

Suzanne Ferre



Champion Teenagers Making a Difference Youth Business Alliance

Ever hear of The Youth Business Alliance? I hadn't until one of my staff pointed out the organization and said, check it out. I did and was smitten. This incredible program helps students at disadvantaged schools soar to greater heights, achieve goals, and seek out careers that fuel their passions. YBA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization offering after school programs that target high school juniors with a GPA of 3.5 and above. These students are exceptional. They are graduating from high schools that lack funding. Some classrooms don't have basic necessities such as pens, paper, and books. Students who enroll in YBA are determined to beat the odds stacked against them. Once you meet these smart and awesome teenagers, you understand the motivation they carry in their minds and hearts to better their lives. Guest speakers are invited to talk with students about career objectives, share stories about their lives, and give "tips" on how to hunt down job opportunities.

Partners with YBA's guest speaker program have been representatives from Deutsche Bank, Disney, Morgan Stanley, Los Angeles Dodgers, Wells Fargo, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, JP Morgan Chase, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Banc of California, Dun & Bradstreet Credibility Corp, Cedars Sinai, Mattel, New York Life, BBC News/World Media, Facebook, and more. They support these financially strapped Los Angeles high schools filled with amazing students who are eager to learn, are 100% determined to graduate from high school, and are committed to achieving their career goals. It doesn't get better than this! YBA was founded by Mark Stagen in 2012. A committed entrepreneur/community leader, he started his first company (a comic book store) at age 15. Mark moved on, but never forget about all of the students who right now are in disadvantaged LA schools fighting against the odds to graduate from high school and, move on to find their place in the world.

Get Involved

I contacted the YBA office, sent my resume and gave a detailed outline of my speaking points. My two sons accompanied me — Niko (27) gaming/collectibles business owner and Stephen (33) Morgan Stanley Financial Advisor. They spoke to the students on a more "relatable" level about challenges



teenagers face in the 21st Century. I brought copies of the magazine, spoke of my passion for writing and the importance of expressing thoughts on paper. I gave students journals to document their feelings, past and present struggles, and goal objectives. On our drive home, my sons spoke about how courteous and eager students were to achieve their dreams. Guest speakers and financial contributors of the YBA have taken students on field trips to their companies to see first hand how the world of business operates. Getting the word out about the YBA isn't easy, but Mark is the guy to do it. He received his BA from Yale University, and is a frequent guest lecturer at UCLA and USC.

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The benefits of being a speaker are many. Inspiring others is an incredible teaching tool. ■

Students of Youth Business Alliance After School Program
Niko Takowsky (left back); Stephen Takowsky (right back)

the BEAUTY and the BEST issue

Our annual Beauty and the Best issue is way fun to produce because we meet fabulous, smart and creative innovators who offer the ultimate in anti-aging rejuvenation and cutting-edge technology to keep us looking and feeling young forever. And after all here in Los Angeles and Beverly Hills — isn't that what life is REALLY about? No seriously. I REALLY mean it. Our incredible line-up of contributors in the fields of beauty, anti-aging, and health are experts in their respective medical industries, providing informative and trending topics of interest as we continue on in our quest to live FOREVER! Enjoy.