

# Q1 2024 Newsletter

Richmond's writing  
and communication  
non-profit for youth



## WINTER PROGRAMS & SPRING AHEAD

BY CANDACE WEATHER, MULTI-REGIONAL PROGRAMS DIRECTOR

I absolutely love the winter time. I love snow (even though Virginia rarely gets any these days), warm clothing, and playing Christmas music for much longer than I should. Most of all, I love the opportunity to serve Richmond and Tri-Cities youth in the new year! This winter session, we hosted six high school programs and eight middle school programs. A few highlights: We worked with the Southside Boys and Girls Club to provide our Weekly Word program, where our youth produced their very own newspaper publication. We also worked with Higher Achievement to prepare youth at Boushall, Dogwood, and Henderson middle schools for their annual Love Out Loud Poetry Competition. It was incredible to watch young people express themselves through poetry at such a pivotal moment in their development, and we are so proud of all our youth this session!

We will continue to nurture our year-long commitments to youth in Richmond, Henrico, Petersburg, and Hopewell during our upcoming spring program session. Our partnerships with The Well in Hopewell and with 21st Community Learning Centers in Richmond and Henrico are still going strong! New for this session, we're partnering with CIS of Petersburg to host two youth pop-ups focused on providing social emotional learning, self-advocacy, and writing as a tool for healing. We are excited to continue to serve as reliable mentors to young people across Greater Richmond and the Tri-Cities; let's finish out this school year strong!

### WHAT'S INSIDE?

- 1 **Winter Programs & Spring Ahead**
- 2 **Flash Fiction Competition - Leap Year Edition**
- 4 **Welcome Board & Young Professional Board Leadership**
- 5 **Podium Gives Back**

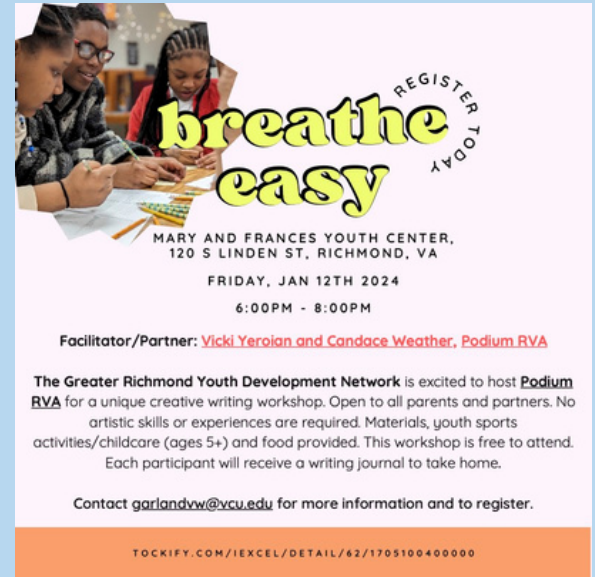
# PODIUM GIVES BACK

BY VICKI YEROIAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Podium provides many weekly after-school writing, communication, and teen professional development programs across Richmond, Hopewell, and Petersburg cities and in eastern Henrico County. Not only does Podium focus on youth literacy and professional development, it also works to support children holistically in their growth and education. To do this, Podium gives back to many partners in many different ways. Here are a couple of highlights from this winter:

## #1. Podium and the Mary & Francis Youth Center at VCU

In January, Podium hosted a parent engagement night at the Mary & Francis Youth Center. Focusing on using writing as a tool to reduce stress and to relax, Podium mentors worked with parents to "Breathe Easy!" Thanks to the Target on Laburnum, Podium was also able to donate 25 glue bottles for a February slime night at the Mary & Francis Youth Center!



## #2. Podium and ReEstablish Richmond

In February, Podium connected with ReEstablish Richmond, a local nonprofit working to connect refugees and newer immigrants to resources needed to establish roots, build community, and become self-sufficient. Starting up their winter family literacy classes, Podium saw a call for supplies and jumped at the opportunity to support! Thanks to the Target on Laburnum, Podium provided glue, erasures, binders, pencils, and dry erase markers to support ReEstablish Richmond's current family literacy cohort!





### #3. Podium and Higher Achievement

This February and March, Podium partnered with Higher Achievement across their three Richmond sites at Boushall, Dogwood, and Henderson middle schools! Helping Higher Achievement expand their Love Out Loud program, Podium worked with their middle schoolers on different forms and styles of poetry to prepare for school-wide competitions. The top three poets selected from each school will share their pieces and be honored at Higher Achievement's regional Love Out Loud showcase on Thurs, April 18th.

[Register to attend here!](#)



**You're Invited to Love Out Loud**  
**Thursday, April 18**  
**6:00-7:30 p.m.**  
**The Hippodrome Theatre**

Higher Achievement scholars use their voices every day to question, engage, advocate, and influence. **At Love Out Loud, they have the opportunity to share their talents through original works of poetry and art.** Prepare to be inspired at this year's event bringing together scholars across our three Richmond Achievement Centers: Boushall, Dogwood, and Henderson.

**RVSP**

*Poetry elective provided in partnership with*



# WELCOME BOARD & YOUNG PROFESSIONAL BOARD LEADERSHIP

BY VICKI YEROIAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

To best meet the needs of our communities, Podium works hard to recruit dedicated and compassionate leaders across Greater Richmond and the Tri Cities. Podium operates with two boards: its Board of Directors and its Young Professionals Board. Podium prides itself on being a community led, community served organization! Each board is filled with parents of Podium's school districts, community partners, former Podium staff and volunteers, with alumni of our programs, and with experts in the fields of youth development, education, and communications.

The Board of Directors is responsible for helping Podium raise funds, resources, and strategic connections. It also provides organizational oversight, governance, and supports Podium's directorial staff. In 2024, fourteen incredible individuals make up Podium's Board of Directors. Learn more about Podium's Board of Directors and how to get more involved [here!](#)

## YP Board Officers



Jillian Olson, MSW, Board Chair  
Richmond Behavioral Health Authority



Kayleigh Crandell, Vice Chair  
Weinstein JCC



Sarah Pentecost,  
Communications & Events Chair  
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality



Kavin Jackson, Treasurer  
Podium Alum

## Members



Phyl Demetriou  
TriNet



Lorin Hoisington  
Henrico County Public Schools



Dean McKnight  
Richmond Public Schools



Erika Misseri  
National Transparency Project



Logan Rickenbach  
ProTact Painters



Tristan Wynn  
Podium Alum

## Executive Leadership



Kerry Swarr, Vice Chair  
BloomEd Group, LLC



Paula Harris, Treasurer &  
Secretary  
Impact Makers



Armani Hall, Chair  
HCLTech

## Directors



Lorraine Blackwell  
Virginia Department of Transportation



Trevor Bragdon  
7 Figure Fundraising



Aaron Brenner  
Tiger Pistol



Sao'dia Douglas  
Prosperity Financial Services, LLC



Kim Eley  
KWE Publishing



Brittany Flippen  
Henrico Education Foundation



Demetrius Frazier  
Fleest Bookellers



Gwyneth Hagan  
Design to Learn Consulting



Shirtiera Lynch-Johnson  
Culturedcated Educational Services



Dre'mon Miller  
Richmond Public Schools



Benjamin Shute  
McGuire Woods

The Young Professionals Board is a great way for folks ages 21 - 40 to get involved in their community while building critical relationships and professional skills. Members organize awareness events, socials, give-back nights, and engage in professional mentorship alongside Podium's Board of Directors. In 2024, ten incredible individuals make up Podium's Young Professionals Board. Learn more about Podium's Young Professionals Board and how to get more involved [here!](#)

# FLASH FICTION COMPETITION - LEAP YEAR EDITION

BY ERIN MILLS, COMMUNICATIONS & EVENTS DIRECTOR

On Feb. 29th, Podium RVA hosted our fourth annual Flash Fiction Competition. This year's theme was science-fiction, and the Podium family had an incredible evening of futuristic fables and technological tales! A special congratulations goes out to Podium's own Multi-Regional Programs Director Candace Weather for winning 2nd place and to Joe Kruger for his incredible 1st place story. Thank you to everyone involved in making Podium's February Flash Fiction Competition an incredible night. Thanks to our sponsors: Impact Makers, Prosperity Financial Services LLC, and Design to Learn Consulting LLC, and to our media sponsor, River City Consulting. Thank you to our awesome judges, Kim Eley, Jess Ellett, and Deanna Lorianni, and finally, thank you to all our competitors and viewers! It is because of your unending support and love that we are able to put on awesome events like this. With over \$1,200 raised, we call that a stunning success! Check out our recap video of our winning stories here, and see you next year!



Check us out online at  
[www.podiumrva.org](http://www.podiumrva.org)



[FACEBOOK.COM/PODIUMFOUNDATION](https://www.facebook.com/podiumfoundation)



[INSTAGRAM.COM/PODIUMRVA](https://www.instagram.com/podiumrva)



[WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/COMPANY/PODIUM-FOUNDATION](https://www.linkedin.com/company/podium-foundation)



[YOUTUBE.COM/@PODIUMRVA](https://www.youtube.com/@podiumrva)