



GUIDING STRONG KIDS TO A STRONG FUTURE

Strong Kids Campaign

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY





SIX LIVES AT A TURNING POINT.

Six kids who once had trouble picturing a better future, now pursue it with vigor and passion.

Here are six visions, six paths of opportunity and promise. Six tales of hurt vanquished, obstacles overcome and potential unleashed.

These kids are **six of the 250,000** reasons the YMCA Strong Kids Campaign came to be...



New York City's YMCA
WE'RE HERE FOR GOOD.™

...AND WHY IT MATTERS **MORE THAN EVER**



BECAUSE THE CHALLENGES ARE TOUGH **Strong Kids Campaign**

Mikhail Lindsay, 18
Freshman, SUNY Potsdam
PROSPECT PARK YMCA | Brooklyn

Santiago Ardila, 15
Sophomore, The Academy for Careers
in Television and Film
LONG ISLAND CITY YMCA | Queens

Zaire Long, 17
Junior, High School for
Language and Diplomacy
MCBURNEY YMCA | Manhattan

Santiago I've always been close to my cousin who lives in Colombia. Last year, three days before my prom, my father told me my cousin tried to take his own life.

Mikhail The summer after ninth grade I was stabbed and almost died. That was a lifechanger for me.

Kennedy I was already part of the Y that summer when my mother passed away, but it became much more like a second home.

Kennedy Right before my mother's graduation from nursing school, something changed my entire world. She suddenly passed away as a result of heart disease.

Zaire My father was picking up some groceries one morning. He was mistaken for somebody else, and was shot three times.

Santiago I became a lot more mature as a result of what happened with my cousin. The staff and my friends here at the Y helped give me a sense of relief.



Zaire Every Tuesday I met with my YMCA tutor, and she helped me more than my regular classes. Her patience made the difference.

Gail I'm an outsider, not your usual everyday girl by any means. I came to the Y already a very tolerant person, but the Y definitely helped me to further my understanding of other kinds of people.

Kennedy Renaud-Williams, 15
Sophomore, Medgar Evers College
Preparatory School
WEST SIDE YMCA | Manhattan

FINDING THE STRENGTH INSIDE **Strong Kids Campaign**

Mikhail I came to an understanding that being stabbed was a second chance for me. I didn't have to be alive. It motivated me, it made me stronger — to want to achieve more in life.

Kennedy Strong kids only become strong because somebody believes in them, shows them the way, and watches out for them.

Gail Schreibman, 17
Senior, Gramercy Arts High School
MCBURNEY YMCA | Manhattan

Sebastian Franco, 18
Freshman, Baruch College
STATEN ISLAND BROADWAY YMCA | Staten Island



IMAGINING LIFE WITHOUT THE **Strong Kids Campaign**

Zaire I would probably be one of the kids who are always outside every day — confused teenagers doing nothing with their lives. Our generation acts the way we act because we lack guidance and authority, but the Y helps provide that guidance.

Mikhail Without the YMCA Strong Kids Campaign I probably wouldn't be in college right now. I might have been with the same crowd and had my life taken.

Gail How would life be different if there were no YMCA? It would have been bad. I would probably be antisocial, not as comfortable with myself.

Sebastian My life would be drastically different. The Y sparked the fuse for me to follow up on what I wanted to do and how I would do it. It's something I'm passionate about and it's something I really love.



THE ART OF BECOMING SOMEONE **Strong Kids Campaign**



Mikhail Before the Y, there was no way the 14-year-old me could have imagined that the 18-year-old me would be in college studying business. Now I'm on a clear path to success.

Santiago The Y is in my blood — my parents met at the Y in Colombia. The Y helped shape who I am today, and the Y will help me shape my future.

Gail I am an activist for the LGBT community. At the moment the focus is on equal marriage rights, but there are other rights like equal rights in the workplace.

Sebastian I will run for Congress someday. It's a goal. I was always interested in politics, but Y programs showed me that this is something I want to do with my life.

Zaire When I was growing up, I never had any idea that the Y would eventually have a big impact on my life. Now I'm a Y Counselor-in-Training, and for Teens Take the City, I am the borough president of Manhattan.



WHERE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY BEGINS **Strong Kids Campaign**

Kennedy The Y has made a huge difference because it keeps me focused on what is possible. The Y helped me see that if I stay focused, I can and will live a very long life.

Zaire The YMCA gave me something to do. I had a title at the Y — I wasn't just another person. The Y gave me responsibilities and duties to carry out. What more could I ask for?

Gail I think one of the reasons people can be intolerant is they're not knowledgeable enough, so I want to spread understanding and knowledge. As people come to understand other groups, they will be less inclined to dislike them.

Sebastian Supporting the Y is an investment in the future — a future of better work ethics, of better discipline, of more responsible people. Kids can become better workers because their higher expectations of themselves lead them to go to college or to become more of what they hoped to be. The result is a better economy and a better community for everyone.



WHY YOU ARE EVERYTHING



SEE FOR YOURSELF HOW
EVERY GIFT COUNTS

The YMCA Strong Kids Campaign is a challenge to the people of New York City. Let's unlock the potential of our greatest natural resource: our youth.

Let's level the field of opportunity so that every kid gets the chance to exercise his or her talents, or start a new business, or discover an inner strength, or run for office.

Let's show New York kids that the adults they see on the sidewalks, in the taxis, and on the subways really care about them. And are willing to do something about it.

We need these kids as much as they need us. Let's let them know what they mean to us.

Strong Kids Campaign

Give to the YMCA Strong Kids Campaign and you are contributing to the future of New York City.

every gift counts **because every kid counts**

ymcastrongkids.org/nyc



facebook.com/ymcanyc



twitter.com/ymcanyc



youtube.com/ymcanyc

A family of four (two men, a woman, and a child) is walking away from the camera through a brick archway. They are walking on a paved path that leads into a park with many green trees. The scene is brightly lit, and long shadows are cast on the path. The text "BECAUSE EVERY KID COUNTS" is overlaid in white, and "Strong Kids Campaign" is overlaid in blue.

BECAUSE EVERY KID COUNTS **Strong Kids Campaign**

New York City's YMCA

WE'RE HERE FOR GOOD.™

NEW YORK CITY'S YMCA
5 WEST 63RD STREET, 6TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10023
(212) 630-9648 YMCANYC.ORG