

YA is an after-school enterprise system that uses the entertainment industry as a platform to teach entrepreneurial business skills and financial literacy to lower-income middle and high school students. We recruit and train teams of emerging artists and executives in an evaluative technique that examines a school's total resources and then creates a customized plan that ignites school spirit and turns it into a tool for income generation. Schools raise funds for specific projects they choose. Productions at lower-income schools are given start-up money from funds raised by students in higher-income schools. Throughout the year, students produce a slate of productions and learn the business side of "show business". At the end of the year, teams bring their entertainment industry products into a competitive setting and are judged on the basis of revenue generated and quality of show production.

In a "Glee-meets-Business Affairs" environment that includes math, new media marketing, advertising and banking, team members learn how to create and produce a talk show, variety show, student dance or hybrid. They learn how to start and run a student store, create and sell merchandise and, in the process, behavior issues are reduced and students track higher in academic performance, leadership, and college acceptance. All programs have two benchmarks in common. They all generate income to support a student-selected project, and they all generate entertainment content for the YA website. A YA program is entrenched and sustainable after a year and impacts a school in perpetuity.

Pedro Puentes wanted to play soccer. He was a junior at a high school in Watts, California. His school had no budget for uniforms, and uniforms were required to play in the league. When the Young Angels after-school enterprise program came to Pedro's school, he joined the team, and in eight weeks, they learned how to produce a fundraising dance event for their peers. It was the school's first dance. At the end of the dance, Pedro presented the school's Principal with a check for the total amount of the uniforms. Pedro and his team have been playing, and winning, ever since.

"Because of YA, I know how to produce killer events that everybody wants to come to, and I've experienced how much fun it is to make money. This year, my YA team decided to raise \$14,000 for prom. We've done everything from starting a student store, to learning comedy and producing our own benefit, to making deals for tuxedos and dresses. Our school only had \$4,000 for us, but we wanted a better party. My experience with YA has made me realize that I'm good at business, and I've decided to major in business in college. I wasn't even sure I wanted to go to college before. Now I'm thinking I might become a TV producer."

Jake Colman was not going in a good direction in high school. Distracted by the usual temptations available to an entrepreneurial boy, Jake hung out with the wrong people, engaged in the wrong business activities and was not in a good place when he was persuaded to join a YA team. “No matter how many times I fell down, YA reached out to me. When I asked them to, they wrote me a letter. When I called them in the night, they took my call. When I was out, they invited me back. They always treated me with respect and helped me with my challenges. Working on the events showed me a different direction, and I decided to get my associates’ degree in culinary arts. They kept checking in on me, and still do. I work as a sous chef and reach out and help with YA whenever they ask.”

Founded 2006 by film industry executives turned non-profit marketing specialists, Brook Dougherty and Debbie Koerner.

Students Served

Over 5,000 a year attend YA events
Total Students Reached – 12,000
Total Funds Raised by Students - \$280,000
Annual Budget - \$250,000

Events Produced

2008 – Six
2009 - Eight
2010 - Thirteen
2011 - Twenty

Young Angels has programs at Green Dot Charter Schools in Watts and South L.A., with the Watts Labor Community Action Center and in Pacific Palisades. YA plans to establish programs at ten new sites over the next two-three years.

The public education system in lower-income communities produces a caste of drop outs and graduates that have little chance of achieving financial independence. The concentration of law enforcement in these areas guarantees that 3 out of 4 African-American and Latino boys will be touched by incarceration, probation, parole and carry a felony into their future. This precludes most forms of public assistance, legitimate employment and paints a dismal picture for girls. Without access to public housing, food stamps and jobs, illegal enterprise is often seen as a viable survival choice. Young Angels believes that teens can be engaged between ages 13-18 with a program that does not require a traditional academic track record and become young

entrepreneurs who can succeed in the legitimate economy, whether or not they go to college. The portal YA uses is the entertainment business. Artistic talent and athletic prowess have been two traditional escapes out of poverty for young people. Young Angels adds to that arsenal ancillary employment possibilities and revenue streams that are mainstays of show business. YA recognizes the lack of entry-level opportunities in the established entertainment community, and encourages investment in ventures that rekindle the entertainment scene in lower-income communities. Armed with a skill set of entertainment-industry related tools and the ability to recognize investment opportunities, YA team members are able to build small, new businesses, revitalize failing neighborhood businesses or expand the vision of a family business.

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