

WHO WE ARE

African Young Dreamers Empowerment Program Intl. (AYDEPI)

A Youth-Led, Adult Guided Program

AYDEPI rose from grief and crisis the community could no longer ignore.

This wasn't random—it was a sign of a system failing our youth. In 2018, King County lost far too many 16- to 23-year-olds to violence, suicide, substance use, incarceration and preventable harm.

In 2019, AYDEPI learned that many youth felt invisible despite the abundance of programs claiming to support them. They didn't want more services; they wanted power and a voice.

AYDEPI formed to meet a need others overlooked: youth leadership. Without giving young people tools, trust, and real authority, the cycles of loss and harm will continue. That's why 70% of AYDEPI's board is made up of youth ages 18 to 25—because lasting change requires youth leadership at the decision-making table.



AYDEPI is grounded in five core pillars: Culture & Arts, Empowerment, Leadership, Healing, and Opportunity. Without these foundations, young people remain exposed to the same patterns of harm and neglect that led to AYDEPI's formation.

When youth are supported and trusted, they don't just thrive—they transform their communities.



OUR PROGRAMS & IMPACT

1. The Beauty of Our African Roots Annual Event

For years, our youth have celebrated their heritage through dance, music, and storytelling—a practice of identity, healing, and resistance against cultural erasure.

The Annual Beauty of Our African Roots brings together over 500 people—mostly youth—to celebrate African culture and foster pride and community connections.

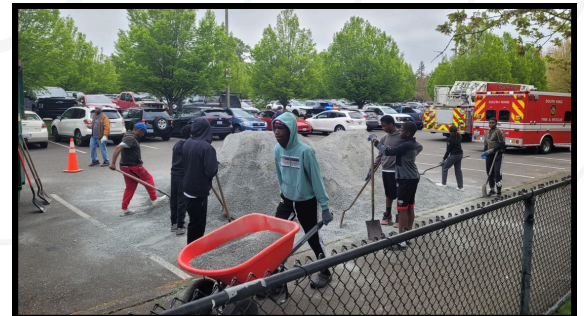
For teens and young adults, preserving heritage is essential. It builds belonging, self-worth, leadership, and ensures African traditions are lived and passed on.



2. Environmental Activism, Climate-Resilient Farming & Community Improvement

Since 2021, youth have led environmental work—removing invasive plants, planting native species, and restoring green spaces in public parks and neighborhoods across Federal Way and nearby areas. Averaging 50 participants per event, they have completed more than five activities each year, gaining hands-on experience in ecological management while improving local ecosystems.

This initiative is vital for teens, connecting them to cultural heritage, promoting ecological literacy and civic responsibility, encouraging healthy habits, and building life skills like leadership and teamwork. Most importantly, it fosters agency and pride, showing youth they can shape their communities and neighborhoods.



3. After-School Education Program: Education Beyond High School

In 2025, eight youth leaders and mentors graduated from high school and college, modeling leadership within AYDEPI and stepping into mentorship roles. Additionally, over 40 other students graduated and moved on to colleges, universities, and trade schools, highlighting the program's success in preparing youth for education and career pathways.

Our curriculum is rooted in culture, linking academic success to identity and community. By integrating African traditions, storytelling, and history, students build resilience, belonging, and pride, while gaining the confidence and cultural literacy to succeed in diverse academic and professional settings.

This skilled young team developed a culturally relevant curriculum reaching over 1,000 students in middle and high schools that teaches environmental health, sanitation, and public safety, empowering youth to prevent contamination in their communities.



4. Dreamers in Action: After-School Outdoor Activities

Our Dreamers in Action Soccer, a youth-led program for low-income and refugee teens, engaged 120 participants over six months, culminating in a July 19, 2025 tournament where they placed second.

For teens facing cultural and social challenges, structured spaces like this are vital, offering safe outlets and fostering leadership, resilience, and community.

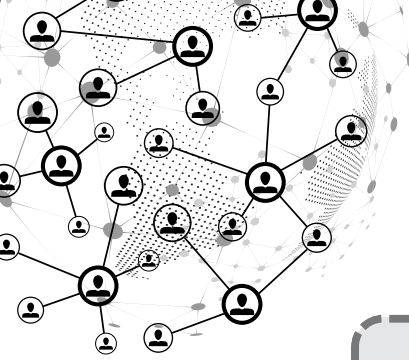


5. ANNUAL YOUTH WINTER GALA

The Annual Youth Winter Gala, scheduled in December, serves as AYDEPI's signature year-end celebration, marking the close of the year with a focus on youth achievement, leadership, and cultural pride. This event provides a vibrant platform for youth to showcase talents in music, dance, fashion, and storytelling while celebrating academic milestones, leadership accomplishments, and community service contributions.

Beyond cultural and academic programming, AYDEPI empowers youth with critical life skills. Participants will learn to recognize the differences between healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships, and develop skills in conflict resolution, effective communication, setting boundaries, coping strategies, safety, and self-advocacy in dating relationships. As an annual Winter program, the Gala and its associated workshops foster intergenerational engagement, strengthen cultural identity, and reinforce a sense of belonging, leadership, and personal empowerment among youth.





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CRITICAL PROGRAM NEEDS

To support more than 500 youth annually, AYDEPI requires safe indoor spaces for cultural and arts programming, access to outdoor sports facilities, and reliable transportation for community and environmental projects. Funding is also needed for competitive staff salaries and essential program resources to sustain high-quality, culturally relevant programming and continue empowering youth. We are deeply grateful for any level of support that helps make this work possible.

SUPPORT AYDEPI

Donate:

Checks to African Young Dreamers Empowerment Program Intl. (AYDEPI),
33530 1st Way S, Suite #102, Federal Way, WA 98003.

Tax Deductible:

AYDEPI is a 501(c)(3), EIN: 86-3042802. All donations help.

Partnerships:

Email aydepiinfo@aydep.org or call (253) 332-2146.