Spartanburg County Foundation

WELCOME

and thank you for being with us today!

- Once you have selected a seat, please select your lunch items from the self-serve buffet.
- **Our program will begin promptly at 12:15 PM.**

COMMUNITY CONNECT | *Investing in Tomorrow: Empowering Today's Youth*



connect connectspartanburg.org

CITIZEN SCHOLARS

INSTITUTE FOR YOUTHJUSTICE®

Today's Presenters



Dr. Susan Little
Executive Director

CITIZEN SCHOLARS

Sarah Daniel
Spartanburg Regional Foundation
Grants Project Manager

connect
connectspartanburg.org

Hope Blackley and **Tara Weese**
Founder Program Manager

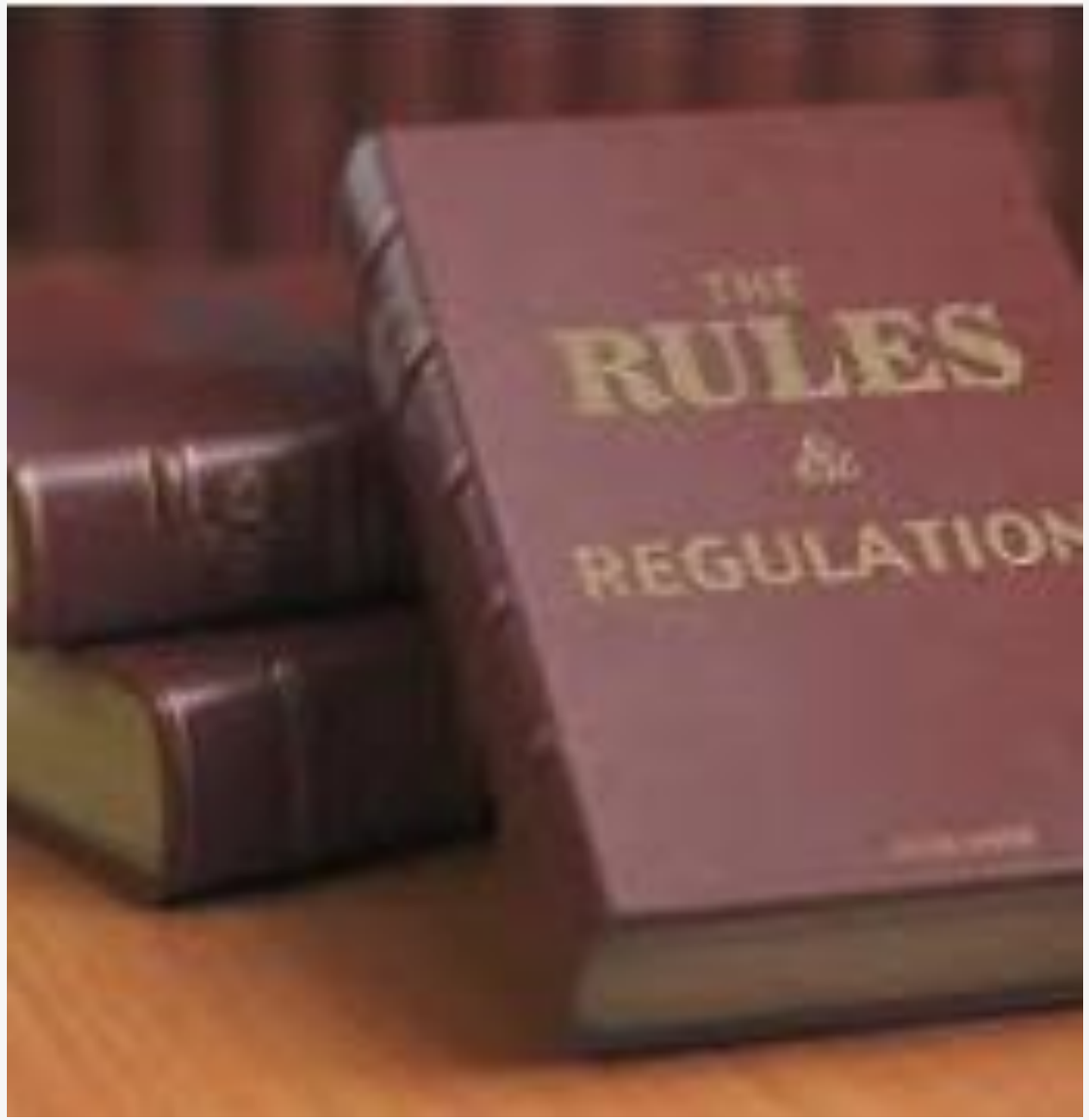
INSTITUTE FOR YOUTHJUSTICE®

CITIZEN SCHOLARS



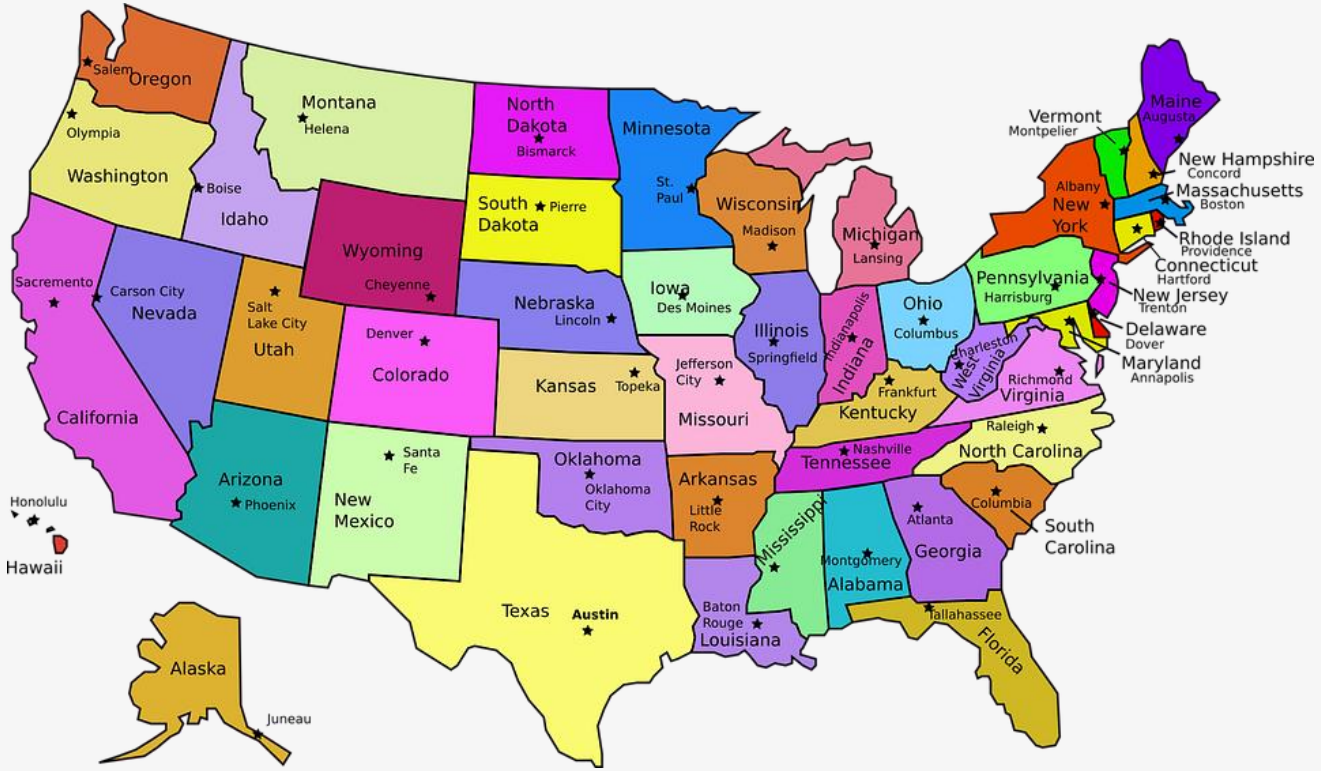
From Access to Achievement:

Changing the First-Gen Story



- Imagine being asked to play a game where everyone else was given the rulebook at birth, but you were handed yours on the first day of the match—and it’s written in a language you don’t speak at home.

- That is the experience of a first-generation college student. They have the talent, but they lack the 'Hidden Curriculum'—the unwritten rules of networking, FAFSA, and academic advocacy.



- The First-Gen Reality: A National Portrait:

- First-generation students now make up 54% of all U.S. undergraduates—more than 8.2 million students.

- This population is also highly diverse: 46% of Latine students and 32% of Black students are the first in their families to attend college, and between 20–30% speak a language other than English at home.

The Completion Gap: While more first-generation students are getting in the door, only 24–27% graduate within six years—compared to 59% of their peers.

The First-Year Filter: About 33% leave college within the first three years, with the highest drop-off occurring in the first two semesters.

Access is not enough. The real mission is persistence—ensuring students not only get to college, but successfully graduate.



- College success often depends on navigating unwritten rules that many continuing-generation students learn at the dinner table.

- For first-generation students, that guidance is often missing—only 11% have parents who can help with FAFSA or complex administrative processes. Without a clear roadmap, even something as routine as a transcript hold can quickly become a barrier to staying on track toward a degree.

The Psychological Weight:

First-generation college students often wrestle with imposter syndrome—questioning whether they truly belong or feeling like they've somehow "slipped through the cracks," despite their achievements. Without the benefit of family members who have navigated college before, the experience can feel isolating and uncertain.

This can lead to heightened stress, anxiety, and a constant fear of being "found out," often paired with a drive toward perfectionism.



The Advocacy Gap:

Self-advocacy for first-generation college students involves actively identifying needs, utilizing campus resources (like advising and tutoring), and communicating with professors to succeed. It requires overcoming fear of asking for help and developing a growth mindset to navigate the institutional landscape effectively.



The Hidden Curriculum & Social Capital Gap:

Beyond academics, first-generation students must also figure out the “hidden curriculum” of college—the unwritten expectations around things like attending office hours, building networks, and advocating for themselves.

Without the benefit of family guidance, many are less likely to seek help or tap into available resources. This can lead to a gap in social capital—understanding when and how to ask for support, form connections, and access opportunities that support success.



The Financial Paradox & "Time Poverty“

First-generation students are navigating a challenging financial reality, with a median household income around $37,500—far below the $90,000+ typical for their continuing-generation peers.

The Financial Gap: Even after financial aid, many still face an average of $12,500 in unmet need each year.

The Work Burden: About 62% work 20 or more hours a week. This creates “time poverty,” limiting their ability to access tutoring, join campus organizations, or build networks—the very experiences that support long-term success and persistence.



Common Experiences and Challenges:

The "Leaving" Struggle: Feelings of guilt for abandoning family, especially if friends or family are struggling, leading to emotional distress or academic burnout.

Family Obligation & Costs: Guilt related to not contributing financially or spending time away from home to focus on studies.

Cultural Mismatch: A feeling of not belonging in a university environment, which is often tailored to upper-middle-class students.

Internal Pressure: The feeling that one must succeed to justify the sacrifices made by parents.



The "Spartanburg Factor":

Why Local Intervention Matters.

- In Spartanburg, only 4.3% of children born into poverty will move up economically without intervention.
- Additionally, 53% of children in South Carolina live in financial hardship, meaning many students are just one crisis away from disruption. These realities make targeted support not just helpful—but essential.

A one car breakdown is often the difference between a degree and a dropout.



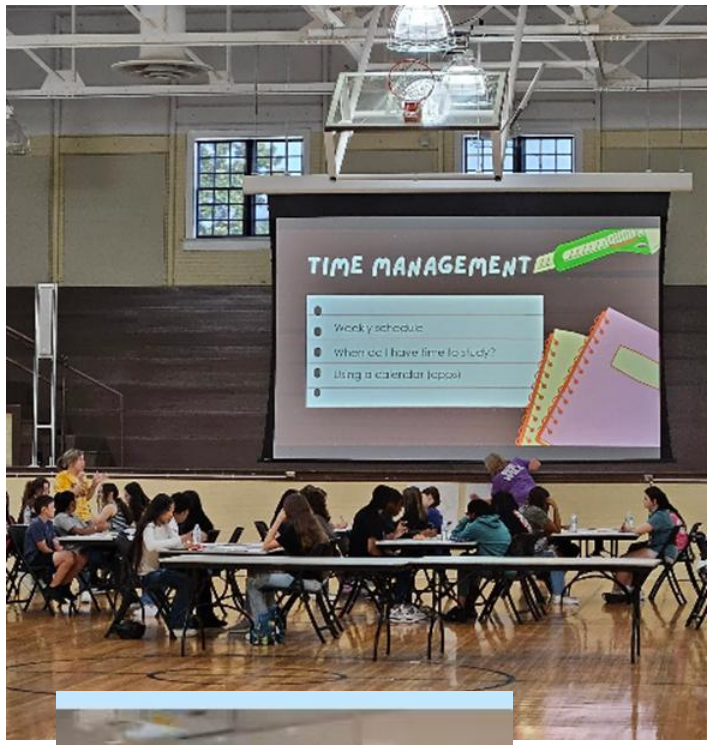


- **The Citizen Scholar Institute Intervention: Bridging the Gap**

- **Direct Advocacy:** We meet with Assistant Superintendents to resolve high-level issues—like behavioral misunderstandings or administrative holds—that a parent without college experience might not know how to challenge.

Workshop Titles

- Finding My Learning Style
- Public Speaking
- Using AI
- Proper use of technology
- National test Prep
- Finding the right college
- What are my career choices?
- Notetaking and College Reading
- Social Media
- Student Skill Business Etiquette
- Communication Skills
- Dining Etiquette
- Time management with a plan
- Self Advocacy
- Focus and Attention
- The College Application
- Financing your Life
- Own Your Own Brand
- Critical Thinking
- Team building
- Research Skills
- College Writing
- Conflict Management
- O*NET
- Financing College
- Future Focused Careers
- Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Developing a strong identity
- Confident Thinking
- Emotional Intelligence
- Analytical Thinking
- Adaptability and Flexibility
- Self Care
- The College Experience


TIME MANAGEMENT
Weekly schedule
When do I have time to study?
Using a calendar (appointment)

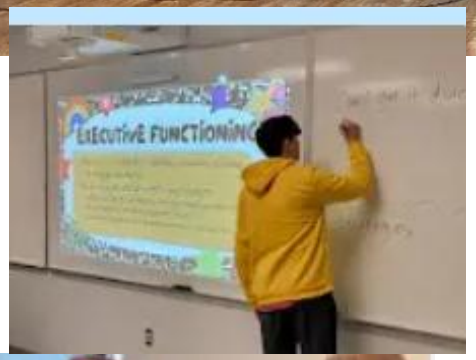









FURMAN


EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING











The Citizen Scholar Institute Intervention: Bridging the Gap

Emotional Vocabulary: We train scholars to move past "I can't do this." We teach them to identify specific stressors and communicate before a struggle becomes a crisis.

Building Social Capital: We bridge the networking gap by introducing scholars to local leaders and service-learning, providing the "Who You Know" advantage.

CITIZEN SCHOLARS

The Multiplier Effect
The impact extends far beyond one student. When a first-generation student earns a degree, their younger siblings are three times more likely to do the same—creating a ripple effect across generations.

Additionally, once they graduate, the earnings gap disappears; first-generation graduates earn nearly the same as their peers. A college degree remains one of the most powerful tools for achieving economic mobility.





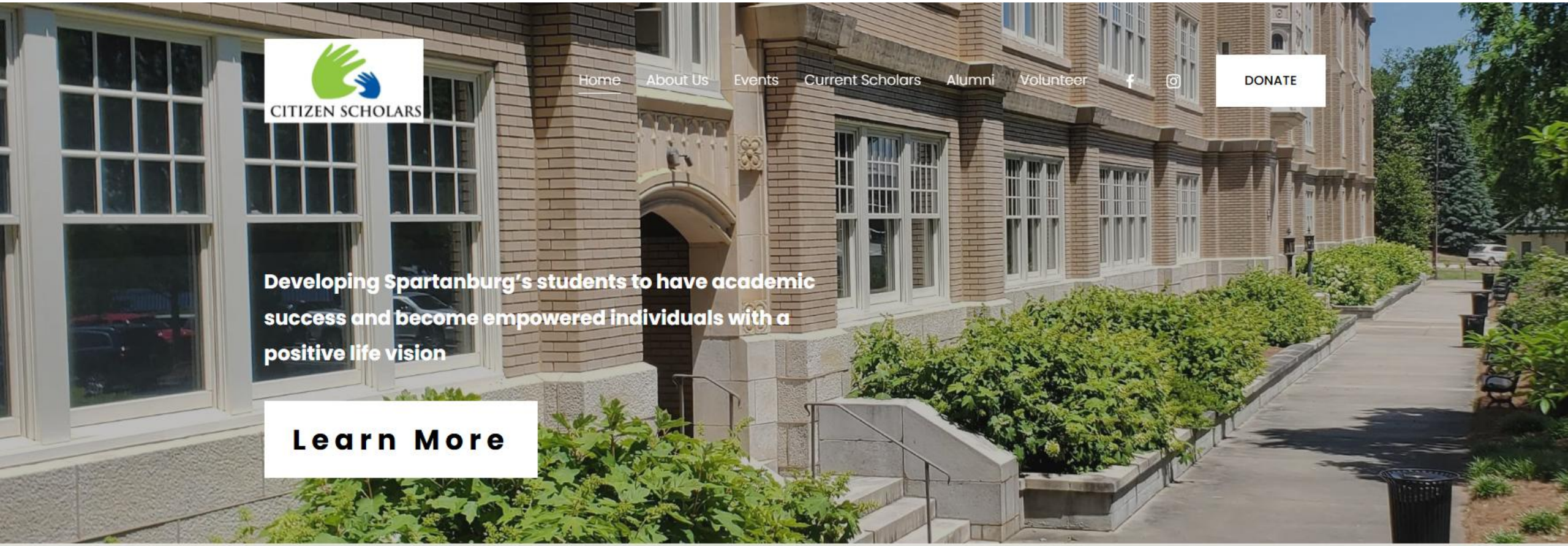
- When one of our Citizen Scholars walks across that graduation stage, they aren’t just receiving a piece of paper; they are rewriting their family’s history.

- They are proving that a child’s zip code or their parents' education level does not have to be their destiny.



- Our 2026 graduates are headed to Clemson, Wofford, and beyond—representing the next generation shaping the future of Spartanburg.

- They are resilient, they are prepared-- and they are coming back to Spartanburg to lead.



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https://www.instagram.com/citizenscholarsinstitutesc/







connect

for positive
youth outcomes











ABOUT US

Spartanburg Regional Foundation's mission is to generate philanthropic support to advance health.

Housing a collective impact collaborative, Connect, we seek to improve adolescent health.

Connect seeks to improve the outcomes for our most valuable resource: our teens.

connect

for positive
youth outcomes

Connect is an Adolescent Health initiative housed at the Spartanburg Regional Foundation.

Connect promotes and invest in adolescent friendly services, supports, and opportunities throughout Spartanburg.



Connect Collaborative

The collaborative consist of school, community, and medical partners working in partnership with youth leaders to improve adolescent health sexual and mental health outcomes.

SRF project management team focuses on leveraging resources, building capacity and evaluating key evidence-based approaches proven to improve adolescent health.

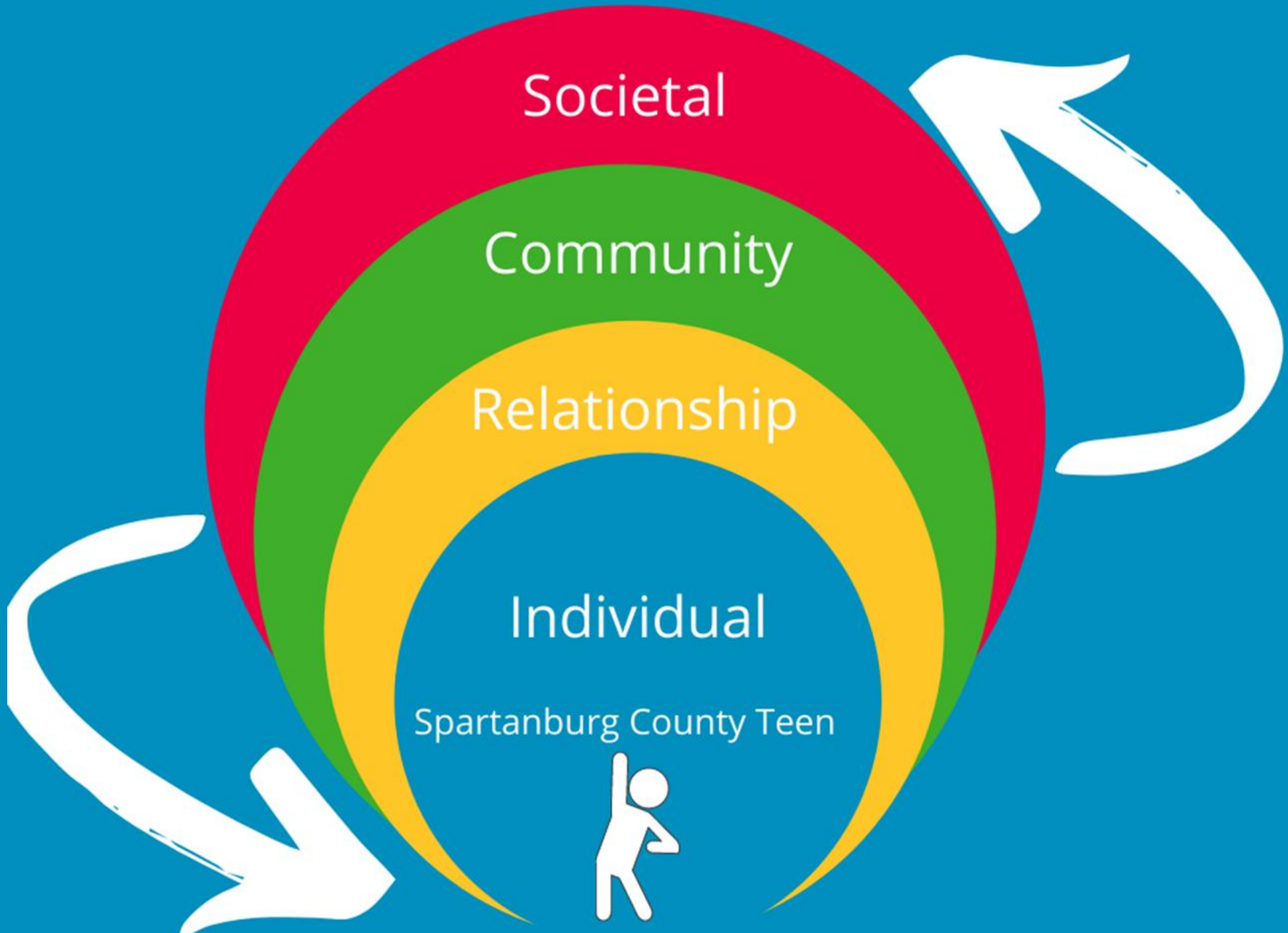
What is Connect Video Link



What do we want for our 20 year olds that grew up in Spartanburg?

Optimal Health, Thriving and Resilient

How will Spartanburg determine the success of adolescent health strategies? Thriving 20-year-olds with a sense of self and purpose, maintaining optimal health, earning a livable wage, or obtaining a quality education with access to equitable support to achieve their desired purpose.


Societal
Community
Relationship
Individual
Spartanburg County Teen



PRIORITY AREAS

Based on YRBS results:

- Sexual Health and Dating Violence
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- Safe, Supportive Environments

Populations facing Disparities

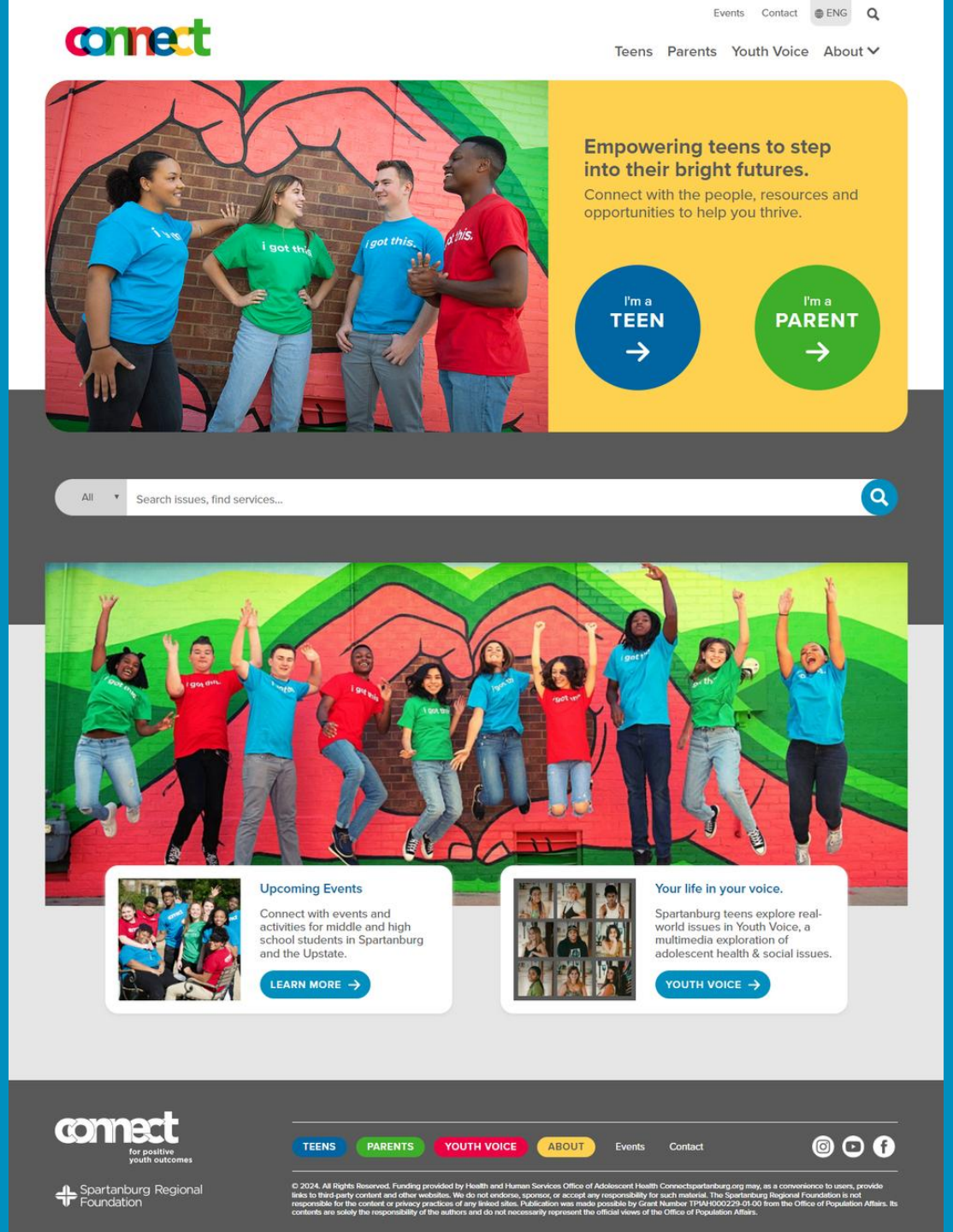
- LGBTQ+ Youth
- Low academic performing students (D/F's)
- Latinx Males and Black Females

YRBS Link



AMBASSADORS

- 10 Local teens engaged in improving health and well-being in Spartanburg
- Serve as youth advisors and leaders within the Connect program
- Design and share public health messaging that resonates with their peers
- Provide real-time insight into youth experiences, needs, and trends
- Partner with adults while bringing an authentic youth perspective



WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

- Youth & Adult Listening led to a more streamlined web experience
- Partnerhub for facilitators & partners
- Personalized experience for Teens & Parents
- Clinical vs Non-Clinical Youth Serving Site Requirements
- Social Media Focuses
  - Ambassador Intros
  - Dating Violence/Healthy Relationships
  - STI Testing
  - Alcohol/ Vaping/ Drug Use
  - Parent Child Communication
  - Mental Health
  - LGBTQ+ Youth
  - Thank You Ambassadors/ Recruiting

THANK YOU

connect
for positive
youth outcomes

Spartanburg Regional
Foundation

Sarah Daniel, Grant Project Manager

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INSTITUTE FOR YOUTHJUSTICE

A Partnership with The Spartanburg County Foundation

Investing in Tomorrow:
Empowering Today's Youth

What do you do if you get pulled over?

Institute Purpose



Deepen understanding of the justice system



Eliminate misconceptions



Build relationships between youth and justice officials

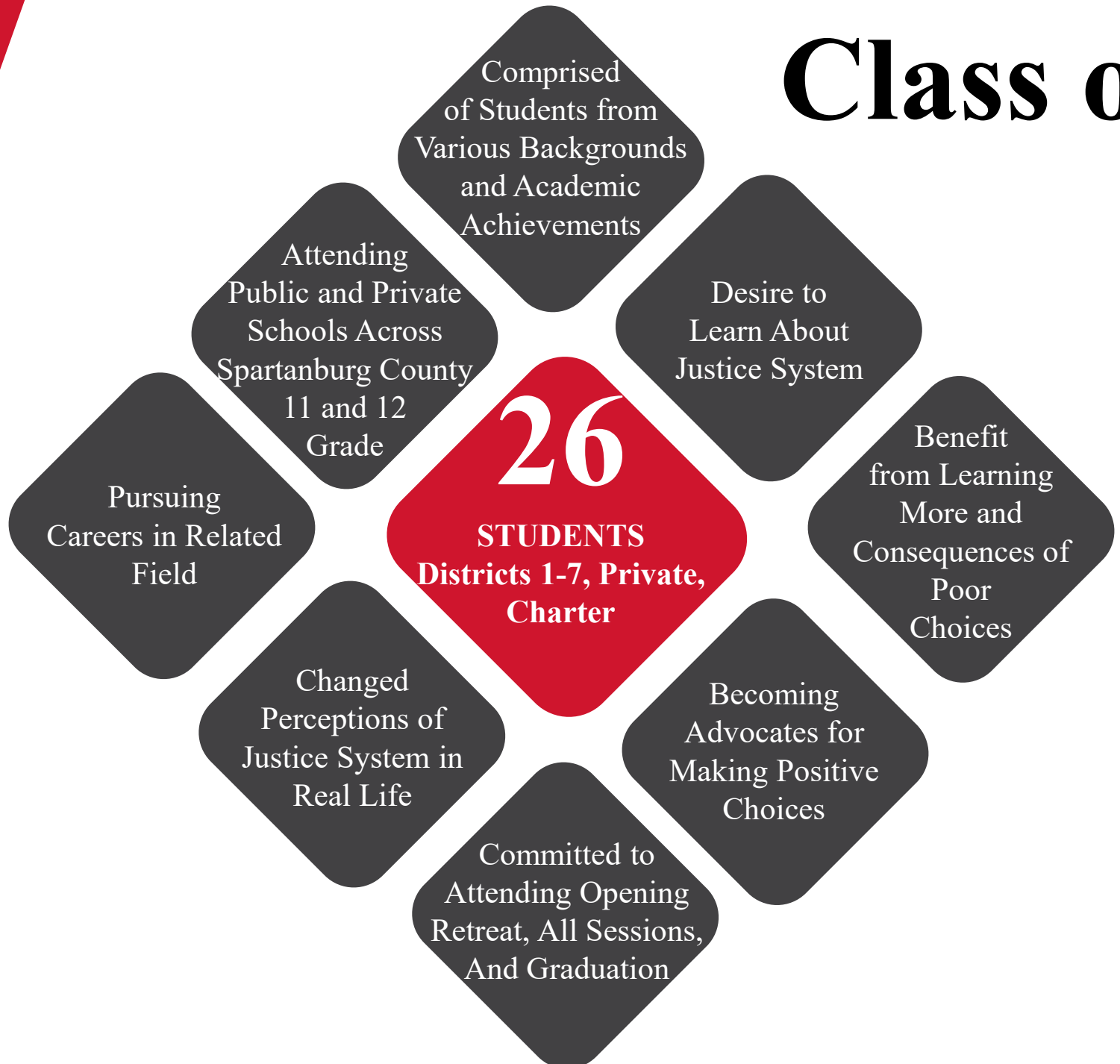


Explore a career within the justice field



Empower youth to lead in improving our community

Class of 2026



Session 1

Spartanburg City Police Department









Session 2

Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office









Session 3

Spartanburg County Detention Center









Session 4

Spartanburg County Courthouse









Session 5

Spartanburg Academic Movement

Session 5: Connecting the Dots

SPARTANBURG ACADEMIC MOVEMENT

ONESPARTANBURG INC.
BUSINESS ECONOMY TOURISM TALENT

Celebrating 10 Years of Impact

ten years of

THE INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH JUSTICE



Focus: Scaling for Impact

1. Grow Cohort to 30 Students (3-4 students from every h.s. in Districts 1-7 and representation from public and private h.s.)
2. Create intentional spaces to build social capital of Spartanburg County youth
3. Build more talent within the Justice System by creating a career pipeline through exposure to internship opportunities
4. Revamp Website and Grow Social Media Platforms
5. Expand Reach Beyond Spartanburg County

Plan: Scaling for Impact



Focused Recruitment



Diversified Fundraising



Strategic Messaging

Questions

THANK YOU!

Hope Blackley, Founder
Tara Weese, Project Manager

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