted in this newsletter. From the connections made due to personal hardships, like those faced by Jared or through career exploration and mentorship, such as Juan – each are powerful in their own way.

To achieve our vision, we rely on a broad network of collaborators – too many to name here. Collaboration helps us weave an even tighter web of support and multiplies our impact. Our work and these partnerships are only possible because of the financial support we receive from allies such as the United Way, Park Foundation, Triad Foundation, Landlords Association, and hundreds of you.

Now that I've found my place in The Web and met many of you, I'm excited to share some new initiatives including, an expanded Life Skills program and the grand opening of our youth clothing closet – Good Threads.

Happy reading and make sure to connect with us in-person, on-line, or just around town!

With gratitude,

Neoma



Neoma Mullens, left, joined Learning Web staff (from right, Rick Alvord, Nino Hoder, & Bevi Wallenstein) at the Nonprofit Community Carnival at Stewart Park.

Cover: Apprentice Juan Taylor at Honey Rock Farm

2018 NEWSLETTER



The Learning Web is a United Way partner agency

Youth Exploration Expansion — Life Skills

Jared was in very serious trouble: Drug addiction, school failure, family conflict, poverty, and delinquency – a “high risk profile” that, with no intervention, could lead to a future of youth homelessness. Unfortunately, because Jared is living with his family, he’s ineligible for the intensive services he desperately needs. That just changed.

Funding from the County & City Treatment Courts and the United Way T. Merrell Shiperd Fund bulldozed through federal and state funding regulations, allowing us to expand our Youth Exploration (YEP) **Life Skills** program. This expansion will provide life skills preparation and intensive case management to youth who still live with a parent or guardian but have risk profiles similar to those of youth living in foster care. Ryan Wilcox, our **Life Skills** coordinator explains the impact of the expanded program, “I’m so excited that The Learning Web received this grant and now has the opportunity to work with a very underserved population in our community. To be able to provide preventative services to youth who need extra support and encouragement to achieve self-sufficiency is huge. This newly funded expansion will provide marginalized and at-risk youth with long term, intensive support allowing them to achieve goals and work to eliminate barriers.”

Now, whether homeless, living in foster care, or living with parents, all high-risk youth are eligible for our programs including; career exploration, apprenticeships, community service, life skills and intensive case management. All youth now have access to the range of services they need to develop the confidence, character, connections, competencies and abilities that lead to a successful transition to adulthood.



Middle Schoolers Take to Cayuga’s Waters!

Our service groups work to **impact** our community, addressing issues from hunger to homelessness, and animal rescue to literacy. The group at right is working with *Discover Cayuga Lake* to prevent invasive species from destroying our lake.



IMPACT — Learning Web Services Yield Important Life Lessons

Juan —

“I am very young and I didn’t need to work,” writes 12-year-old Juan, “but this job was an important thing to have in my life.” Reading this, you may be wondering, can a 12-year-old learn valuable **life and career lessons** from a 6-week apprenticeship?

Juan provides the answer. . . “Working at Honey Rock Farm was an amazing choice for my first job.” Reflecting on the experience, Juan wrote that Bill Hilker (“Mr. Bill”), the owner of Honey Rock, “taught me everything I need to know and more. If you’re new. . . watch others do it first and ask questions. It’s ok to be confused especially if it’s your first job, and Mr. Bill reminded me that it’s ok to ask questions. Mr. Bill showed me that a business isn’t just working and making money all day, you have to: keep the honey sanitary, set reminders around if you couldn’t finish [a task], always keep everything in a place that’s reliable and safe. Mr. Bill also taught me. . . how to

market and deliver our product. We set up a tent and brought our best honey and got ready to work. Mr. Bill showed me that I can’t be shy. If I am comfortable I should try to ask others to come and try our product. He showed me how many people would walk past our market if we didn’t say a word. It’s amazing because most of those people that were just going to walk past actually ended up buying our honey.”

Juan’s final thoughts: apprenticing with Bill Hilker at Honey Rock Farm, “would be an amazing choice for others. This type of thing is needed no matter what age.”

— Owen

For Owen Piao, the journey from Changchun, China to Blacksburg, Virginia took a **life-changing turn** through The Learning Web. Arriving in the US and Ithaca in his teens, Owen thought that his passion for design and the outdoors fell into incompatible career spheres. But Learning Web apprenticeships expanded his thinking: “My apprenticeships at the Ithaca Beautification Brigade and the Cornell Landscape Architecture Program made me realize I can combine design and environment. I didn’t know that connection before.” Setting his sights on a career in landscape design, Owen reflected on how his apprenticeships prepared him for acceptance and enrollment at Virginia Tech’s top-ranked Landscape Architecture program: “I had experience with my apprenticeships and my mentors at Cornell really helped me [and] gave me tips on what to expect and what I needed to do.” This summer, Owen worked diligently on our landscaping before leaving for college. Ithaca has captured Owen’s heart. He loves its community feel and plans on working in a small landscape design firm in a town like Ithaca.

We’d love to see him back!



Courtney —

“I dropped to the ground, immediately opening the bags. I assisted with high flow oxygen, establishing a nasal airway and gathering the supplies needed for transport. With coordinated team work, we revived her and safely transferred her to the hospital for suspected alcohol poisoning with possible aspiration.” A typical night for Courtney Simpson, volunteer Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), but a critical step along a path leading to **life-changing experiences**.

Courtney never gives up. Overcoming housing instability, financial challenges, and life stressors that would crush many people, Courtney grabs any opportunity to reach her goal of becoming a Primary Care Physician (PCP). Her journey led her to Youth Outreach where she was a resident in our Housing Scholarship Program, during which time she worked at Shortstop Deli, earned her Associates degree, trained to be an EMT, and enrolled at SUNY Cortland. The Learning Web’s education fund assisted her in buying textbooks. Courtney excelled in her studies making both the Dean’s and President’s list and graduated with honors.

Courtney now works as a Critical Care Technician in the ICU and Phlebotomist at a local rural hospital. Currently applying to medical school, Courtney stopped in to update us on her plans:

“I believe health begins with making conscious actions and choices every day; it is sustained by attending regular visits with a PCP that knows a detailed history and context. I want to be that PCP, who has the privilege and opportunity to make a difference.”

We have no doubt that she will become Dr. Simpson!



Courtney Simpson, center, pictured here with Rick Alvord, Youth Outreach staff and Neoma Mullens, Executive Director

Impact

in a year —

870 handshakes — the beginning of many great connections between young people and community adults who share career interests.

800 hours — the time that Learning Web community service participants have dedicated to improving our community.

12,000 miles — the distance Learning Web staff and youth traveled to explore interests, access services, and learn how to advocate for themselves — roughly circling the US twice each year!

\$551,196 — the taxpayer dollars saved by assisting 51 Youth Outreach participants to find safe, stable housing without using a Section 8 public subsidy. Assumes that these youth’s subsidies were reduced by one year.

“ You are helping young people to be stronger, more resilient, and growing!!

—PARENT OF APPRENTICE

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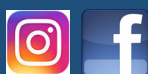
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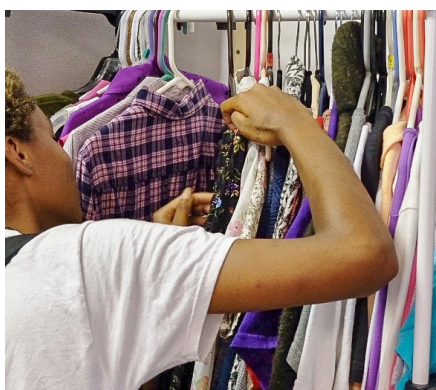
Serving & Learning — Good Threads Opens

An ambulance ride to the ER was critical for Chris to get treatment for a medical crisis – losing his only pair of shoes, backpack, and coat was a consequence he didn't expect. Living on the streets, Chris was disconnected from community services including Youth Outreach (YO). After leaving the hospital in shoes three sizes too big, he decided to visit the YO Drop-In Center for help. This was an opportunity for Youth Outreach staff to connect with Chris in a way they couldn't in the past. Chris was invited to "shop" in our new youth clothing closet, dubbed, "**Good Threads**." He left with new sneakers, two pairs of pants, a backpack, and coat. Looking and feeling better, Chris is now a regular participant and drops in several times a week to touch base with us.



Good Threads was created with funding from the Triad and Legacy Foundations

to meet the demand for low/no-cost age-appropriate clothing, and to provide employment and entrepreneurial training, while enhancing our outreach to homeless youth. Chris is just one of many youths whose initial connection with YO was forged through access to **Good Threads**. Providing tangible help that is of value to youth builds trust and engagement. Access to clean, warm clothing is important, but beyond that, appropriate clothing is vital when looking for jobs and attending school.



Opening **Good Threads** involved lots of planning and learning. Working alongside **Good Threads**' apprentices, YO staffer

Rick Alvord, Earl Roach III and Donnie Hampton, Park Leadership Fellows and MBA students at Cornell's SC Johnson College of Business, are assisting the youth as they determine how to: gather and process clothing donations, display merchandise, track sales, set payment methods, and develop systems that will make the clothing closet sustainable. Earl and Donnie bring expertise in entrepreneurship and project management to the project. "From our work experiences, we want to share different ways to work through projects as we do our best to help setup the launch of **Good Threads**... We are extremely excited to be helping and we love how excited the team is to have us partnering with them. We believe **Good Threads** has a wonderful opportunity to make a big difference in the community, furthering the Learning Web's mission.

We all have a lot to learn about running a clothing business as part of our YO Drop-In Center. Just like any business, it has its bumps and fits and starts but it's a great adventure and we are living our tagline... learning by doing! Help us grow **Good Threads** by donating clean, youth appropriate clothing or by making a tax-deductible



Park Fellow, Earl Roach, center, with Lexi Washington, apprentice, and Rick Alvord, Youth Outreach staff.

"The problems and challenges The Learning Web attempts to tackle do not have a one size fits all situation... Regardless of the challenges, there is a wonderful opportunity to help many people in big ways and the people that work at The Learning Web have a huge heart."

Donnie Hampton & Earl Roach,
Park Leadership Fellows