

GAD Youth Center Throws Open the Doors to Higher Education Through a Transformative Virginia State University Experience

One Fredericksburg nonprofit's vision, community partnerships, and unwavering commitment are inspiring youth to dream bigger and build brighter futures.

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Every child deserves the chance to see beyond their circumstances and imagine a future bursting with possibility. That belief drives everything [GAD Youth Center](#) does — where

mentorship, leadership development, life skills, and faith-based guidance are reshaping the trajectory of young lives across the Fredericksburg region.



That mission came roaring to life recently when GAD Youth Center led 21 students, ranging in age from 11 to 17, on a transformative visit to Virginia State University (VSU) — an immersive college experience, months in the making, designed to help students see themselves as tomorrow's leaders, professionals, and changemakers.

None of it would have been possible without a generous grant from Matern Staffing, whose deep commitment to youth development tore down the financial barriers that could have kept students home and opened the door to a day of learning, exploration, and inspiration they won't forget.

"This trip wasn't simply about visiting a university," said Arline Gause, Founder and President of GAD Youth Center. "It was about helping our youth understand that college is attainable, success is possible, and their future is not limited by where they begin."

Gause founded GAD Youth Center after more than three decades of federal service — supporting NASA, the DEA, the Department of Defense, TRICARE, and the Department of Justice — to rebuild and redefine the village it takes to raise our youth. Inspired by Jeremiah 29:11, the

organization now delivers leadership development, life skills, academic enrichment, career exploration, financial literacy, culinary education, health and wellness, faith formation, and community engagement to youth throughout the region.

Pulling off the VSU trip took months of coordination. After GAD Youth Center landed on the university's visitation waiting list, Maria D. Taylor, VSU's Admissions Visitation Specialist, worked tirelessly to secure the organization's requested date — ensuring students received the full campus experience. Denise Caldwell and driver Valerie of LW Transportation Charter Service got every student and chaperone there and back safely. And in the spirit of collaboration, GAD Youth Center extended the invitation to another local youth-serving organization, opening the day to even more Fredericksburg-area students.

For many participants, the visit didn't just inform their future — it transformed it. Eleven-year-old Antoine left campus with renewed purpose: "I learned that if your first dream changes because of an injury or something unexpected, you can still have a successful future doing something else. I want to become a mechanical engineer one day, and now I know college can help me get there."

Parents say the impact reaches far beyond a single trip. "The Virginia State University trip opened my son's eyes to opportunities he hadn't considered before," said parent Kisha Whiting. "But GAD has done so much more than provide a field trip. Mrs. Arline listened to God's calling and created exactly what families like mine have been searching for — a place where our children are mentored, challenged, encouraged, and taught the life skills many of us never had the opportunity to learn ourselves."

For GAD Youth Center, success was never about a head count. It's measured in the confidence gained, the dreams awakened, and the futures forever changed. Because changing a generation doesn't happen through one event — it happens through consistent mentorship, intentional leadership, and a community that decides every child is worth investing in.

About GAD Youth Center

GAD Youth Center is a Fredericksburg-area nonprofit dedicated to rebuilding the village it takes to raise the next generation. Through mentorship, leadership development, life-skills education, academic enrichment, faith-based guidance, career exploration, health and wellness, and community engagement, GAD Youth Center equips youth with the confidence, character, and practical tools to thrive — in school, in life, and in their future careers.

Community Partners Recognized

Matern Staffing, for the generous grant that funded the educational experience.

Maria D. Taylor, Admissions Visitation Specialist at Virginia State University, for securing GAD

Youth Center's requested visitation date.

Denise Caldwell and Valerie of LW Transportation Charter Service, for safe, seamless transportation.

The dedicated parents, volunteers, and community supporters who make GAD Youth Center's mission possible.

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