

IN THE

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A Publication of the Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals Network  
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INSPIRED  
FOR  
CHANGE



Northern Virginia Urban League  
Young Professionals Network

*Empowering Communities.  
Changing Lives.*



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The Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals Network (YPN) is an auxiliary organization of the Northern Virginia Urban League. YPN was founded in 1999 as a way to identify and develop future leaders of the community.

Through a variety of programs and community service initiatives, YPN supports the mission of the Northern Virginia Urban League and fosters young professional development, social consciousness and civic involvement.

# IN THE Movement

## EDITOR'S NOTE:

Greetings, and welcome to *In the Movement*, a new feature publication produced by the Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals Network (YPN)! It is truly a great pleasure to introduce the release of our first issue, and my congratulations and heartfelt gratitude goes to Managing Editors Garrett James and Jewell Jones who have been the driving forces behind *In the Movement's* successful launch. I would also like to thank the entire editorial board and all of the contributors who have been instrumental to this issue.



We bring you *In the Movement* as a way to tell YPN's empowerment story—the story of our members, our programs and the lives we touch everyday through our service. In this issue, we are reflecting on the ever-present need to renew ourselves as individuals and grow as agents of change. In this issue, you will read about just some of the ways YPN programs and services have inspired change and renewal over the past six months. Programs like a new backpack drive and our annual Political Forum that garnered record attendance have generated increased enthusiasm for the work we do in the community. Our cover story, "Inspired for Change," reflects on our generation's desire to have a tangible impact on the political, social and economic future of our world. In her message, our President Pamela Perkins reminds us of the historic growth that YPN has taken over its history and challenges us to push harder for the future.

I hope this issue of *In the Movement* will inspire renewal or change for the better in your life. Please let us know what you think by sending comments to [communications@nvulypn.org](mailto:communications@nvulypn.org). If you like what you read, help us spread the word by sharing *In the Movement* with your colleagues and friends.

Enjoy, and we look forward to hearing your feedback.

Yours in the Movement,

*Courtney McSwain*

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### Chatique Sample Discovers Passion to Serve



"Opportunity to Thrive's (OTT) mission of ensuring that all children are well educated and prepared for economic self-reliance in the 21st century ignited my passion. Because of YPN's commitment to nurturing the leadership potential of members, I was able to gradually increase my commitment to OTT and I became chair in July 2010. YPN has empowered me to identify and live my mission in all aspects of life."

### Garrett James Gains Access Through the Movement



"Access! For a long time, when I thought about the access that certain organizations provided, my mind only pictured CEOs and top executives. YPN has since reintroduced another access to me; it has put me in a network of like-minded individuals. These are the networks that change circumstances drastically. That same change is what YPN members bring to the Northern Virginia community as well as each other through service."





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

### Young Professional 2.0

A friend celebrated her birthday this past year, and she entitled the event "Version 3.0." The title hit home, and it got me thinking about creating a renewed sense of self. Every so often, electronics and textbooks come out with updated versions that are supposed to be new and improved, and over the past two years, change has been a dominant word in our public dialogue. As the Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals

Network (YPN) grows one year older, and as we as individuals hopefully become one year wiser, we too must ask ourselves: "What am I doing to affect change – not only a change in the community, but also change or growth in myself?"

The mission of YPN is to engage young professionals in the Urban League Movement toward social and economic empowerment. YPN fulfills this mission through community service programs and personal and professional development. Since joining YPN many moons ago, I have been fortunate to witness, firsthand, the growth of the organization and the direct impact that YPN has had on the community. The organization has also changed me personally by developing my leadership skills and providing unique experiences to interact with community leaders outside of the traditional corporate environment.

One of the goals of YPN is to provide opportunities for members and guests to empower communities and develop their individual talents. These opportunities manifest not only through various service projects, but as members take on leadership roles and learn essential skills like event programming, fiscal management and fundraising. Our membership is the lifeblood of YPN, and over the years, this organization's development has been the direct result of the growth of our membership.

For instance, six years ago, YPN's high school college preparation program, College Survival 101 (CS 101), was pulled together by three members working into the middle of the night in one of their living rooms. CS 101 has grown so much that it now requires its own executive board to manage the year-long planning of the event. When I first joined YPN, our general body meetings were a mere discussion of the organization's business; now they set the stage for our Professional Speaker Series, where a packed house of members and guests gather to learn new skills and grow their professional network. Further, because of our membership, YPN will proudly re-launch the financial literacy program Opportunity to Prosper in 2011. YPN is also continuing to strengthen our relationship with the Northern Virginia Urban League through partnerships with the Guild, Grandfathers Group and Resource Mothers.

As we move into a year and a new millennium of the Urban League Movement, we must continue to push ourselves and the organization to constantly renew itself for new challenges and opportunities ahead. Life is like a river, and if you are not paddling forward, you are floating backwards.

My challenge to you is: What are you doing to become a new and improved version of yourself?

## Ready to Lead? JOIN A YPN COMMITTEE ☺

- Communications – "Telling YPN's empowerment story." Email: [communications@nvulypn.org](mailto:communications@nvulypn.org)
- Community Service – "Engaging young professionals in selfless service." Email: [community@nvulypn.org](mailto:community@nvulypn.org)
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# YPN Leaves a Footprint in the Community with its First Backpack Drive

by Jewell Jones

Helping support local students from low-income families prepare for the school year, the Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals Network (YPN) held its inaugural Backpack Drive in August at the Charles Houston Recreation Center, in Alexandria, Va.



More than a dozen volunteers gathered around the recreation center’s multipurpose room tables to help stuff backpacks with essential school supplies including markers, folders, notebooks and pencils. They could not help but reminisce.

“I remember,” said Alencia Johnson, 23 and a member of YPN, while throwing one of the backpacks on her shoulder. She smiles. “I was such a nerd.”

With monetary donations and supplies from more than 30 volunteers and a \$2,000 grant from BB&T, YPN donated 97 fully stuffed backpacks as a result of the drive—far surpassing its original goal of 50. With the generous donations, YPN was able to provide backpacks and supplies to the Patrick Henry Family Shelter, where the organization conducts its monthly



Empowering Youth mentoring program. Additional backpacks were also donated to the Northern Virginia Urban League’s Resource Mothers and Girls Empowered to Move Toward Success (GEMS) programs. Grant funds from BB&T also allowed YPN to purchase car seats and play yards for the Resource Mothers program.

“I think it was overwhelmingly successful,” said Nicole Battle, Director of Community service for YPN.

Neither nerds nor class clowns would disagree.



# 4 Tips for Your Next Getaway

by Jewell Jones



*“The world is a book and those who do not travel only read but a page.”* – Saint Augustine

Whether you want to make up for the summer vacation that you did not take or plan next year’s adventure, consider the following tips given by local travel experts during “Eye Opener – Expanding Your Horizons Through Travel,” the August general body meeting of the Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals Network.

## **#1** Schedule your trip as far in advance as possible and save for it.

Kimberly Ballou, an International Relations Specialist at the U.S. Department of Energy, travels for both pleasure and business and advises travelers to take time and plan. She suggests booking early and setting up a bank account for travel. “If you don’t have the money to pay, you don’t go.”

## **#2** Consider booking through a travel agency.

Sandi Smith, owner of the travel agency Visionair Vacations, dispelled the myth that most travel agents charge customers fees. “We love repeat business,” she says. Unlike discount travel websites, travel agencies may be willing to offer payment plans and make suggestions to cater to a traveler’s wish list.

## **#3** Hello. Goodbye. Thank you. You’re welcome. Please. Where is the bathroom?

Robert Jordan, co-founder of Sankofa Odyssey Adventures, an international adventure travel company, suggests that learning the basics of a language before reaching your destination can enhance your experience. But, he encourages travelers not to let language be a deciding factor. “It’s OK if you are not fluent in an area’s language,” he says.

## **#4** Don’t forget that you are an ambassador.

Carolyn Cole, president of the Underwater Adventure Seekers Scuba Diving Club, advises young professionals to travel as much as possible but remember that everyone is watching you. “You’re representing yourself and African-Americans of the United States.”

### Online Travel Resources

Travel Zoo.com – travel deals from around the world

Priceline.com – discount prices with the option to negotiate the cost

Kayak.com – compare results from hundreds of travel sites

### Local Travel Clubs

Sankofa Odyssey Adventures – [www.sankofaodyssey.com](http://www.sankofaodyssey.com)

Underwater Adventure Seekers Scuba Diving Club – [www.usadivers.org](http://www.usadivers.org)

## Stepping into Resume Success

### YPN Holds Professional Resume Workshop

by Garrett James

STEP ONE: Describe in detail your duties and responsibilities

STEP TWO: Describe your skills and abilities

STEP THREE: Do an analysis of what you have just written

These were the first three steps in the resume assessment workshop conducted by the Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals Network (YPN) on July 14 at the Northern Virginia Urban League headquarters in Alexandria, Va. The workshop was free for YPN members and the community.

John Pettiford, an employment services specialist at the Arlington Employment Center in Arlington, Va., facilitated the session and gave one-on-one counseling to each of the attendees who were asked to submit their resumes in advance of the workshop. Pettiford, who has been a career coach since 1997 and sees about 200 resumes per week, discussed sample job descriptions and various resume formats with workshop participants. According to Pettiford, the uncertainty of life requires that everyone update his or her resume at least once every six months.

Chatique Sample, a member of YPN, had not updated her resume since graduating from college three years ago. At that point, she was job hunting as a college senior. “This session has given me the framework to transfer my resume from what it was when I was a student, to what it should be now as a professional,” Sample said.

The resume workshop was a follow-up to YPN’s Professional Speakers Series, which is held in conjunction with the organization’s general body meeting on the second Thursday of each month. Natasha Smith, director of professional and



personal development for YPN, notes that the best way to stay connected with future professional development opportunities is by joining YPN.

“We encourage membership so that each individual can be sure to take part in all of the sessions offered,” Smith said. Future sessions from the professional and personal development committee will focus on financial literacy, wealth management, investment, real estate and entrepreneurship.



## Raise Your Glass

### Members Discover Their Wine Palate

by Jewell Jones

While most of us may not be living the champagne life yet, the Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals Network recently gave its members the chance to experience the pleasure of learning about wines and their distinct appearance, aroma, and flavor.

Chef John Logan, a culinary arts instructor at The Art Institute of Washington and the event's wine expert, gave members the following tips:

#### Swirl, Smell, Taste

It is best to first swirl your glass of wine, take a moment to smell its aroma and then taste. Focused tasting will help you determine what you like best. "I look for taste and what I'm going to eat," he says.

#### Try the Unknown

While the general rule of thumb in wine and food pairing is white wine for white meat and red wine for red meat, budding connoisseurs should try experimenting. "Sometimes you want to venture out," says Logan, also a former military food service officer.

#### More than a Drink

Chef Logan noted that fine wines are enjoyable to cook with as well as drink. He also warns that sometimes wines can ruin the rest of an otherwise mouth-watering meal. "Don't start out with a sweet wine [when eating a full course meal]."

#### Pop the Bottle Later

"When you store a bottle of wine, store it upside down," advises Chef Logan. Storing wine in a cool, dark place can help with its preservation. "The more wine sits around the better it's going to taste."



## Inspired for Change

### Civic Action Still Relevant for Young Professionals

by Arika Lawrence

This fall, leaves were not the only things changing in Northern Virginia; area young professionals were working to inspire change in the community as well.

On September 9, the Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals Network (YPN) focused its general body meeting on direct ways one can take action towards positive social change. The thought-provoking topic ignited opportunities for YPN members and guests to express their personal frustrations around neighborhood and regional issues.

Krysta Jones, owner of Krysta Jones Consulting, Inc., a firm that specializes in providing skill development to small non-profits, and Jennifer Knox, a community organizer for Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement, served as the guest speakers. Ndidi Mojay, director of political engagement for YPN, moderated the discussion. Together the panel facilitated a dialogue to equip attendees with effective tactics to implement change in their communities.

“You can’t make change on your couch,” Knox said. “Organized power and organized money [produce] change.”

Knox opened the discussion by first showing a short video about residents of a small southern town who came together to advocate for improvements to the city’s educational infrastructure. The clip served as a vivid illustration of how anyone can pull their community together and rally for change—even members of YPN.



In addition to gathering power and finances to implement change, Jones said that “building relationships” with community influencers is also necessary. “Community organizing and forming relationships with local leaders can help inspire change,” Jones said.

Looking toward YPN’s Sixth Annual Political Forum, which was held in October with candidates from the 8th and 11th Congressional districts of Virginia, Mojay and Knox asked participants to state one thing they would like to address with political candidates during the forum.

As each individual discussed concerns that ranged from heavy traffic to unaffordable housing and bug infestations to potholes, the responses revealed that many YPN members shared the same concerns.

Kristen Herring, a first year member of YPN, said, “It helps to know [that] there are others in the room who share the same issues in their community. There is strength in numbers, so we can mobilize and commit to implementing change [together].”

The dialogue charged everyone with personal accountability in making change occur in his or her own neighborhood. Participants discussed that, while many people talk about wanting to make a difference in their community, it takes a proactive approach in order for things to happen effectively.

## YPN's Political Forum

### "An Employed Northern Virginia" Shows Being Informed Matters

by Garrett James

"We had a very healthy dialogue between the constituents and the candidates. Our hope was to have the community walk away empowered," said Ndidi Mojay, Director of Political Engagement.

Mojay was referring to the Sixth Annual Political Forum sponsored by the Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals Network (YPN). Held a few weeks before the midterm election occurred in November 2010, the event brought representatives from both the 8th and 11th Congressional Districts of Virginia together to share their ideas and field questions from the audience.



This and other initiatives sponsored by YPN in 2010 were geared towards increasing the political awareness of young professionals and the community at large. In addition to this political forum, YPN organized voter registration drives and distributed

information to the public concerning ways to not only contact those in and running for office, but to also become involved in the process that governs them.

Of our Constitutional Rights, the ability to vote is one of the most treasured. Not only have many people fought and given their lives for this right, but many have suffered because they did not or could not vote; the political decisions made didn't benefit them. YPN attacks this head-on and believes that an important key to making positive strides in the community and for ourselves is by the public taking responsibility and electing the officials whose views they support. It was our duty, right, privilege and a way to give gratitude to those whom have gone before us by continuing to vote and sharing its importance with others. YPN supports voting, and more importantly, being educated in exercising that right to vote.

The Sixth Annual Political Forum was successful in disseminating information and reiterating the importance of being informed while going to the polls. YPN is honored to have had a part in educating the public on the political process and urges young professionals, as well as all residents of Northern Virginia, to take political responsibility by holding their representatives and themselves, accountable.



## Centennial Conference Connects

### Young Professionals to the Past, Present and Future of the Movement

by Jewell Jones

The National Urban League (NUL) held its annual conference at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC during the last week of July to commemorate its 100th year of existence with informative exhibits, leadership and community workshops, a job fair and evening entertainment.

More than 500 members of National Urban League Young Professionals chapters from across the country attended the centennial conference, including more than two dozen members of the Northern Virginia Urban League Young Professionals Network (YPN).

“Everyone is so positive,” said Beverly Backus, 29 and a member of YPN for two years. “These events have kept me hyped.”

Serving as speaker for the morning plenary session on July 29, President Barack Obama kept a promise he made as a senator in 2008, when he agreed to speak at NUL’s centennial if he became President.

“From your founding... the Urban League has been on the ground, in our communities... making our union just a little more perfect,” Obama said. “America is a better place because of the Urban League.”

Neosho Ponder, 30 and a member of the Greater Washington Urban League Thursday Network, enjoyed the conference, where entertainers like John Legend, Fantasia, Common and Dr. Maya Angelou joined the festivities. However, seeing the U.S. president was a highlight for her.

“It’s amazing making new friends and reconnecting with old ones in the movement,” said Ponder with a grin. “The day could not have been better with him [President Obama] starting out.”

Catered lunches with speakers, early-morning community service projects and thought-provoking workshops were all a part of the conference’s full schedule. Many recruiters and

*“America is a better place because of the Urban League.” –President Obama*

career experts were also on hand at the conference’s career fair and professional development sessions to offer advice for those who were seeking career opportunities.

Kwame Ofori, 31 and a six-year member of the Urban League Young Professionals of Metropolitan St. Louis, participated in the community service day and enjoyed the networking aspect of the convention. “They [National Urban League] definitely did it big,” he said. “I made a couple of contacts.”

During the farewell party, YPN member Olufolajimi Ige, 25, reflected on the conference’s theme: “Empowerment Time: Past, Present and Future.”

“It was inspirational. We got to see the past, present and future,” Ige said of the conference. “It was a lot of fun. I’m looking forward to next year.”



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Northern Virginia Urban League  
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# THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA URBAN LEAGUE

*“Empowering Communities and Changing Lives”*



## With Our Help, Families Can Thrive

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## Our Freedom House Museum

Experience the fascinating history of the Freedom House Slave Museum at 1315 Duke Street in our Old Town, Alexandria location. What was once headquarters for the largest and most successful domestic slave trading firm in America is now home to the Freedom House Museum and the Northern Virginia Urban League.

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