

# Louisiana Youth Seminar, Sponsored by Leadership Seminars of America, Inc. Information Summary

## **Contact**

**Organization's Name:** Leadership Seminars of America Inc., sponsor of the Louisiana Youth Seminar

**Date Incorporated as a 501C3:** 1976. **Tax Exempt #:** 72-0070035

**Executive Director:** Sonja Pruitt, PhD

**Contact for Board of Directors::** Jo Pease, Founder; Vickie Guarisco, Chair

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## **Mission**

The Louisiana Youth Seminar is a leadership camp designed for high school juniors and seniors. LYS was founded in 1971 by three college students. It was founded on the belief that if businesses, communities and government are to have effective leaders in the future, we must help our students to develop their core leadership skills such as effective communication, setting and achieving goals, team building, understanding and accepting others, developing self confidence, conducting effective meetings, problem solving skills. LYS is held for one week each summer during the third week of July on the campus of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. Approximately 200 students attend from throughout the state.

## **Endorsements**

Given the challenges of the world today, we believe it is so important to invest in developing our youth as future leaders. The most compelling reasons to support LYS come from quotes from past participants, educators, and leaders.

- "LYS is an experience like no other. I have learned how to formulate a plan to make my dreams come true."
- "The different involvement sessions taught me valuable lessons about working as a team and communicating effectively. LYS is truly a life changing experience."
- From a relative of a student – "I have watched three kids come out of their shells as a result of LYS. You all have such a positive impact on the lives of these teens...it means so much to so many students, and it means a lot to the people that love those students too."
- ""My years as a LYS delegate did more towards the development of my character than any other experience I have ever had."
- "Not only have I learned how to communicate, organize and work under pressure, but how to love and accept people in a way I have never experienced before."
- "I've always had a desire to serve my community; LYS taught me to channel that desire into positive, sustainable action. It also showed me how much talent lies within our state's youth. I was inspired by the examples set by my peers at LYS to believe in the possibilities that extend from a group of complete strangers coming together and not only getting to know and respect one another but also working toward the fulfillment of a common goal that has the ability to positively impact many more lives than our own. That's the power of learning. That's the power of collaboration. That's the power of leadership. That's LYS." From a 1989 delegate, Dr. Nghana Lewis, who is now an Assistant Professor of English at Tulane University.
- "Throughout my life, I have been involved with leadership development programs...I have seen LYS, and I am impressed. I strongly recommend this weeklong leadership camp for young leaders, who are striving to make a difference in their community and the State of Louisiana." Jay Dardenne, Secretary of State

- “In my position at the Department of Education, I meet and work with many involved in the education of the youth of Louisiana. In my view, LYS is an excellent program focused on developing young leaders. I support and recommend LYS as a great place to develop leadership skills.” Patrick J. Dobard, Deputy Director, Louisiana State Department of Education
- “LYS brings the best possible leadership training to Louisiana’s youth. I can personally say that this program achieves great results.” Former US Senator John Breaux
- “LYS more than any other thing helped me to believe in myself. It gave me the confidence and energy I had lost somewhere along the way.” Mary Landrieu, US Senator
- ““LYS is an outstanding program, and I have personally seen the positive impact it has had on students who attended. LYS gives students the skills and confidence they need to grow as a person and to contribute to their community and the larger world.” Senator Michael J. “Mike” Michot, Louisiana Senate District 23
- “Those who attended LYS demonstrated a new perspective for our entire school to note and to follow...They brought back a spirit and the skills to conduct themselves like young leaders. I watched and what these student leaders exhibited in their behavior led the rest of the student body to follow their lead.” - Principal, McDonogh 35
- “I was a ‘fan’ of LYS when it got off the ground in the 1970s. I served as the sponsor of a very active student council program in the Lafayette Parish public system during that time and had numerous students attend LYS in its infancy....I’ve always promoted programs that developed leadership qualities in students. The list is endless when we itemize those leadership qualities, from self-esteem to hard work and service. LYS is the premier organization in Louisiana that does this! Ray Simon, Principal, St. Thomas More Catholic High School
- “I endorse LYS. As principal at a Catholic high school, I have been involved with a significant number of students who have greatly benefitted from this program. The universal theme from students returning from LYS is that they learned real-life lessons and learned how to get along with others who come from different backgrounds. There is a great need for programs like LYS that teach leadership and tolerance and help students to improve their sense of self.” Principal, Notre Dame High School of Acadia Parish
- “For many years, students from Teurlings Catholic High School have participated in the Louisiana Youth Seminar. Those juniors and seniors who attended LYS experienced a week’s worth of life changing career oriented activities. I support and endorse LYS...” Principal, Teurlings Catholic High School
- “For many years now, Louisiana Youth Seminar has allowed ESA students an incredible opportunity to develop their leadership skills. The young men and women from ESA who participate in the LYS summer program return to school in the Fall energized and enthusiastic about serving others. They are always eager to share their LYS experiences and encourage other students to become part of the LYS experience. Whether they are leaders on Student Council, athletic teams, or extracurricular organizations, students who attend LYS come back to school each year with noticeably improved skills and with turbo-charged enthusiasm for their leadership roles.” Admissions, Episcopal School of Acadiana

## **Financial Overview**

LYS is funded by tuitions paid by students, by donations and by “tuition scholarships” provided by individuals and corporations. It is directed and staffed essentially by volunteers. There is one part time contract staff. A \$395 tuition fee is charged to participants. However, this fee covers only a portion of LYS expenses as the real cost per delegate approaches \$500. The Executive Committee, supported by the Board of Directors has purposefully kept the tuition low in order to make LYS affordable for all students throughout the state. This has been particularly important during the struggles caused by the recent hurricane disasters and the impact on many families.

Over 60% of the total expense is attributable to food and lodging at LSU for the students and staff during the one week seminar in July. The remaining expenses cover: supplies and materials, printing and publication, telecommunications, insurance, contract staff and miscellaneous.

In addition to subsidizing tuition, we give almost \$25,000 in “tuition scholarships”. Thus, we must raise almost \$50,000 annually to cover operations and provide scholarships.

## **History**

The Louisiana Youth Seminar was established in 1971 as a unique and progressive leadership learning experience for high school students. Every year the Seminar is held at Louisiana State University for one week in July. During this week, students participate in many activities which focus on leadership skills, such as effective communication skills, setting and achieving goals, team building, understand and accepting others, developing self confidence, conducting effective meetings, problem solving skills.

The goal of LYS is to develop students' raw leadership potential into skills that will help them to succeed in life. LYS delegates meet interesting people from across the state, learn how to achieve life goals, and compete in good-natured yet challenging games.

LYS is a non-profit organization that has been providing the highest caliber of leadership training for many years. We welcome all high school incoming juniors and seniors throughout the state of Louisiana. Students come to LYS via a variety of ways: selected by their schools, sent by their parents, recruited by past LYS delegates and by LYS friends and family. The goal of LYS is to attract students of all talents, interests and backgrounds. LYS enhances the leadership potential in each individual and provides leadership opportunities to its delegates through hands-on experience.

LYS is organized, staffed and directed by young professionals and college students who volunteer their time every summer. Each staff member has participated in the seminar as a student delegate and therefore understands the inner workings of the program. The staff is young, positive, and progressive and can easily identify with the hopes, feelings and trends of Louisiana's youth. Each staff member has participated in LYS as a student delegate and therefore understands the inner workings of the program. The staff move up within the program, taking on more responsibilities as they grow personally and professionally. The staff move from active summer program staff to being Vice Presidents of the nonprofit organization, LSA, Inc. The various Vice Presidents have responsibilities which contribute to the overall achievement of the organization and result in getting everything ready for the summer program staff. Again, all are volunteers, except for the part time Executive Director who is paid a small stipend.

The total cost of LYS is slightly under \$100,000. We have no offices as we have a virtual organization. The largest single expense is for food and lodging at LSU for the delegates during the leadership camp.

Since inception, LYS has impacted almost 8000 high school students, many of whom are currently leaders in the state: in government, in corporations, in nonprofit organizations.

## **Board of Directors**

The current Board of Directors includes:

Mark Barnes, term ends 2012. Staff, Louisiana State Senate, Baton Rouge

Zac Burson, term ends 2013. Counselor, Bossier City Schools, Bossier City

Liz Baudoin Landry, term ends 2012. Assistant, Office of the President, University of Louisiana, Lafayette

Scott Daigre, term ends 2010. Owner, small business. Los Angeles

Stephen Gauthier, term ends 2013. Business owner, Lafayette

Andree Gonsoulin, term ends 2013. Independent Consultant, Lafayette

Vickie Guzzino Guarisco, Chair, term ends 2011. Community volunteer, Mandeville

Amy Allums Lee, term ends 2011. Attorney. Lafayette

Norma Jane Sabiston, term ends 2012. CEO, Sabiston Consulting, New Orleans

Wendy Walker Stanford, term ends 2011. Community volunteer. Baton Rouge

Hasting Stewart, term ends 2012. Manager, Shell E&P Community Affairs, New Orleans

## **Advisory Board**

Barbara Jo Pease, founder

Valsin Marmillion, founder

Karl White, founder

Adrian Baudoin  
Lisa Zaccaria Barnett  
Anne Sonnier Calhoun  
Tom Calvert  
Kyle France  
Stephanie Sonnier Calhoun  
Donald Cravins  
Jeanne Hebert Fisher  
Mary Langely Hernandez  
Pattie Morrison Kitchen  
Yvette Vezina LaCour  
Nghana Lewis  
Jerry Luke LeBlanc  
Amy Young Maniscalco  
D'Ann Morris  
Melinda Landrieu Seiter  
Rowland Stalter  
Barbara Stott  
Brother Henry Werner

### **Past Supporters**

In the past, LYS has received support largely from individuals connected with LYS including past staff and their families, friends and colleagues. In recent years, LYS has also been supported by corporations with critical operations within Louisiana, including: Shell Oil Company – New Orleans, Shell Chemicals – Geismar and Norco, Motiva Convent Refinery, Motiva Norco Refinery, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, CenturyTel, Freeport McMoran, Acadiana Ambulance Service, Christus Health, Acadiana Computer Systems, Johnson Gray McNamara LLC, and LA Education Loan Authority. LYS has just began approaching foundations; support has been received from: Pat Taylor Foundation, The Community Advancement Fund, the Dale Brown Foundation, the P&C Carroll Foundation, the Feltermann Foundation, and the John and Susan Wilder Foundation. A complete list of donors can be found on the LYS website.