



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jeffrey Russo, President

Maija Stone, Vice President

Donna Schaare, Secretary

Michael Pintabone, Treasurer

Jack Budd Robert Gould Brian Hajdu Mark Reda

Amanda Shepherd Brian Tipton Michael Weirsky

*"Alone we can do so little...
together we can do so much."
-Helen Keller*

FYC LEADERSHIP TEAM

Kelly Post-Sheedy, Executive Director

Meghan Santowasso, Program Director

Keely Rehman, Project Coordinator

Ashlee Melick, Program Manager

Laurie Nelson, Director of Development





“

It is with hope that all young people of the town, rich and poor, are going to use it. Instead of meeting on street corners, meet here and see what it has to offer...if you will all promise to do this, you will make me feel that I have done something worthwhile for the town. Make me happy and make it a great success.

”

- Elizabeth Firth-Wade at the 1954 Firth Youth Center Dedication



Creating Community

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we enter into the 70th year of service at the FYC, I often find myself pausing and thinking about the countless residents, partnering agencies, businesses, and community leaders who continue to step up and help expand our offerings, improve the facility, and create new opportunities for the vulnerable kids we serve. It has been heart-warming and humbling to work alongside so many devoted individuals who also believe that when we #FILLtheFIRTH, our youth have a safe place to ***just be kids!***

With that being said, I'd be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge our Leadership Team and Staff for their dedication and tireless efforts. Our team is composed of individuals who inspire, support, encourage, and lift-up P'burg kids every day. They are the ones who kids will look back on with fond memories of the ways they cared for them, played with them, and supported them through hard times.

They are the modern-day Kit Stansberrys, Jim Fiammas, & Pierre Grassis.

They are making a true impact, a lifelong impact, on kids who are deserving of so much more than the cards they were dealt.



From maintenance, to direct-care, and playground program staff, every team member brings their unique style, positive energy, and team-first approach to the FYC. The accomplishment I am most proud of this year has been to build, support, and aid the team we have surrounding our kids!

What is going on at the FYC is not a product of one person or a few Board Members. It's everyone who is willing to step up to the plate, roll up their sleeves, and make Phillipsburg a better place for children to grow up.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and children we serve, thank you all for your generosity and continued support. We look forward to all that is good to come for the youth of Phillipsburg via the FYC!

-Kelly Post-Sheedy, Executive Director

NOTEWORTHY HIGHLIGHTS

Cultivating childhood memories since 1954.



792 Youth served at one or more programs

5,093 Lunches and dinners served to youth



Awarded over **\$9,500** in grants to provide programs targeting youth currently or more likely to experience homelessness

417 Backpacks with supplies distributed



560 Hours of enriching summer programs

\$5,310 in scholarships awarded to youth seeking career training and post-secondary education



42 Youth served through the FYC Boutique

Distributed nearly **1,800** gifts to families thanks to B.A.C.K. Club and other local toy drives during the holiday season



Assisted families in saving over **\$223,300** in subsidized child care in partnership with Norwescap CFRS

Help us continue to offer creative solutions and innovative support for our local kids and families



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

BYRON MCINTOSH

Byron McIntosh is the owner/operator of The ChopShop located at 396 Heckman Street. Byron was always a Jersey boy, born in East Orange and raised in Newark, but his story didn't start in Phillipsburg until he opened his shop in 2008 with his late brother, Jay.

From a young age, Byron saw first-hand what it was like owning a barber shop, since his mother, Audrey Burch, operated one. Byron would run errands, sweep, and, eventually, learned to cut hair. Byron saw the inner-workings and the responsibility, grit, & sacrifices it took to be a business owner. When his brother and business partner, Jay, passed away in 2022, Byron had the determination to ensure The ChopShop would live on.

Byron's wife, Annie, is also a hairstylist and owns her own business, The Deca Hair Salon, in Emmaus, PA. Together they have three boys Isaiah (22), Byron (12), and Kian (11). Byron loves to volunteer, ***Giving back has always been important to me, especially with youth organizations, Big Brother programs, and food banks.***

Byron's first experience with the FYC was when Miss Joan Lichtenwalner walked into his shop and told him about the *Hooray! It's Back to School Day!* event. He immediately liked Miss Joan and enjoyed her upbeat and witty personality. ***When Miss Joan told me about the FYC Back to School event happening at the end of the summer, it was a no brainer! I immediately knew I wanted to help. I told my employees, Trevor & Pablo, and they were just as excited and 100% on board to make a difference that day!***

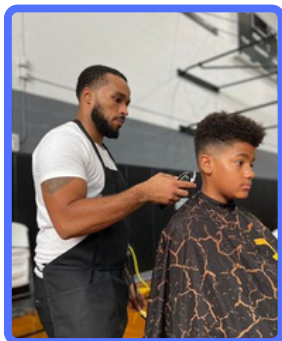
At the FYC, everyone is always warm, inviting, and helpful and it's obvious that the kids are excited to attend school looking fresh for their first day. It's the best feeling! After the 1st year, I knew I would continue to volunteer every year after. And that he did...

Byron volunteered at the first ever *Hooray! It's Back to School Day!* and every year since. The August 22, 2024 event will mark his 6th year of service at the FYC!

Being a kid from the inner city, I understand the importance of the youth center that I grew up in and how the staff impact the children. I was one of those kids. I received guidance, support, and fellowship when I needed it most... it shaped me into the man I am today.

Byron is also an MMA coach, former mixed martial artist, and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu brown belt. His future plans include opening a mixed martial arts gym (LEVELS), which will offer youth classes, women's self-defense, and fitness packages for all ages and skill-sets within the Phillipsburg area. Until then, you can find him at The ChopShop...

except on Hooray! It's Back to School Day!



EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH EDUCATION AND RECREATION



PROGRAMS

- 45 Unique Youth Programs
- 57 Healthy Cooking Classes
- 150 Hours of Academic Tutoring
- 302 Drop-In Sessions

ATHLETICS

- 9 Wrestling Matches
- 24 Hours of Dance Classes
- 32 Youth enrolled in Jiu Jitsu
- 84 Youth Basketball games held
- 275 Hours of Staff-led Exercise

RECREATION

- 74 Youth enrolled in Summer Camp
- 88 Reading & Writing Workshops
- 32 Character Building Lessons
- 205 Playground Program Participants

Together we make a difference in the lives of others.

12 volunteer Board Members work alongside the FYC Team to **spread awareness** of diversified programs, **foster relationships** with collaborative partners, **develop** fundraising initiatives, **strategically plan** for capital improvement projects, and **positively impact** the families we serve 12 months of the year. The FYC is **committed to building** the resiliency of **Phillipsburg's** most under-served populations while continuously promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion for the betterment of the children and community.

Join us as we keep the FYC **a place where kids can just be kids!**

FUTURE LEADER PROFILE

DE'ASIA BROWN



De'Asia is a 4th Grade Student at Phillipsburg Elementary School, but started coming to the FYC at just 6 years old. De'Asia attends Summer Camp, After School Care, Fri-Yay Night Dances, Hip-Hop Classes, and plays her Steele Hill Basketball Games in the gym each Winter. If there's an activity going on at the FYC that De'Asia is eligible to attend, you can bet she will be there with a huge smile!

De'Asia is the definition of a true youth leader. She helps others with homework, cleans up after herself, encourages friends to follow rules, participates in activities, and assists staff whenever she can. Due to her incredible behavior, De'Asia is always a contender for the TOP winner of all Behavior Improvement Campaigns, including Kelly Cash, Pie-a-Counselor, and Slime Day.

When talking about the FYC, De'Asia proudly recalls all the times she won, and continues to win, the Behavior Improvement Campaigns. When asked how it makes her feel, she responds, *"When my name is called after the loud drum roll, I feel really proud of myself... that I earned it! Getting called up in front of everyone makes me feel really excited and grateful to be a part of the FYC!"*

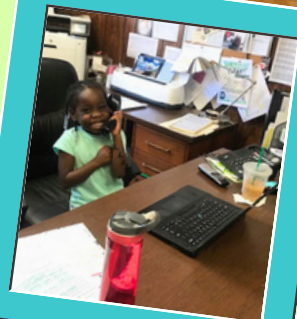
De'Asia resides with her parents, 2 brothers, and 5 sisters in Phillipsburg. She proudly shares, *"My parents make sure I have food in my belly, a roof over my head, a comfy bed, and clothes. They take really good care of me and do lot of things for me. I feel really grateful for them. I'm a lucky girl for all I have... I go to a great school and get to go to the FYC!"*

De'Asia's future plans include, *"becoming a FYC Camp Counselor and making my way up to be the boss, like Miss Kelly!"*

Until then, she'll just keep enjoying all FYC has to offer!

DE'ASIA'S TOP FYC MEMORIES

- Pieing Mr. Saad in the face
- Swimming at the Pool during Summer Camp
- Learning to Roller Skate on a Field Trip
- Winning the Talent Show with a Cheer routine
- Hanging out with Miss Sam in the Gym
- Winning Kelly Cash to buy Christmas presents for my parents and siblings
- Playing Steele Hill Basketball Games
- Meeting new friends



RECOGNIZING OUR FYC FAITHFUL

MARK SCUDERI



Mark resides in Stewartsville with his wife, Katie, and their three children, Tommy, Shane, and Brianne (a/k/a Breezy). He owns multiple businesses in the area, including REMAXX Supreme, Motto Mortgage, and CrossFit Phillipsburg. Mark is committed to helping others, especially when it comes to the kids of Phillipsburg. He linked-up with FYC Director of Development, Laurie Nelson, to share why he is so committed:

L: What sparked your interest to get involved?

M: I am a big fan of supporting my local community. There is no better way to support a community than by investing in the youth. Supporting local is taking care of your own. The FYC checks both boxes for me. I donate locally and invest in the future of our community. Plus, you can see with your own eyes where your donations are going. Every cent stays at the FYC.



L: What programs have you been involved in?

M: Hooray! It's Back to School Day, Career Week, Holiday Tree to sponsor gifts for children, and my daughter, Breezy, volunteered at Summer Camp... plus there's more to come.



L: What drives you to give back so much and so often?

M: It's easy to become comfortable in business, especially after time goes by. Having something bigger than yourself to work towards growing keeps me motivated. We can all strive to be better and do better. The kids at the FYC learn that and one day will return the favor.



**On behalf of the FYC Board
and Leadership Team,
THANK YOU MARK!**

YOUTH PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Promoting healthy lifestyles for Phillipsburg youth.



11 Youth participate in iLEAD Coalition Club, which shapes youth into future leaders through character building, substance prevention education, and access to positive mentors



15 LEAD Phillipsburg Coalition members work tirelessly to strengthen community collaboration in support of local efforts to reduce youth substances



Awarded and allocated over **\$190,000** to provide Youth Substance Misuse Prevention Programs



2,750 stickers distributed to educate adults on the impact and consequences of serving alcohol to minors



153 students educated about the dangers of vaping through the *Don't Get Vaped In* curriculum



30% more High School youth strongly agreed that using marijuana or alcohol regularly would harm their health & healthy habits after undergoing the Prevention Plus Wellness curriculum

VOLUNTEERISM



53 Dedicated FYC Volunteers

34 Dedicated Youth Volunteers

33 Lafayette College Volunteers

1254 Hours of Volunteerism

The Board of Directors and Staff extend our sincerest gratitude to all volunteers who have stepped up to help the youth of Phillipsburg.

We are beyond humbled and grateful by the outpouring of community support the FYC receives each year.



BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

DONNA JIORLE SCHAARE



During their youth, Donna, her sister and brother attended summer programs, roller skating events and Friday night dances held in the FYC gymnasium. She also has fond memories of attending aerobic dance and ceramics classes with her mom, sister, aunts, and cousins as well as walking to the FYC after PHS football games to get together with friends. During the 1990s and 2000s, Donna reconnected with the FYC as she watched her 3 sons compete in CBL basketball games. One of her sons even became a camp counselor for two summers. *I am happy to say that, so far, 3 generations of my family have utilized the FYC!*

So, when the opportunity arose to join the FYC Board of Directors in March 2010, Donna jumped at the chance to help. *As a business owner in Downtown Phillipsburg for many years, I saw how many children lacked opportunities and I thought the mission of the FYC was so important to the community. It is heartwarming to see these children have chances to do things that they would not otherwise experience if they didn't have access to the FYC.*

Before recently retiring, Donna, along with her husband Dave, ran the family business, Jiorle's Office Supplies, which her mom and dad established in 1973. In her free time, you can find Donna at the gym, playing pickleball, golfing, or helping out at many FYC events throughout the year.

During the first FYC Wrapping Day, I asked a young boy who the gift was for that we were wrapping. He said "This is for my neighbor lady who brings us meals." It was heartbreaking to realize that many local children do not have a home cooked meal every night, which is something I took for granted growing up. This is why Dine & Dash is one of my favorite programs.

Favorite Memories as a Board Member

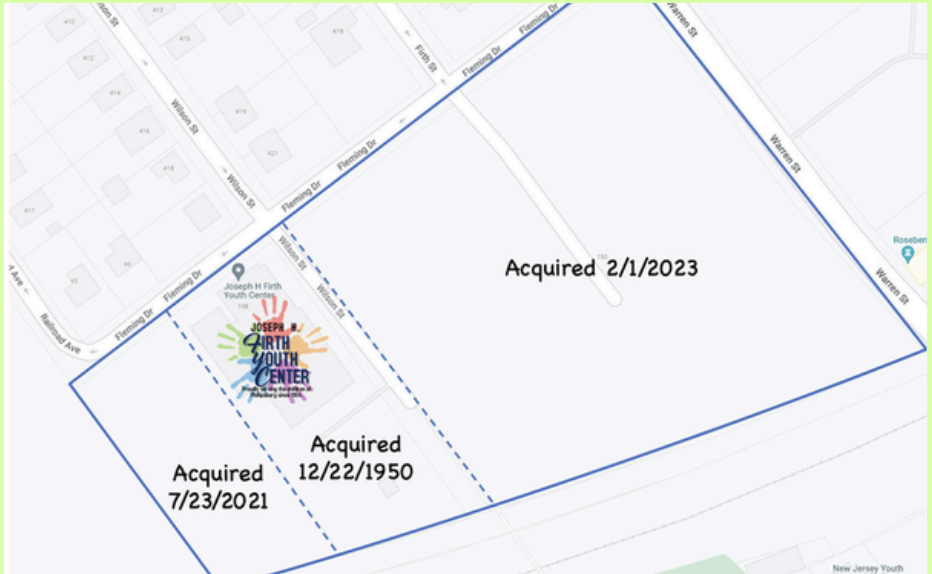
- Annual Banquet, which showcases everyone who helps contribute to the FYC's success
- Freezing the Firth
- Ribbon Cuttings for the Michael J. Weirsky Gymnasium and the Brennan Family Multipurpose Room
- Hooray! It's Back to School Day!
- Wrapping Day where the kids shop for loved ones

One day, I hope the Town of Phillipsburg can have a community center to serve all ages. With the purchase of the adjacent property, there is so much potential to help more children and residents. I am honored to serve on the FYC Board of Directors, it has been one of the most rewarding experiences to see all the wonderful programs that are now being offered. I am excited to see what the future holds at FYC for the children of Phillipsburg! They are certainly in good hands with the outstanding Leadership Team, who serve as incredible role models for our youth.



HONORING OUR PAST INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

On February 1, 2023, the Board of Directors purchased the 5.66-acre lot adjacent to the FYC, located at 150 Fleming Drive. This brings FYC's total property to nearly 8-acres of land. While the current plans are to pay down the mortgage and complete some clean-up projects, the Board of Directors was grateful to be in a position to preserve the neighborhood by acquiring the property. However, one can't help but dream about the possibilities for the **#FutureOfTheFirth!**



The newly renovated gym was formally dedicated as the

Michael J. Weirsky Gymnasium

on January 29, 2023 in front of a standing-room-only crowd of family, community partners, dignitaries, youth sports organization representatives, and kids.

Help us celebrate
70 years of service!



33rd Annual Banquet
Thursday, Sept. 12, 2024 at the Firth Youth Center



On May 2, 1954, the doors of the Joseph H. Firth Youth Center officially opened to the children of Phillipsburg. Since then, generations of kids have benefited from the diverse programs, caring mentors, and safe environment that the FYC has cultivated.

Please consider joining us for a special evening commemorating the past, honoring those who uplift the mission, and sharing the vision of the #FutureFirth!



For tickets and sponsorship information, please reach out to:
Laurie Nelson, Director of Development at Laurie@FirthYouthCenter.com
www.FirthYouthCenter.com/Banquet

Together

WE MAKE

A DIFFERENCE IN THE

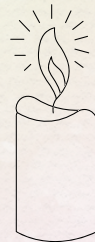
LIVES OF OTHERS

Help us continue to offer creative solutions and innovative support for our local kids and families



There are some who bring a light so great to the world, that even after they have gone the light remains.

Clark W Deemer, Sr.
Dr. John W. "Jack" Emery
Cecelia M. "Polly" Honey
Phil Kays, Sr.
Joshua Dean Loudenberry
Larry Marino, Jr.
Elizabeth "Betty" Post
Mark Anthony Reda
Jack C. Searfoss, Jr.



In loving memory of the FYC Faithful we lost in 2023.

