

**YBLACK ACHIEVERS**<sup>™</sup>  
We build strong kids, strong families, strong communities.



**Greater Cincinnati**  
**Black Achievers Program**  
REACHING AND SERVING ALL PEOPLE OF COLOR



**BLACK ACHIEVERS** describes the origin and mission of the program. Today, however, the program includes all teens of color at YMCAs nationwide. Local program names may vary, such as Black & Hispanic Achievers or Minority Achievers.

## History

**QUENTIN MEASE** first conceived the YMCA Black Achievers program at the South Central YMCA in 1967 under the label Young Black Achievers of Houston. The program was designed to motivate African-American teens to academic and career success. In 1971, New York YMCA Financial Consultant Leo B. Marsh challenged the Harlem branch to develop a new motivational program, initiating the Black Achievers format we know today. The new program fostered ongoing interaction between African-American youth and adults who had distinguished themselves in their professions. After the Harlem launch of the Black Achievers program, this successful career development/academic achievement initiative spread quickly to YMCAs nationwide. Today, Black Achievers continues to grow in both urban and suburban communities of all sizes with more than 200 active programs nationwide.

The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati Black Achievers program is a national college readiness program designed to help African-American and other teens of color set and pursue high educational and career goals. Through academic support, career exploration and mentoring, the Black Achievers program help youth raise their academic standards, develop a positive sense of self, build character, explore diverse college and career options, and meet and interact with professionals of color who serve as role models to inspire them to greater heights.

**THE PROGRAM** since 1979 has served over 5,000 teens, awarded over \$ 150,000 in scholarships and engaged more 3,500 volunteers through networks of corporate and community partners.

## Why we need YMCA of Greater Cincinnati Black Achievers

Education statistics show that high school and college drop-out rates are higher among African-American and Hispanic students compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Research also shows that teens are more motivated to succeed academically when encouraged and guided by adults who are successful and who look like them. The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati Black Achievers program addresses these issues by pairing students with successful role models of color and providing academic and career-related mentoring and support services.

## How the program works

The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati Black Achievers is built on the notion that community and corporate involvement are critical to building networks and opportunities for youth. To that end, the program centers on the relationship established between volunteer mentors and youth during career clusters. Clusters are workshops dedicated to specific areas of professional interest. Youth participants and mentors, who are experts in their fields, complete projects that are designed to provide students an opportunity to explore their career interests through real-life application of skills. Career clusters include: Arts and Humanities, Business, Communications, Computers, Education, Engineering, Health and Medical, Law and Government, as well as Vocational and Technical disciplines.



# Greater Cincinnati Black Achievers Program

*"The Y has been in the business of helping kids for over 150 years grow and understand what life really is about, therefore the Black Achievers Program is another tool that bridges the gap."*

Toni Miles, Executive Director  
Greater Cincinnati Black Achievers

## YMCA of Greater Cincinnati Black Achievers Goals

- Raise academic standards of youth of color
- Assist youth of color in gaining acceptance to institutions of higher learning
- Expose youth of color to diverse career options
- Provide minority adult role models to inspire youth of color to set and achieve personal and professional goals
- Help youth of color develop a positive sense of self
- Build character and develop positive assets in youth of color
- Create channels for continuing community involvement by business and industry



## Teens in YMCA of Greater Cincinnati Black Achievers programs are:

- Motivated to succeed in school and gain marketable skills
- Empowered to pursue advanced education
- Inspired to develop their talents and leadership abilities
- Exposed to the culture and expectations of the workplace
- Engaged in mentoring relationships

To me, Black Achievers means opportunity! It is a magnificent tool which spring-boards youth to greater success academically and personally that creates a brighter future for us all!"

Jesiah A. Brock  
Past Black Achiever Teen  
2007 Senior, Northern Kentucky University

The program includes college prep and leadership development activities, such as workshops on SAT/ACT preparation; study skills/time management; interviewing techniques; financial management; team-building field trips; community service-learning projects; and college tours. The program hosts meetings at the YMCA, churches, schools, colleges/universities or local businesses. The Black Achievers program strongly incorporates the building of the Abundant Assets - 40 critical factors for the successful growth and development of young people. The assets clearly show the important roles that families, schools, congregations, neighborhoods, youth organizations and others in communities play in shaping young people's lives.

### Who participates?

YMCA of Greater Cincinnati Black Achievers is open to youth in middle and/or high schools, from all social, economic and academic levels. The only true requirement a youth must have to enroll in the program is the desire to achieve.

Adults of color also benefit from this program. Each year, corporations, businesses and organizations nominate successful role models in professional and managerial positions who are honored at an awards event. Thanks to the opportunity for leadership roles in the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati Black Achievers program, adults can gain visibility within their YMCA branch boards and companies, helping them to advance professionally and within their community. The program now reaps the benefits of past teen achievers who return to give back to a program that gave so much to them. Many past teen achievers have been honored as adult achievers. They also volunteer as cluster leaders, serve on YMCA branch boards and hold key positions within the YMCA, such as the position of Black Achievers Director. Finally, because of their participation and networking with adult volunteers, many past teen achievers have attained high profile positions within the corporate and business community.



"Black Achievers gave me insight into things I never thought I was capable of and I carry that lesson with me to this day. The people I met, the things I did would have not come together to assist me in defining my life's successes if it had not been for this program and the insistence of it's mentors, that I always demand the best from myself."

Jenine Smith  
Past Black Achiever Teen  
HR Professional, Major Retail Chain