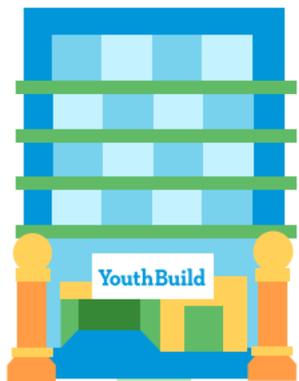


LOVE

YOUTH BUILD PHILLY

#TODAYTOMORROWANDBEYOND





Kayla Mann, Class of 2017



Originally from North Carolina, soft-spoken and warm-hearted Kayla made her move to Philadelphia like many others in search of better opportunities for education and work. While attending high school, Kayla became a mother, and continued to persevere toward her diploma and the next steps in her education and career. When she couldn't graduate from her previous high school, Kayla discovered YouthBuild in 2015, and enrolled with some nervousness and trepidation, but eager to earn her diploma and fulfill her dreams.

At YouthBuild, Kayla quickly found a second family with relentless support. It was Kayla's dedication to her son that drew her to the Child Development Associate (now known as Child and Youth Care) curriculum, but she was also struggling with housing and child care for her son - sometimes even bringing him to school with her, challenges that made it difficult for her to focus on anything else. Eventually, Kayla left YouthBuild before finishing her Child Development Associate internship, citing her housing and child care challenges as well as her shy demeanor and habits of over-empathizing and second guessing herself as undermining her confidence.

"Something that always sticks with me from YB is that we have the tools here for you, but it's up to you to go and use those tools to build your foundation for your life . . ."



After a time of reflection, Kayla leaned on her self-awareness and room for growth, and decided to re-enroll at YouthBuild for the 2016-2017 school year. This time, Kayla became more persistent when she spoke up and discovered how to “push back” when she needed to. She negotiated babysitting with her grandmother and kept a value she learned from her first time at YouthBuild of “leaving things better than how it was when you came” in mind to propel her success, starting her own business and working in childcare while in school. During her work experiences she realized the potential and responsibility to serve a greater purpose as a Child Development Associate. By allowing herself the grace to bounce back from setbacks, Kayla thrived in her second try with the YouthBuild CDA track, graduating with high honors in 2017.

Kayla’s unique maze of experiences did more than help her learn, but also gave her a chance to fully develop as a whole person. Today, her passion for caring for people and animals has Kayla striving to become certified as a Veterinary Technician and EMT, while continuing to raise her son, who is now thriving as a second grader.



Douglas Pickett, Class of 2015



"I believe in reflection a lot. . . I believe that when you show a person respect... and you let a person know that you are a respectful person, they are going to give you that same energy, that same respect, back."

As a brave role model for critically conscious leaders everywhere, Philly native Douglas became interested in YouthBuild after seeing how the school had positively impacted his older brother. He enrolled in YouthBuild in 2014, and recalls having trouble with learning and comprehension. His demanding presence and outspoken demeanor would wilt when he faced a literacy challenge, but he realized that the teachers were fast to take notice and be by his side. At YouthBuild, Douglas found support, and that led to a curiosity for a higher purpose than street life, which he admits was the life he looked up to before enrolling because it was familiar to him.

He often reflects on a time when he thought it was the end of his career; similar to many teenagers in Philadelphia, Douglas ended up being coerced into a life that was the product of his surroundings in the inner city. After trouble with the law that led to brief incarceration, his circumstances shifted his perception of life, learning, and people. When Douglas came back out into the world, he found that YouthBuild took him back in with no judgement and with open arms after his incident. What followed was an



immediate breakthrough, with Douglas determined to bounce back with his newfound perspective. He understood at a deeper level the vast opportunities and responsibilities he had as a leader in Advanced Construction at YouthBuild.

“Whoever hears this, and whoever this goes out to – just know that there’s so much out there for you. If you’ve got people who are willing to help, people who are willing to guide, or just people who are willing to be by your side – you can go so far.”

Douglas would later graduate and go on to find work in construction and in parks and recreation where he continued to show and adhere to the values he fine tuned while at YouthBuild. His commitment to always doing things to the best of his ability helped him to develop a unique set of confidence and skills that led him to pursue a path into the culinary arts, with guidance from some of Philadelphia’s most renowned chefs. He continues to reflect on how YouthBuild’s core values of perseverance, excellence and respect have shaped him into the person he is and how he takes these values with him everywhere he goes. Today, Douglas is a newly engaged father of two boys, advocating to the youth for professional leadership, has found new passion in becoming a chef, and is masterfully teaching others his philosophies along the way.



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