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Youth advocates to gather virtually for 2021 National Youth-at-Risk Conference

February 19, 2021

“We did not want to miss an opportunity for these crucial advocates to come together to share experiences and knowledge. Our youth are too important.”

Alisa Leckie, Ph.D.

For the first time in its 32-year history, the National Youth-at-Risk (NYAR) Conference is going virtual. From March 8 to 10, the conference will provide resources and training for youth advocates, including teachers, administrators, therapists, community leaders, health professionals and social workers with the goal of creating safe, healthy, caring and intellectually empowering educational environments for the nation’s youth.

“When faced with the decision whether to safely hold the conference digitally or not host the conference at all, the coordinators agreed that we did not want to cancel,” said Alisa Leckie, Ph.D., conference co-chair and assistant dean for partnerships and outreach for Georgia Southern University’s College of Education (COE). “The National Youth-at-Risk Conference is known for sharing beneficial information for practitioners working with young adults across the country. We did not want to miss an opportunity for these crucial advocates to come together to share experiences and knowledge. Our youth are too important.”

The conference will feature four keynote speakers. To kick off the event, Eric Rowles, president of Leading to Change, a nationally recognized training agency, will present “GAME ON: Get Ready, Get Set...Get Going.” Rowles is known for bringing power, energy and innovation to his training sessions where he draws inspiration from his previous work experiences. He has served as a senior director of training at the Youth Leadership Institute, director of leadership development at Rutgers University, manager of his own touring educational theater organization, director of international youth summer abroad programs and as a substance abuse prevention coordinator.

Additional participants include motivational speaker “Mr. I’m Possible” Keith L. Brown, renowned internet safety expert Katie Greer, and prominent poverty and homelessness researcher Rajni Shankar-Brown, Ph.D.

This year, the planning committee will announce a new conference name.

“It is our intent that this name change will promote an asset-based, rather than a deficit-based view of the youth we serve,” said Taylor Norman, Ph.D., conference co-chair and assistant professor in the COE at Georgia Southern. “We are excited to announce a new name that will continue the legacy of this conference and bring with it the positive approach youth advocates utilize when working with students to focus on their achievements and strengths.”

Registration for the National Youth-at-Risk Conference is open, and discounts are provided for groups of five or more. Visit

<https://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ce/conferences/nationalyouthatrisk/registration/> to register.

The NYAR conference is hosted by the COE at Georgia Southern University and the Division of Continuing Education. NYAR Conference was founded in 1990 by the COE and has grown from a regional conference of 150 participants to a national conference of approximately 1,200 participants from around the world. With more than 120 presentations made each year, participants learn about current research-based, educational programs and strategies, which empower young people to overcome at-risk conditions that may threaten their safety, health, emotional needs and academic achievement.

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[< Previous](#)