The National League of Cities was founded in December of 1924 and serves to advocate for improving federal policy, and leadership, and discovering effective solutions for more than 2,700 cities and constituents nationwide. The National League of Cities holds 2 meetings yearly one being a city summit and a Congressional City conference. On March 26th-28th, 2023, the Winston Salem youth advisory council (YAC) attended the national league of Cities Congressional City conference in Washington DC as youth delegates along with other youth advisory councils from across the nation. Members in attendance included Ghufrad Abd, Ava Banner, Litzy Castillo-Olvera, Max Chen, Jordan Moore, Jayla Page-Thomas, Jacob Taylor, Jada Taylor, and Jeremiah Washington. During the conference, YAC attended general sessions, in which various speakers such as NLC 2023 Board of Directors, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, and more shared how they were advocating and implementing change in their local towns, villages, cities, and communities. In these general sessions, we were also educated on the importance of affordable housing nationwide and resources for funding and grants we could use to benefit our communities. YAC members Ghufrad Abd, Jayla Page-Thomas, and Ava Banner were members of the planning committee which contributed to organizing each youth delegate session.

The planning committee allowed YAC members to develop new skills, and firsthand knowledge and experience. I was able to look at the different types of things that would go into making a conference while also being able to know what we need to prepare for so we can be the best, said YAC member Jayla Page-Thomas. During the youth delegate workshops at NLC, there was an election campaign for the first-ever NLC youth mayor who would represent youth delegates nationwide. Candidates had to be selected from their respective groups then the candidates would be ultimately voted on after creating a campaign poster and presenting a speech on why they should be elected. Vice Chair of the Winston Salem Youth Advisory Council Ava Banner was chosen as a candidate for a group and won the election becoming NLCs first Youth Mayor.

When asked about her election experience this is what Ava Banner had to say on that matter. I am so honored to be able to have that mainly because it gives me the ability to properly represent constituents and learn how to campaign and the election process for when I get older, but YACs experiences did not stop at NLCs general and youth delegate sessions. Outside of the general and youth delegate sessions, YAC members visited historical areas in Washington such as the White House and Washington Monument. In addition, YAC members also got a tour of Waldorf Astoria from Jamaal Simington and got to walk inside the hotel’s Presidential suite and other exclusive areas. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I’ll never forget, said YAC member Jeremiah Washington. Wrapping up the trip on the last day YAC members and Chaperoses Dr. Pam Peoples-Joyner and Braxton Langston-Chapman shared what they learned from NLC and about each other during a delicious breakfast at a local cafe. The NLC trip showed YAC members the possibilities of what they can do in our local cities, communities and towns through the youth delegate workshops and general sessions. YAC members also mentioned networking with other youth advisory councils nationwide and realizing each of their potential as leaders.

Congratulations to the class of 2023!!!*

2022-2023 Winston-Salem Youth Advisory Council

Atkins High School—Michael Gallagher*, Max Chen
Career Center—Nasi Bongweni*
Carver High School—Leah Ralford
Early College—Jacob Taylor*, Jada Taylor
East Forsyth—Gracie Brown*
Kennedy High—Jordan Moore*, Jeremiah Washington*
Middle College—Jayla Page-Thomas
Mount Tabor High—Makayla Beard, Nattapat Ruangrat, Madyson Williams
North Forsyth High—Nicolas Spencer
Reagan High School—Daniel Reyes, Ava Banner
Reynolds High School—Addison Truzzy*
Parkland High—Litzy Castillo-Olvera*, Ghufran Abd
Walkertown High School—Ryah Newton-Roseboro, Britney Speaks
Winston-Salem Prep—Serenity Heckstall, Aranza Cortex-Arana
YAC Makes Waves at State Youth Council Year End Conference
By: Jeremiah Washington, Kennedy High School

During the weekend of April 21st - 23rd, 2023, the Winston-Salem Youth Advisory Council (YAC) attended the State Youth Convention for North Carolina at the Shell Island resort at Wrightsville Beach. This convention hosted all youth advisory councils from around the state. Members in attendance included Ghurfan Abd, Ava Banner, Litzy Castillo-Olivera, Jordan Moore, Nicolas Spencer, Jada Taylor, and Jeremiah Washington. The 2023 State Youth Convention this year had a tropical SpongeBob theme, and YAC participated in multiple activities and events on the agenda such as SpongeBob theme mini games, a glow stick walk on the beach with s’mores, and more. There were many competitions during this event between councils such as Innovative Projects and fashion shows and a member from each youth Council was selected to judge each category. Judges from Winston-Salem YAC included Jordan Moore, Jada Taylor, and Jeremiah Washington.

The State Youth Convention also held an election for their new executive board in which YAC member Ava Banner got elected as the new sergeant of arms for SYC. In addition to that YAC members Litzy Castillo-Olivera, Jordan Moore, and Jeremiah Washington received their senior awards certificates. The 2023 State Youth Convention allowed YAC to expand its network, increase teamwork, and create lifelong friendships and memories.

Showcase of Song
By: Jordan Moore, Kennedy High School

Music is a staple in African American Culture. We use music to communicate messages, bring awareness of oppression, express love, and more. Music runs through our veins. It’s passed down from generation to generation, like a story that won’t ever grow old. Performed through the sweet melody of Jazz, the saving grace of Gospel, and the heartfelt sound of Blues, music holds generations of joy and pain while beautifully sharing our story.

This was all explored at the Annual Black History Month Showcase of Song, sponsored by Winston Salem’s Human Relations/DEI Department and Triad Cultural Arts. Many gathered at Union Baptist Church on Saturday, February 25, 2023, to celebrate music’s impact on Black History. Performances of cultural dances, songs, and percussion, paired with narration and poems, really brought the event together. I thoroughly enjoyed the program and events like this that highlight positive aspects of culture.

Congratulations!!!

Adison Truzi was awarded the Morehead-Cain Scholarship. This prestigious honor was the first merit scholarship in the United States. In addition to covering all expenses for four years of undergraduate education at UNC Chapel Hill, the scholarship also included fully funded summer enrichment activities and funding for independent research, internships and international study.

Jayla Page Thomas won the 2023 North Carolina Mathematics and Science Education Network Oratorical Contest. Students also competed in contests focused on Engineering & Design and a Quiz Bowl.

Max Chen played violin in Heart of the Triad Choral Society’s ‘Mass: A Celebration of Love & Joy’, written by esteemed composer Dr. Andre Thomas who was the Professor of Music at Florida State University and Professor of Choral Conducting at Yale University. Max is also an accomplished pianist.

YAC Marches for Homeless Youth
by Max Chen, Atkins High School

On December 3rd, 2022, many members of Winston-Salem’s Youth Advisory Council participated in the annual Winston-Salem Holiday Parade. Every year, dance teams, high school marching bands, and various other people within the community come together to put on a 2-hour show of non-stop holiday cheer, culminating in the Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership’s Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony.

As is their tradition, the Youth Advisory Council participated in the parade in order to bring awareness to a social issue. Using banners and voices, the Youth Advisory Council gave those in need a voice as they marched in the parade, advocating for the homeless among the youth population of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and the nation as a whole. In 2019, there were 34,765 youths in North Carolina that were homeless, which marked a 9% increase from the years before. Out of those people, 1,211 were completely unsheltered, living at the mercy of the elements. Across the nation, there were over 4 million homeless youths and young adults, with 700,000 of them being unaccompanied minors—one that are not part of a family or accompanied by a guardian. These issues are difficult to fix, but the solution starts with raising awareness. The Winston-Salem Youth Advisory Council has and will always advocate for and give a voice to all of the people it represents.