AIM HIGH AKRON

GEAR UP

2025 DESIGNING YOUR FUTURE SUMMER CAMP

From “What If?” to “Watch This!” – GEAR UP is where your future starts taking shape!

AIM HIGH AKRON

GEAR UP

HI THERE!

What a summer! Over the course of two unforgettable weeks, our GEAR UP campers ditched their phones (yep, for 7 out of 10 days) and jumped into hands-on, high-energy experiences, all designed to allow students to explore their future and find their spark.

We hit the ground running with team building games, speed mentoring, and career-focused chats with local pros – including personnel from the University of Akron's College of Business, and staff from the Akron Rubber Ducks (even the General Manager!). Big names, like Dominique Waters from Akron Sneaker Academy, Olympian Butch Reynolds, *Boondocks* theme song creator, Gabriel Benn, and the powerhouse duo Erika and Ebony Hood from See You At The Top (SYATT), dropped in to inspire the next generation.

We toured college campuses (including **THE Ohio State University**), went behind the scenes at the **Akron Civic Theater** and **Rubber Ducks Stadium,** and gave back by volunteering at the **Akron - Canton Regional Foodbank.** And of course, we got some fresh air and good vibes during our days out in nature at **Summit Lake Nature Center** and at **Cuyahoga Valley National Park.**

From laughs to life lessons, this camp was all about stepping up, dreaming big, and having fun along the way. The future, it's looking bright!

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- Columbus State and Columbus College of Art and Design
- Ohio State University Main Campus and Mansfield

COSI

Akron Civic Theater & Rubber Ducks Stadium

Portrait of a Scholar

Student Voice

Thank You

MEET YOUR ADVISORS

Isma'il Al-Amin

Tim Anderson

Karrie Snavely

Audrey Stallman

MEET YOUR CAMP CHAPERONES

Brittany Gibbs

Joanne Duran

Angela Ulrich

Michael Payden

Safety Team Member
Chris Kopas

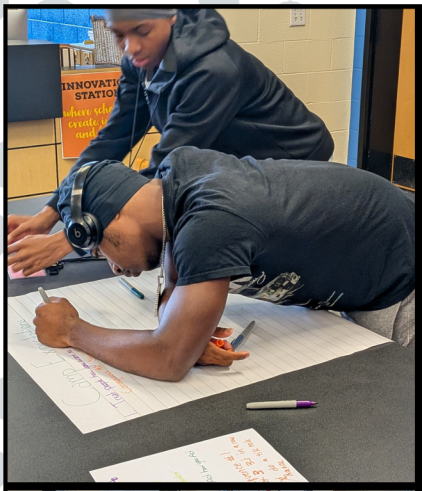
Caitlin Bradley

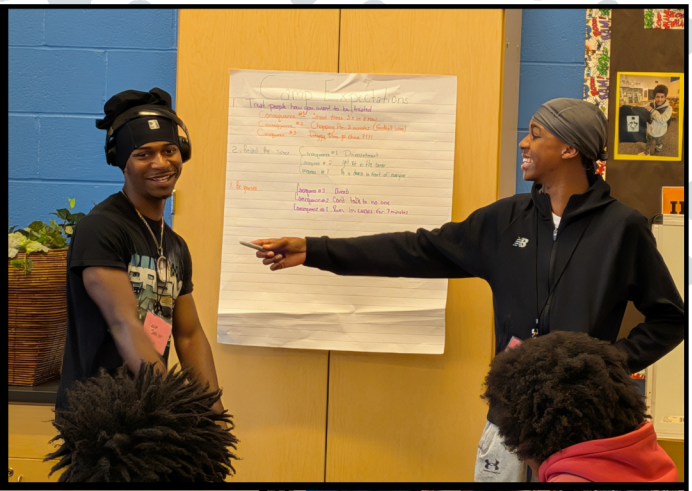
THANK YOU TO OUR GUEST CHAPERONES

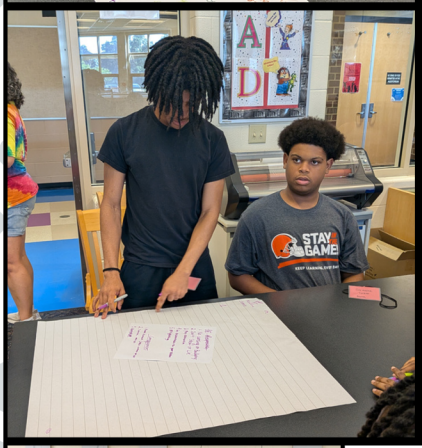
Antonio Preston

Jazzmon Britton

Eric Fletcher







COMMUNITY BUILDING

Scholars spent the first day of camp participating in activities designed to build both their confidence & relationships. Whether it was the high energy rock paper scissors tournament, the twisted human knot, the spirited debate, or the 10 minute conversations with a stranger, our scholars participated in a day of laughter, insight, and growth.

GEAR UP GIVES BACK

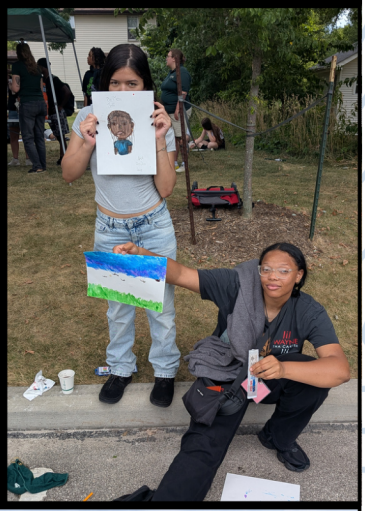
Our scholars rolled up their sleeves and gave back during a meaningful day of service at the Akron – Canton Regional Food Bank. From sorting donations to packing meals, they worked together to make a real impact, proving that even small actions can create big change!

GEAR UP for . . .

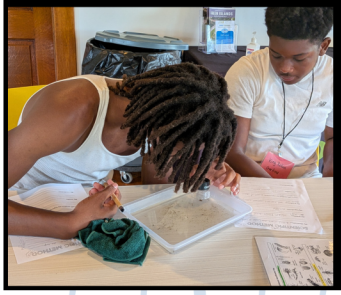
Over the course of this two-week camp, scholars had the opportunity to work with numerous mentors and leaders. They were able to:

- Connect with local professionals across various fields at a powerful speed mentoring event hosted by Bryce Harris's ***Always Climbing*** at Kent State University
- Learn about overcoming challenges and unfair circumstances from Akron's own Olympian Gold and Silver Medalist, Butch Reynolds
- Reflect on media's messaging and influence in a workshop led by acclaimed Peabody Award winner and *Boondocks* theme song writer, Gabriel Benn
- Explore their values and purpose in a workshop with sisters and See You At The Top (SYATT) founders, Erika and Ebony Hood (followed by a full-day tour of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park highlights with said sisters)
- Meet with Dominique Waters of Akron Sneaker Academy (where some lucky scholars went home with new kicks!)
- Explore several behind-the-scenes careers in professional sports with guidance from Dr. Lee and other personnel from the University of Akron Sports Business and Analytics programs, as well as staff from the Akron Rubber Ducks (including the General Manager!)

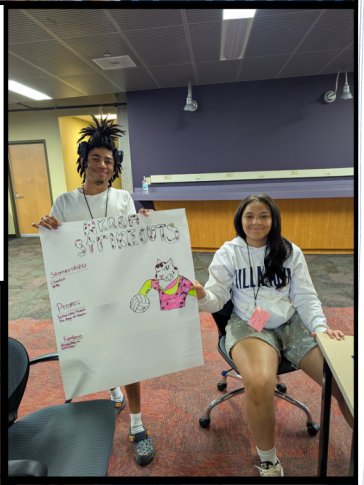
Professional Mentors

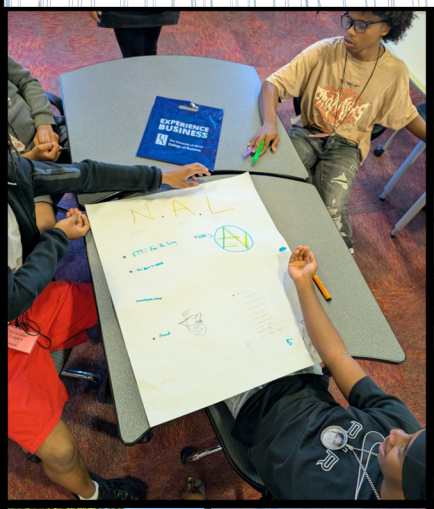


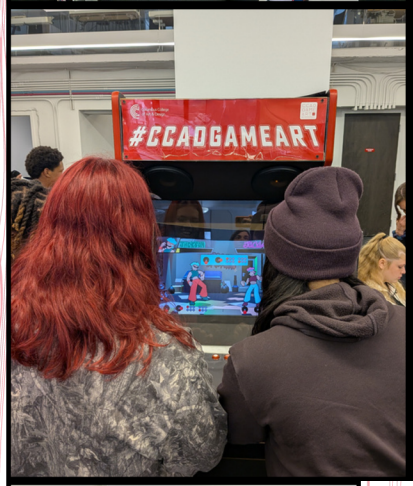
Summit Lake Nature Center



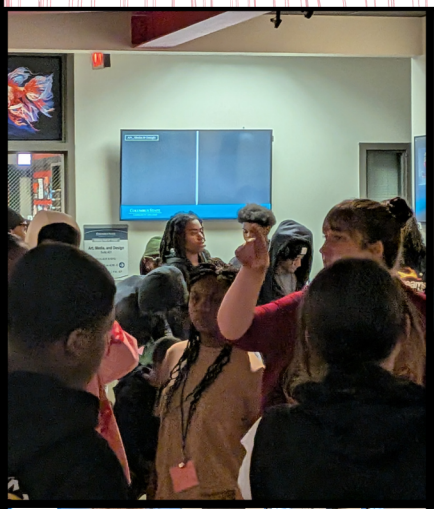
Cuyahoga Valley
National Park

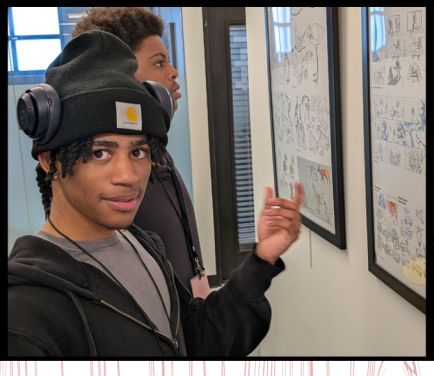
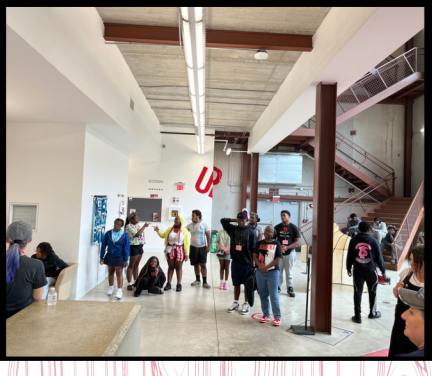
Kent State & University of Akron






Columbus State and Columbus College of Art & Design



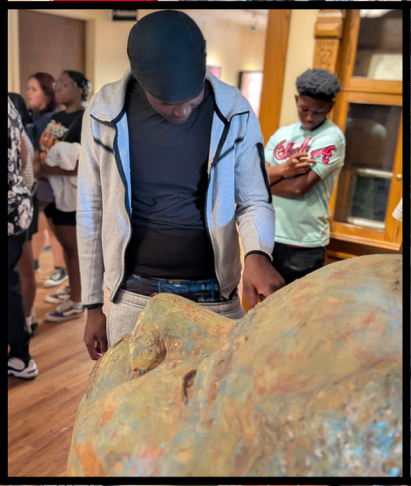
The OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Main Campus and

Mansfield Satellite Campus

JACOBS

BRUTUS

BRUTUS


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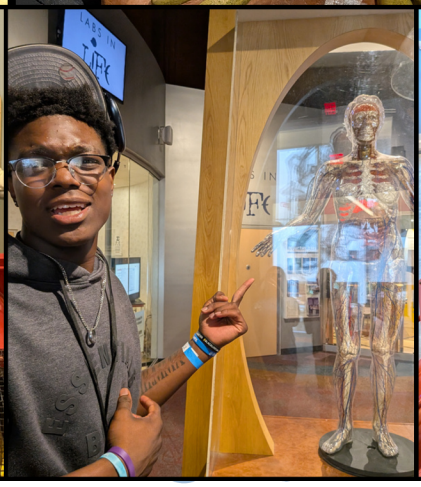
A·K·A

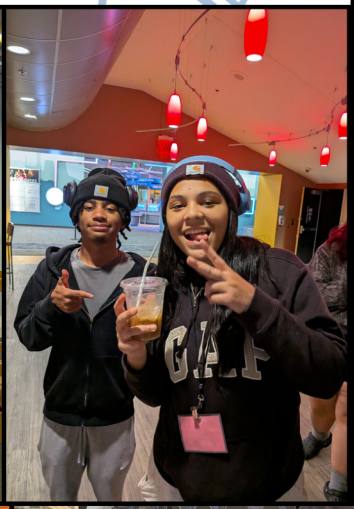
1908
ALPHA PHI ALPHA

A DINOSAUR

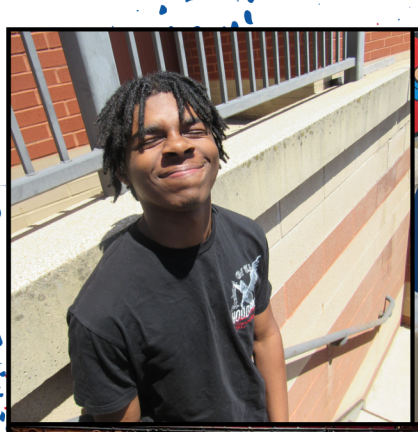


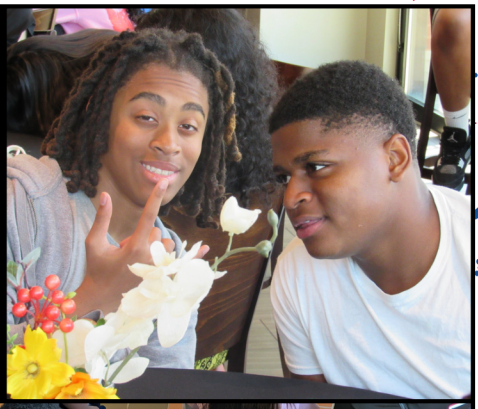
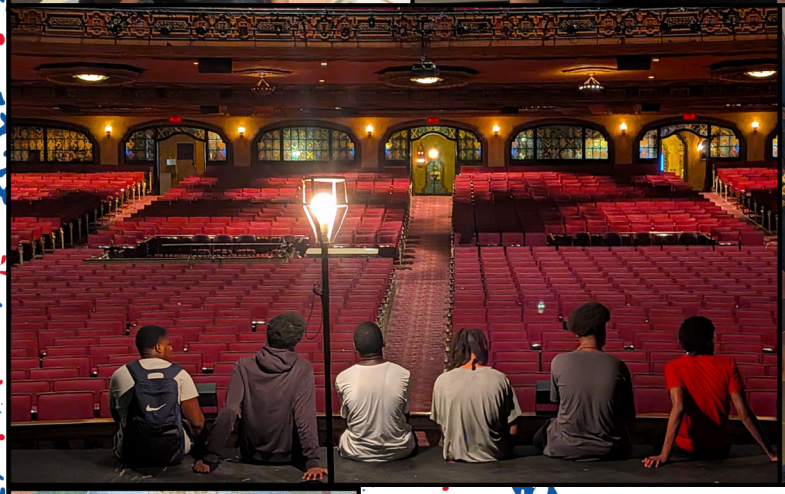
COSI

UNOFFICIAL GALAXIES
MAY 10
SEPTEMBER 1
FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL!

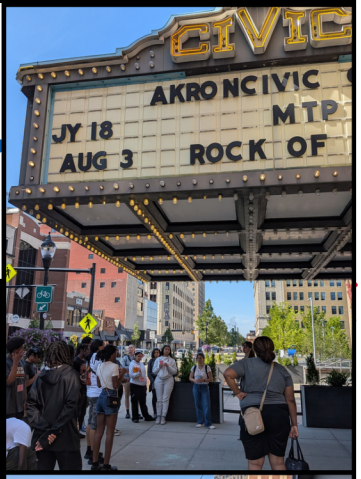


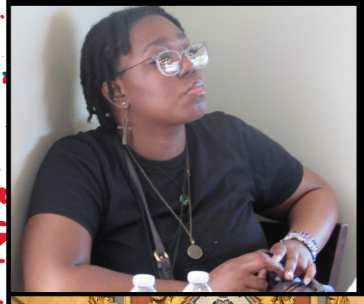
SHARKS
To be great is to be misunderstood.

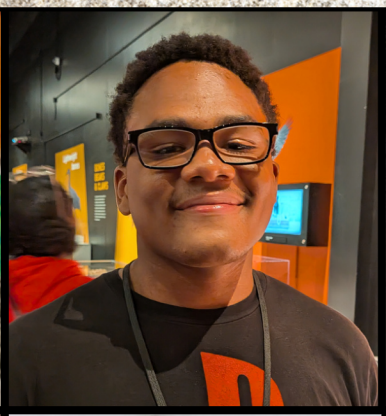


Akron Civic Theater & Rubber Ducks Stadium





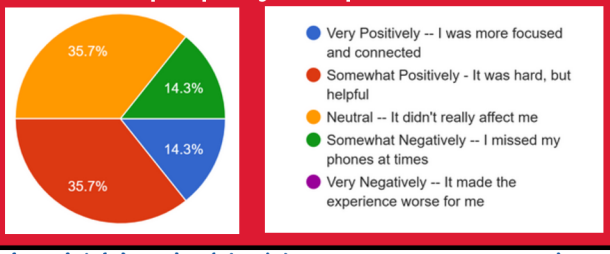


Portrait of a Scholar

STUDENT VOICE

Your Voice Matters

How did not having access to your phone for most of camp impact your experience?



Overall Camp Experience

Top Complaints About Camp

- No phones to take photos
- School Lunch Days
- Behavior of some students

WHAT I LEARNED AT CAMP

"I learned about one of the culinary majors and it really stuck to me. I was really interested when we were getting shown around and seeing their cafe and restaurant. Seeing how they let the college students work there to let them get that experience had me interested and thinking about going there if I actually go to college."

"One thing that suprised me during a college visit was how passionate the students were. They truely loved being there which insoired me to find a school where I could feel the same."

"It made me feel good to be able to help people who may not have the right resources or are in a place where they just can't provide for their loved ones. I'm really glad that I was able to get the chance to participate in something that helps many people."

"Today I learned how to be more self-aware, give my full 100% all of the time, and to never stay on negativity. I also learned that life has chapters and that you need to close old ones so you can more on to the new."

"There were a lot of things I genuinely learned. I learned about the importance of being my own, individual person. I think both learning adversity and being your own person are very important. I personally learned from each person here and I am glad to have been here today."

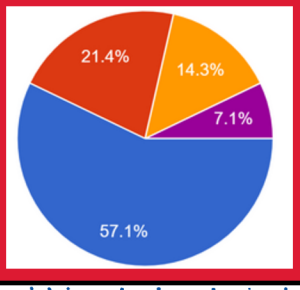
"Being in nature helped me realize that I can really do things if I focus and try. At Summit Lake I a caught a fish and at the National Park I skipped a rock 5 times. Those were moments that I was proud of myself."

"Seeing the impact of helping others makes me what to stay involved and give back more."
(In Response to Volunteering at the Food Bank)

Most Interesting College

1.Kent State
2.Ohio State Main
3. Tie
- Columbus State University
- Columbus College of Art & Design

5.Ohio State Mansfield



How did you feel about volunteering at the food bank

- I really enjoyed it -- it felt meaningful
- It was good -- I liked helping out
- It was okay -- I didn't mind doing it
- I didn't really enjoy it
- I did not attend camp that day

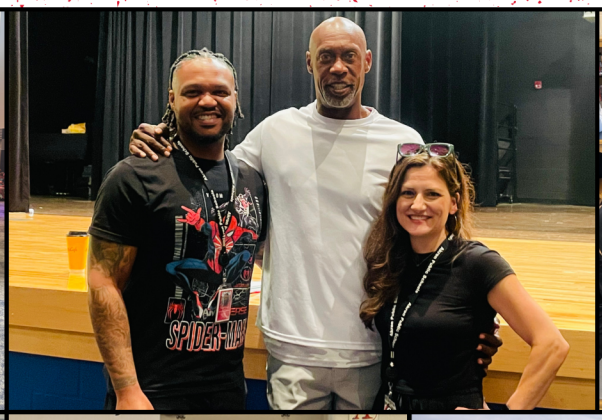
"You have to feel for people because you have no idea what goes on behind the scenes with them."

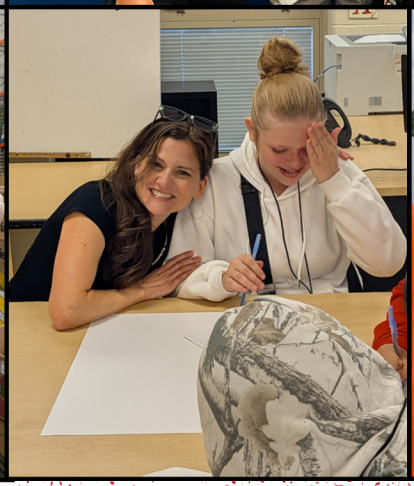
Most Impactful Speaker

1.Speed Mentoring
2.Butch Reynolds
3.U of A/Rubber Ducks Sports Professionals
4.Ebony & Erika (SYATT)
5.Dominique Waters (Akron Sneaker Academy)
6.Gabriel Benn

"I learned the importance of perseverance in the face of difficulty. One thing that stood out to me was the phrase 'Hurt people, hurt people.' This phrase stood out to me because I know I don't want to be the person who makes someone else's day worse because I didn't take the time to properly heal and accept my circumstances. It's important to understand and control your emotions if not for yourself, then for the people around you.This can be helpful for later on too because doing this allows you to pass on this knowledge and help others."

"People are always saying that you have one option, but you can always do anything you want as long as you believe in yourself."





Thank you

The GEAR UP Team could not have done it without the help of our chaperones. You all jumped in, participated, and made connections.
We appreciate you all!

Thank you!

The GEAR UP Team would like to thank:

APS Extended Learning, Transportation, and Child Nutrition.

Ms. Beecher & Buchtel CLC for hosting camp at 1040.

All of our chaperones and the safety team who spent their summer days supporting us and our students.

All of our guest speakers who volunteered their time to be with us and for those who made time to put us in their schedules.

Summit Metro Parks, Cuyahoga Valley National Park (and SYATT), the Akron Rubber Ducks, The Ohio State University, Kent State, University of Akron, who hosted us all for a day.

For the parents, guardians, and our bus drivers who made sure students made it to and from the camp safely.

To our students who dedicated two weeks of their summer to be with us!

To Melvin, the alligator,
thank you again for not biting anyone. Two years strong.

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