

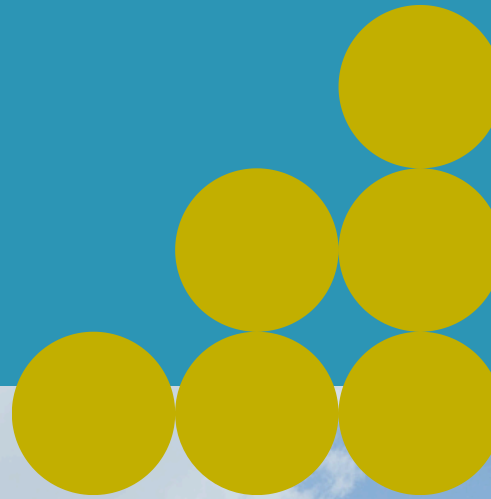


POINTS OF LIGHT



37th Annual National Service-Learning Conference[®]

Youth Voices Lighting the Way



Welcome to #SLC26



Dear Friends, Colleagues, Educators, Youth Leaders, and Changemakers,

Welcome to the 37th Annual National Service-Learning Conference. On behalf of the National Youth Leadership Council, it is my honor and joy to welcome you to this extraordinary gathering of people who believe deeply in the power of young people to create meaningful change in their communities and in the world.

This year's conference is especially meaningful as we come together in partnership with Points of Light, uniting two powerful communities of practice committed to service, civic engagement, and youth leadership. This collaboration reflects a shared belief that service-learning is not only a pedagogy, but a pathway for strengthening democracy, building empathy, and preparing young people to lead in an increasingly complex world.

Together, NYLC and Points of Light are expanding the reach and impact of this convening by bringing together educators, practitioners, researchers, youth, and community leaders who are shaping the future of service and civic engagement. This partnership allows us to deepen the dialogue between formal and informal education spaces, and to better connect local action to national and global movements for change.

This conference has always been more than a professional development event. It is a community. It is a place where ideas become action, where relationships spark innovation, and where we are reminded that service-learning remains one of the most powerful strategies for developing young people as leaders, problem-solvers, and engaged citizens.

At a time when communities across our country and around the world face growing challenges, the need for empathy, civic engagement, collaboration, and youth voice has never been greater. The work you do every day in schools, nonprofits, higher education institutions, community organizations, and youth-serving programs matters deeply.

Over the next several days, I encourage you to fully engage in the conversations, learning experiences, and connections that make this conference so special. Attend sessions that challenge your thinking. Share your successes and lessons learned. Meet someone new. Listen to young people. Reflect on your purpose and the impact you hope to create.

Most importantly, remember that you are part of a larger movement, one that believes young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow, but essential leaders today.

Thank you for the work you do, for the communities you serve, and for bringing your energy, ideas, and passion to this conference. We are grateful you are here and excited for all we will learn and build together.

Welcome to the National Service-Learning Conference!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy Meuers'.

Amy Meuers, CEO
National Youth Leadership Council

#SLC26 Agenda - Day One

A Day on the Hill: Elevating Youth as Solutions on Capitol Hill

10:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Room: Columbia 9-10

* Pre-registration required.

The National Service-Learning Conference is excited to offer a powerful opportunity for youth and their adult allies to advocate for young people as contributors and problem-solvers in communities across the nation. Attendees are invited to join together for a Hill Day Kick-Off Session designed to prepare them for productive and meaningful meetings with legislators before departing for Capitol Hill.

Youth Voices Lighting the Way: Opening Session of #SLC26

4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Room: Lincoln East & Monroe

The future isn't something young people are waiting to inherit, it's something they are actively shaping. Youth Voices Lighting the Way opens #SLC26 by spotlighting the bold ideas, fearless leadership, and transformative action of young people who are changing their communities and the world right now.

This high-energy opening session will feature powerful youth voices, visionary thinking, and real examples of impact across issues and communities. From local action to global influence, young leaders are driving solutions, challenging the status quo, and redefining what's possible.

Join us as we kick off #SLC26 inspired by the brilliance, urgency, and unstoppable momentum of youth leading the way.

Points of Light Conference Welcome Reception

6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Columbia Ballroom

This high-energy gathering brings together all attendees to kick off a week of celebrating community and connection. Mingle with fellow changemakers, explore featured exhibitors and soak in the spirit of our nation's capital, a city built on service, action and the power of people coming together to make a difference.

#SLC26 Agenda - Day Two

Student Showcase & Breakfast

8:00 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

Room: Columbia Ballroom

Want to be inspired by young changemakers who are making a real difference in their communities? The Student Showcase is your opportunity to connect with innovative student leaders from across the country and around the world. The Student Showcase puts high-quality, student-led projects in the spotlight, giving you a chance to hear directly from the young people behind them. You'll learn the stories behind each project from how they were implemented to how they connect to curricular goals, and what makes them so effective. From environmental action to social justice advocacy to school-based innovation, the Student Showcase highlights the incredible range of impact young people are creating right now. Come ready to be inspired, spark new ideas for your own work, and connect with the next generation of changemakers.

Opening Plenary of Points of Light

9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Room: International Ballroom

Kick off the conference with high-impact inspiration that celebrates the transformative power of volunteering, reimagining what's possible when people, creativity, and purpose come together. This dynamic session sets the tone for the days ahead and celebrates 250 years of civic engagement, inviting attendees to explore how volunteering can be a powerful force for social impact, community resilience and belonging. Attendees will be challenged to think differently about problem-solving, leadership and the role innovation plays in building stronger, more connected communities.

Recommended #SLC26 Workshops

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Introduction to Service-Learning: Where Education Meets Action

Presenter(s): Julie Rogers Bascom & Ariella Adjanba-Baker

Ready to bring service-learning into your classroom or program but not sure where to start? This hands-on session will get you started! Designed for adults working with young people at any stage of their service-learning journey, this session gives you the foundation, the tools, and a concrete plan to make it happen.

Youth as Data-Driven Change-Makers: An Introduction to Youth Participatory Action Research

Presenter(s): Heather Kennedy

Participants will explore Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)—a powerful, youth-driven approach that transforms young people from researched to researcher and change agent. Through hands-on activities and real-world examples, attendees will learn how YPAR equips youth to investigate issues that matter to them, analyze data, and take informed action to create meaningful impact in their schools and communities.

#SLC26 Agenda - Day Two

Lunch, Student Showcases, and Civic Park

12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.

Room: International Ballroom

Recommended #SLC26 Workshops

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Amplifying Youth Voice: How to Create and Sustain a Student Youth Advisory Council

Presenter(s): Kristin Stephens

How can organizations move beyond “youth involvement” to genuine youth leadership? This interactive session explores how to build a youth advisory council from the ground up, one that empowers young people to shape decisions, lead initiatives, grow their leadership skills, and strengthen programs. Drawing from the creation and growth of the Tidewater LEAD Student Advisory Council, participants will learn practical steps for developing structure, facilitating engagement, and sustaining impact. Through real-world examples and actionable tools, attendees will leave equipped to amplify youth voice within their own organizations and build the next generation of community-minded leaders.

Bridging Divides Through Service

Presenters(s): Pam Siebert & Matthew MacWilliams

In a time of deepening polarization, where social, political, and cultural divides threaten to separate us, service provides a powerful, unifying force to rebuild connections and foster understanding. This workshop will explore how community service can be a bridge across these divides, offering a shared space where people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences can come together, collaborate, and make a tangible difference. Through this workshop, participants will explore the profound impact of cross-generational, cross-cultural, and cross-economic collaborations. By working side by side with individuals from varying walks of life—whether it's across age groups, genders, ethnicities, or economic backgrounds—we not only contribute to the betterment of our neighborhoods but also create a shared narrative that fosters solidarity. When we engage in meaningful service together, we discover new perspectives that challenge and expand our own.

Gen Z Won't Sign Up for That: A Youth-Led Lab for Designing Volunteer Experiences Youth Want to Join

Presenter(s): Diya Mankotia

This youth-led session examines why young people who care deeply about community still hesitate to join traditional volunteer pathways and how small shifts in early engagement can rebuild connection. Diya Mankotia, a 17-year-old youth program coordinator with the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, will share insights shaped by her work supporting hundreds of youth across school-based and national programs. Together, we'll look at the engagement practices organizations rely on most—from sign-up processes to welcome orientations—and identify where young people often feel unsure or unseen. Participants will choose one real practice from their own work and walk through a guided redesign exercise grounded in youth insight and equity principles. This workshop is designed for anyone seeking practical, youth-centered strategies to strengthen participation and build volunteer experiences young people are excited to return to.

#SLC26 Agenda - Day Two

#SLC26 Learning Lab

2:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Youth Voice and Civic Power: From the Margins to the Center

Location: Georgetown West/East

Presenter(s): Julie Rogers Bascom and Feven Tesfaye

Who holds power? Who gets a seat at the table? And who decides? Young people have the insight, passion, and lived experience to lead meaningful change, yet their voices are often left out of school decisions, community planning, nonprofit leadership, and public policies that shape their lives. At the same time, communities everywhere are facing complex challenges such as climate change, public health needs, and education inequity. The truth is that young people are not simply preparing to lead someday. They are already leading today.

This Learning Lab explores what happens when youth voice is recognized as essential to building strong and vibrant communities. Through stories, research, and practical strategies, we will look at how youth-led efforts are strengthening civic life, influencing policy, and creating solutions that benefit all of us. We will highlight examples of young people who are advocating for change, organizing peers, and taking action to improve their schools and communities.

#SLC26 Receptions

6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Youth Room Event

Location: Jefferson West/East

Join us for an energizing evening in the Youth Room as we come together to imagine, create, and celebrate the future we want to build. "Ignite the Change" is a space designed by and for young leaders to connect, collaborate, and recharge through activities that spark creativity and fuel your passion for changing the world. Enjoy music, games, conversation circles, and hands-on stations that highlight the power of youth leadership. Whether you come to meet new friends, share your ideas, or simply have fun, this evening will remind you that the movement for a better world starts with you.

Educator Reception

Location: Georgetown West/East

Join fellow educators from across the country for a warm and engaging Networking Reception at the National Service-Learning Conference. This gathering provides a welcoming space to connect with peers, exchange ideas, and build relationships that strengthen your practice and enrich your programs. Whether you are new to service-learning or have years of experience, you will have the opportunity to share insights, celebrate successes, and discover new partners who are equally committed to empowering young people through meaningful service. Enjoy thoughtful conversation and the chance to expand your professional community in a supportive and inspiring environment.

#SLC26 Agenda - Day Three

Student Showcase and Breakfast

8:00 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

Location: Columbia Ballroom

Want to be inspired by young changemakers who are making a real difference in their communities? The Student Showcase is your opportunity to connect with innovative student leaders from across the country and around the world. The Student Showcase puts high-quality, student-led projects in the spotlight, giving you a chance to hear directly from the young people behind them.

Recommended #SLC26 Workshops

10:15 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

Amplifying Youth Leadership: How Service Transforms Communities and Invites Young People to Lead

Presenter(s): Ross VeLure Roholt and Matthew MacWilliams

The future of our democracy requires the renewal of democratic leadership. This workshop will share promising practices for youth leadership embedded in service. We will start with a discussion of youth leadership before we launch into assessing our own values and practices that enable or inhibit young people from leading. Throughout the workshop, you will be introduced to concrete actions and evidence-based resources that support youth leadership in your community.

Beyond Tokenism: Creating Real Power for Youth in Civic Systems

Presenter(s): Maria Lopez de la Cruz and Omar Ornelas

Young people don't just deserve a seat at the table; they deserve decision-making power. This interactive workshop shares how Stockton Service Corps, a place-based initiative in California's 11th largest city, empowers Stockton youth to drive their own programs by recognizing the strengths they already possess and creating structures that amplify their voices and skillsets.

Next-Gen Voices: A New Era of Civic Dialogue

Presenter(s): Kierran Petersen and Sarah Gesner

What changes when young people lead the conversations that shape their communities? In this interactive session, participants will step into youth-designed, small-group dialogues inspired by Cortico's Teen Dialogue Accelerator, co-run by the MIT Center for Constructive Communication and PBS FRONTLINE. Using AI-assisted tools, attendees will see how conversations can surface deep insights while preserving human judgment. We'll spotlight Alexandria Library, where youth-led civic conversations elevated teen voices locally and nationally. Participants will walk away with a replicable framework and ready-to-use tools to launch youth-led dialogue programs in their own communities.

#SLC26 Agenda - Day Three

Lunch, Student Showcase, and Civic Park

11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

#SLC26 Lightning Talks

1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Looking for energizing conversations and fresh ideas? Lightning Talks are your chance to connect with passionate presenters, discover innovative ideas, and engage in meaningful small-group dialogue. Think of it as the conference's version of professional speed networking. During this dynamic 75-minute session, you'll move between tables, each hosted by a presenter with a compelling idea or project to share. Here's how it works: Hear something new: Each presenter shares their idea, project, or insight in a focused 5-10 minute talk. Go deeper: Spend the next 10-15 minutes in open conversation by asking questions and building connections. Keep exploring: You'll rotate through up to three 20-minute rounds, visiting different tables and presenters each time. Lightning Talks feature both youth and adult presenters showcasing emerging work, grassroots ideas, and new concepts in a relaxed, conversational format.

#SLC26 Recommended Workshops

2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

A Global Perspective: Amplifying Youth Voice Through Service-Learning

Presenter(s): Cathryn Berger Kaye

In a school for children who are refugees...within an international education...in public schools...through community partnerships. How is service learning activating youth voice around the globe and setting a pathway for authentic engagement? By adopting a human-centered approach, how do we form meaningful connections with others? What ethical considerations must we make to move from a deficit-based model to an asset-based model? Through exemplars, let's identify essential best practices that build reciprocal relationships and elevate what we can accomplish together. In this interactive session, engage through gathering stories, generating ideas, and making connections that extend beyond the conference.

Stitching Dignity: A Case Study in Youth-Led Social Action

Presenter(s): Audrina Demma and Giuliana Demma

Discover the impactful journey of G's Giving Gowns, a youth-led non-profit that has championed dignity and comfort for pediatric patients by designing and creating customized hospital gowns and port access shirts. This session will dissect how the organization functions as a powerful model of youth voice and leadership, where young people drive all operations, from sourcing materials and managing finances to executing design improvements based on patient feedback. We will showcase the practical steps taken to implement authentic youth-adult partnerships and explore the critical leadership skills developed—including collaborative problem-solving, ethical decision-making regarding production and distribution, and effective advocacy with healthcare systems. Attendees will leave with a clear, replicable framework for launching and scaling a hands-on, youth-led project that successfully translates direct service into a catalyst for systemic change within their community and beyond.

#SLC26 Agenda - Day Three

#SLC26 Recommended Workshops

3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.

Bridge Building Through Service: Creating Lasting Connections Across Communities

Presenter(s): Anyu Silverman

Repair the World engages Jewish young adults and their neighbors in service learning that builds capacity of hundreds of nonprofits, strengthens communities, and bridges divides across lines of difference. With service as a universal language of connection, Repair connects Jews and non-Jews to find common ground and to pursue a just world and stronger civic life. Our service learning methodology fosters understanding, helps to dispel stereotypes, and highlights shared values through reflection, shared goals, and values-based education. In this session we will learn more about Repair's bridge building approach and practice how to meaningfully tie together service, dialogue and learning.

From Mentoring to Mutuality: Strengthening Youth Leadership Through Intergenerational Collaborations

Presenter(s): Marci Alboher and Alex Edgar

We're living in the most age-diverse society in human history -- and one of the most age-segregated. Youth civic and volunteer programs unleash passion and creativity, but when they exist apart from older generations, young leaders can only go so far. Real-world change happens in community, not in silos. If we want young people to take on the challenges that matter most, they need opportunities to collaborate with older allies—who too often feel sidelined despite their experience, networks, and shared purpose.

From Screens to Service: Practical Digital Strategies for Engaging Today's Youth

Presenter(s): Markie Morrison

In a world where young people exist increasingly online, it's time to stop treating online engagement as a barrier to service and start leveraging it as a launchpad for impact. Through real examples of online youth-led storytelling, fundraising, and service campaigns, this workshop reframes online spaces as powerful gateways to civic participation, showing how digital platforms can spark curiosity, strengthen community, and inspire youth to take meaningful action. Participants will explore practical strategies, tools, and platforms for meeting youth in their digital environments while guiding them toward authentic service experiences that create lasting impact in both virtual and physical communities.

#SLC26 Agenda - Day Three

#SLC26 Recommended Workshops

3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.

Reimagining Service-Learning: Innovation, Impact, and What Comes Next

Presenter(s): Pam Siebert and Lori Fowler

This dynamic panel workshop brings together district leaders, practitioners, researchers, and youth changemakers to explore how to both reimagine and scale high-quality service-learning at the district level. Panelists will share real-world strategies for moving from isolated projects to system-wide practice, including aligning service-learning with academic standards and civic goals, supporting educators through training and coaching, building strong community partnerships, and creating structures that ensure quality and sustainability. Blending research-informed practice with lived experience and youth voice, this interactive session offers candid lessons, innovative approaches, and actionable insights to help districts advance service-learning in ways that are impactful, equitable, and built to last.

#SLC26 Docathon

5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Location: Holmead

Join NYLC for a powerful Docathon experience featuring international films created by young changemakers from around the world, alongside documentaries from NYLC's Youth as Solutions teams addressing education equity, community health, environmental sustainability, and more. Through compelling short films, students share how they are identifying challenges in their communities and leading meaningful, solution-driven change. After each screening, participants will engage directly with the filmmakers through live conversations with both in-person and virtual presenters, offering insight into their creative process, the impact of their work, and the lessons they are learning as young leaders. This interactive session celebrates youth voice, global connection, and the transformative power of service-learning in action.

#SLC26 Agenda - Day Four

#SLC26 Recommended Workshops

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Beyond the Classroom: Youth-Led Volunteerism as a Catalyst for Education Equity

Presenter(s): Mumtaz Cooper

Education equity begins with listening to the communities it serves. In this dynamic, youth-led workshop, humanitarian and 17-year-old nonprofit founder Mumtaz “Taji” Cooper explores how volunteerism can become a tool for systemic change in education. Drawing on their work with Pencils Not Prisons, Taji shares how empowering young people to design and lead community-based initiatives, from addressing the school-to-prison pipeline to advancing educational access, can transform both classrooms and communities.

Motivating Youth Leaders for Social Impact

Presenter(s): Jahnavi Rao

New Voters is a youth-led 501(c)3 that has had over 400 team members, with every one of them under the age of 22, and nearly 300 of them operating in an entirely volunteer capacity. Join Jahnavi Rao, 25-year-old President and Founder of New Voters, in learning how New Voters has harnessed the power of young people to accomplish their goals while developing their leadership potential. In this session, you will learn not only how to recruit, retain, and motivate young people, but how to manage them in a way that grows your organization, increases your impact, and shapes the young leaders of tomorrow.

Closing Plenary Brunch

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

International Ballroom

Wrap up three unforgettable days with a high-energy celebratory brunch. Get inspired by Gen Z’s leadership, discover future-shaping trends in volunteerism and learn how storytelling can supercharge engagement and fundraising. Beginning with a networking brunch, the conference concludes with a powerful closing plenary that looks across generations to explore how volunteering strengthens democracy and shapes our collective future. This energizing session brings together Gen Z changemakers and seasoned leaders for a multi-generational panel conversation on the evolution of service, civic engagement and volunteerism in a rapidly changing world. Awards presentations will recognize youth and educators who are innovating in volunteer leadership and inspiring others to lead with purpose. Attendees will gain a renewed sense of possibility and a shared commitment to strengthen democracy through service.

Thank you for attending!

We look forward to seeing you in 2027 at
The 38th Annual
National Service-Learning Conference.®

www.nylc.org/slc

