



**YouthWorks**, an expansion of United Way’s Opportunity Youth work, is a comprehensive workforce development initiative that helps youth ages 15-24 start on a path to a sustainable career – from providing economically disadvantaged adolescents the opportunity to learn job readiness skills and get their first summer job to supporting some of Atlanta’s most vulnerable youth and young adults build their career path.

### THE ISSUE

Youth unemployment is at the highest levels since World War II. The costs to our society includes the loss of talent and the increased costs associated with social supports. Unemployed youth are at higher risk for unstable housing, substance abuse, crime and unplanned pregnancies. Additionally, without a robust talent pipeline, businesses will continue to struggle with filling necessary positions which impacts productivity now and into the future.

### UNITED WAY’S ROLE

In 2013, United Way led the effort to build a community collaboration focused on improving outcomes for Opportunity Youth, defined as 16-24 year olds who are disconnected from school and employment. Since that time, United Way, its community partners and youth advocates have added strategies targeted to youth who are most at-risk of becoming Opportunity Youth in order to prevent their disengagement as well.

### THE RESULTS

Over the three years, YouthWorks has served more than 2,900 disconnected youth. Of those, 902 (31%) became engaged in an educational program, 1,945 (67%) participated in employment internships, 363 (21%) obtained a credential of value and 495 (17%) are employed. In addition, YouthWorks has engaged more than 130 corporate volunteers in the work.

The YouthWorks Initiative will continue to expand the number of academic and employment partners and support in building the capacity of the direct service providers.