

Division of Educational Engagement and Workforce Development Strategic Update

Creating Pathways. Cultivating Purpose. Keeping Talent Home.

Dr. Stephanie L. Covington, Commissioner of Educational Engagement and Workforce Development

Key Findings

Workforce Readiness and Career Exposure

Youth need earlier and broader access to mentorships, internships, job shadowing, and exposure to nontraditional career paths, particularly in STEM, healthcare, and the trades.

Gaps in Soft Skills and Life Preparedness

Life and career success are hindered by a lack of soft skill development. Youth and families emphasize the need for programs that teach financial literacy, communication, and professionalism.

Transportation and Infrastructure Barriers

Poor transit access and deteriorating infrastructure are significant deterrents to youth participation in city life, especially for those who do not drive or live in under-resourced neighborhoods.

Safety and Community Conditions

Fear of violence, poor public safety infrastructure, and lack of trust in policing disproportionately impact youth of color and contribute to feelings of disconnection from the city.

Lack of Youth-Centered Community Engagement

Some city-led efforts fail to recruit youth voice and leadership. Young people are eager to co-create solutions and participate in advisory boards, neighborhood design, and cultural initiatives.

Housing Affordability and Quality

Youth cite cost of living, substandard housing, and landlord harassment as major obstacles. Recommendations include expanding voucher access and redeveloping abandoned properties.

Equity, Inclusion, and Representation

Equity must be intentional. Participants called for increased representation of marginalized youth in leadership, culturally competent programming, and disaggregated data collection for accountability.

Identity, Belonging, and Personal Growth

Youth seek purpose, expression, and connection. Investing in travel, arts, wellness, and civic leadership can deepen their ties to Toledo and foster long-term retention.



Activities Completed
July 2025-November 2025

Workforce Readiness and Career Exposure

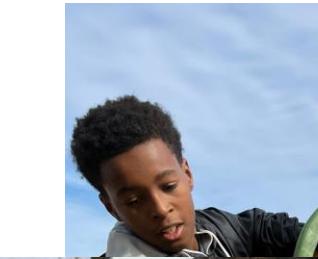
Urban Agriculture Workforce Development Program

Partnership: Urban Wholistics & Toledo Preparatory Academy

Grades 7–8 Career Exploration
Urban Wholistics provides hands-on, daily career exploration curriculum focused on urban agriculture, sustainability, and wellness.

Community Impact

Students recently participated in a large-scale food harvesting event, collecting 3,000 lbs of fresh produce and distributing it to 333 Toledo families — learning the power of service, teamwork, and community care.



Workforce Readiness and Career Exposure

Junior Achievement 5th Year Program

Facilitated a Soft Skills Presentation:
Teamwork & Communication

Experiential Learning
Hosted site visits to Hoffman Landfill and One Government Center to expose students to real-world career pathways.

Internship Experience
Currently hosting two Junior Achievement interns within the City of Toledo Department of Parks & Youth Services.



Workforce Readiness and Career Exposure

Park Quest – Toledo's First Parks-Focused Video Game

Partnership: City of Toledo Parks & Youth Services × BESN X Community

47 Youth Participants collaborated to design a video game that:

- Showcases Toledo's parks and their history
- Promotes outdoor exploration and play
- Inspires youth connection to green spaces

Skill Development:

Students learned fundamentals of coding, video game design, digital storytelling, and character creation — while exploring the rich history of Ottawa Park, including the Police Museum, Amphitheater, and Playgroun

 *Park Quest combines technology, creativity, and community pride to reimagine how youth engage with Toledo's parks.*



Gaps in Soft Skills & Life Preparedness

STEM & Soft Skills Workshop

Location: Longfellow Elementary School

Audience: Middle grade students

- Focused on essential **soft skills** for daily life and future careers
- Featured **hands-on activities** blending **STEM concepts** with teamwork, communication, and problem-solving

❖ *Empowering students with skills for success—in school, work, and life.*



Gaps in Soft Skills & Life Preparedness

LeadHerWay Youth Summit 2025

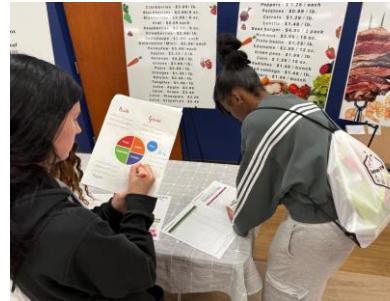
Reality Town – October 11, 2025

 **Nearly 100 Youth (Ages 12–24) Served**
 **Real-Life Simulation:** Students lived a day in the life of 30-year-old adults — budgeting, making financial decisions, and managing responsibilities.

Workshops Included:

- Financial Literacy
- Salary Negotiation
- Career Pathways
- Mock Interviews

 **Empowering youth with real-world skills to build confident, successful futures.**



OPEN TO ALL YOUTH AGES 12 TO 24

LEADHERWAY
2025 YOUTH SUMMIT

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL

REALITY TOWN: REAL LIFE, REAL CHOICES
"Empowering Youth Through Real-World Choices"

Step into the future—literally! The LeadHerWay 2025 Summit is a one-day immersive financial literacy and workforce simulation that allows participants to live a day in the life of a 30-year-old adult. With a career, salary, and real life responsibilities, youth will face choices about housing, childcare, transportation, insurance, and more; learning how to budget, prioritize, and plan for success.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 11, 2025
STUDENT UNION
THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

What to Expect:

- Mock paycheck & monthly budgeting
- Over 15 interactive booths
- Life's curveballs: bills & surprises
- Guidance from mentors & professionals on the job market
- Skills: financial literacy, planning, entrepreneurship, philanthropy and the value of giving back
- Grocery Store
- Utility Companies
- Transportation & Car Dealerships
- Health & Medical Insurance
- Education/Certification or Professional Development
- Clothing, Shopping and more!

Simulation Environment: Booths

- Grocery Store
- Utility Companies
- Transportation & Car Dealerships
- Health & Medical Insurance
- Education/Certification or Professional Development
- Clothing, Shopping and more!

Agenda Overview

- 9:00 AM - Registration & Seating
- 9:30 AM - Breakout Sessions
- 11:30 - 2:30 PM - Simulation & Lunch
- 2:30 PM - Reflection
- 3:00 PM - Closing

REGISTRATION INCLUDES SNACK, LUNCH, PROGRAM MATERIALS, AND SWAG

PROGRAM PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

WOMENOTOLEDO.ORG/VWOT

Gaps in Soft Skills & Life Preparedness

Bigs & Littles: Reading & Art Connection

Mentorship through Literacy & Art

- Pairs **Waite High School juniors/seniors** with **Kindergarten** students from L. Hollingsworth Elementary.
- Promoted reading engagement, creativity, and mentorship.

Activities Included:

- **Read Together:** Books by diverse BIPOC authors & illustrators.
- **Create Art:** Craft project inspired by the story.
- **Share Out:** Present book & artwork with peers.





Future Plans November 2025-2026

ServeOhio Grant

Seeds to Service – Youth Service-Learning Project

•Partnership: Toledo Preparatory Academy × Urban Wholistics × City of Toledo

•Middle school students will **grow and process herbs** into wellness products (teas, scrubs, balms) while building skills in:

- **Environmental literacy**
- **Entrepreneurship**
- **Workforce readiness**

The project includes workshops and community impact by donating products to local families in need, empowering students to serve as modern-day changemakers.

Grant Amount: \$5,000

Grant Period: January–May 2025

Purpose: Service-learning project

Workforce Readiness and Career Exposure

International Holiday Market – Youth Build

Hands-On Workforce Experience

Thirty students from **Start High School**, **Washington Local CTC**, and **Glass City Academy** will partner with *Inspired Lumber* to **build 15 vendor huts** for the upcoming International Holiday Market.

Build Day: Thursday, November 20th

Location: Levis Square Park

This project provides students with valuable hands-on construction experience while fostering meaningful connections between youth and Veterans through collaboration and community service.

Gaps in Soft Skills & Life Preparedness

Gratitude & Service Workshop

Date: Saturday, November 22, 2025

Partner: *GirlSense: Young Girls on the Move*

Program Focus:

Designed for young ladies in grades 5–9, this workshop teaches the importance of community service, gratitude, and life appreciation.

• Hands-On Service Project:

Participants will spend the day engaging in reflection activities and complete a service project — donating items to the children of Bethany House.

Empowering girls to lead with kindness, purpose, and service.

GRATITUDE & SERVICE WORKSHOP FOR GIRLS GRADES 5-9

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2025
10AM – 3PM

Glass City Enrichment Center
815 Front St, Toledo, OH 43605

Highlights

- Fun Activities
- Gratitude Journals
- Hands-on Service Project
- Leadership & Team-Building
- Certificates & Take-Home Packet

Scan the QR Code or register at this link:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gratitude-service-workshop>

Helping Girls Grow, Serve, and Lead
Ronnell Ferrell
419-514-6618

Equity, Inclusion, and Representation

Youth Town Hall Meeting

Co-Hosted By:

Youth Advisory Boards for **Parks & Youth Services**, **Zepf Center – Safety Net**, and the **Homelessness Board**

Date: Sunday, December 7, 2025 | ⏰ 3:00–4:30 PM

Guest Presenter: *Kwinlyn Tyler, TARTA*

Topics of Discussion:

- **Upcoming Route Changes** – Impacts on youth relying on bus transportation
- **Transportation Access** – Reaching jobs, internships, and after-school activities
- **Bus Safety for Youth**

❖ *Empowering youth voice through dialogue and collaboration.*

Tentative 2026 Initiatives

Youth Entrepreneurship Program

Expansion of Park Quest

City Wide Internship Program Pilot

Continued direct school and industry engagement