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United Way  
of Central Maryland

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# Young Men United

## Breaking Down Barriers for Young Men of Color in Greater Baltimore

Finishing high school and starting college or a career is an important milestone, and for young men of color, it can be a challenging journey.

**Young Men United (YMU)** aims to improve the lives of young men by increasing educational opportunities and pathways to post-secondary education options. Through exposure to different industries and careers and employing strong mentorship and family support components, YMU will guide students from high school to college or job training and into a full-time career aligned with their dreams and goals.

### What is Young Men United?

The program provides long-term, holistic support and resources to both students and their families to break down barriers to opportunity, access, and earning power.

The program launched in the fall of 2022, and we began working with our pilot cohort of 50 students from Baltimore's Patterson and Benjamin Franklin High Schools in January 2023.

### How does this program work?

Services are provided by competitively selected community-based partners. Our initial lead partner is I AM MENTality, a Black-led nonprofit with experience operating leadership development programs for Baltimore youth. Additional partners and services are layered in to meet each young man's unique needs and include:



Exposure to and awareness of different industries, careers, and post-secondary pathways, particularly around careers of the future (guest speakers, field trips).



College and career guidance (academic program research, application, and financial aid guidance).



Multi-generational support for students and families (financial literacy coaching, financial assistance, resource navigation).



Connection to supportive resources like housing, food, and mental health support for students and families.



Barrier removal (stipends, technology access, transportation assistance).



Career pursuit (job shadowing, paid internships, interview and resume preparation).



Access to and guidance on training/certification programs and trade education opportunities.



Academic support, including technology resources and training.



Mentorships, internships, job shadowing, and paid, part-time employment.



“ *The best part of the program is the mentorship. They are guiding us through high school on to college and teaching us life skills. I also like the feeling of brotherhood in the group and that we go out and do service together helping other young people.* ”

--YMU participant



### Why Did We Create This Program?

There are several compelling reasons that this program is critical to the lives of young men of color throughout Baltimore:



**Addressing the Achievement Gap:** The Young Men United program is specifically designed to address the achievement gap that exists between young men of color and their peers. This program provides the tools and support that these young men need to succeed in school and beyond.



**Breaking the Cycle of Poverty:** Many students who participate in the Young Men United program come from low-income families. Education is a key factor in economic mobility, and closing the education gap can help ensure that these students have access to better job opportunities and higher-paying careers. This can help reduce poverty and increase financial stability for them and their families.



**Investing in Our Future:** An educated and diverse workforce is critical for the development of healthy and thriving communities. When young Black men have access to quality education, they are better equipped to contribute to their communities and local economy.



**Advancing Equity, Opportunity, and Access:** Closing education and earning gaps for young Black men can help address systemic inequities and promote social justice.

“ *It's a brotherhood. We all respect each other and work together. We are all a part of the same program trying to reach our goals together. It's a family.* ”

--YMU participant

*Together, we can make a meaningful, measurable, and lasting impact on the lives of young men right here in Greater Baltimore.*

For more information, contact:  
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