



2015 YOUTHLEAD-SENA PARTICIPANTS

YouthLead-SENA is a program in which Partners convenes rural young adults of limited means from across Colombia in the U.S. to promote social entrepreneurship, increase leadership skills, foster global competitiveness, and develop a commitment to service to community. Participants engage with U.S. companies, government agencies, and civic organizations in the process of building relationships with community leaders and participating in skills-based training focused on mobilizing their communities toward positive change. The following YouthLead participants are from across rural areas of Colombia. After a week of activities in Washington, D.C., they will head to South Carolina and Wyoming for two weeks of content-rich programming.

Luis Fernando Henao Rodríguez, 30 (Mentor)



Luis Fernando is from Manizales, Colombia and is a systems engineer and SENA instructor. One of his goals is to complete his master's program in the strategic management of technological resources. Previously Luis has given classes to people in rural areas, assisted trainees with projects, and volunteered in a nursing home. Motivated by his desire to help others, he is enthusiastic about guiding this group of YouthLead participants and helping them develop their project. Speaking on the value of the YouthLead-SENA program he writes, "participants will acquire new knowledge and skills to apply to their technical area and it will foster a spirit of leadership in each of them that in working with SENA will help them generate technological development projects that will boost the agro-industrial sector in some of the neediest areas of the country."

Juan David Vaca Espitia, 27 (Mentor)

Juan David is from Cali, Colombia and a SENA instructor of gastronomy. His goals include advancing his gastronomic experience and working on community development initiatives with rural youth. Previously, Juan David has taught baking to people with cognitive disabilities, has been awarded opportunities to enhance his gastronomy and hospitality training in France and Croatia, and has supported dozens of successful rural entrepreneurial projects for SENA students. He believes that this will be the most important formative experience for YouthLead participants up to this point in their lives and aims to help them take full advantage. Speaking on the program's importance he writes, "Education begins at birth, we do not produce results without sowing interest, offering practical guidelines, emphasizing productive potential, fostering proper use of raw materials and an automation of processes that allow us to generate a positive, progressive and realistic goals in our society."





Deiver Orlando Daza Alférez, 26



Deiver Orlando is from El Calvario, Colombia. Driven by a desire to improve the lives of people in rural communities, he is looking forward to learning as much as possible while he is in the US. Deiver has previous experience in the commercialization of products and rural services. He believes that young people are the key to a more sustainable and brighter future. After the YouthLead program he plans to utilize his newfound knowledge and skills to educate youth about the development and implementation of pesticide-free bioproducts, promote employment, and generate income for young farmers.

Luis Alfredo Adrada Meneses, 26

Luis Alfredo is from Trujillo, Colombia. As a student of the production of organic fertilizers, he is involved in a project that aims to change the production system of his community through the use of organic fertilizers and saving natural resources. Luis hopes that in the future this project and others he undertakes will help establish a stable economy in his community. During his time participating in the YouthLead program he is excited to not only improve as a leader and a person, but to also learn more about the United States.



Maria Fernanda Rojas Leguizamo, 27



Maria Fernanda is from Piedecuesta, Colombia and she is currently studying the technology behind food quality control. A project she is working on now involves evaluating the impact of the training and implementation of food handling practices in her region. She hopes that in the future she will be able to launch her own company that will export Colombian plants to other parts of the world. Through the YouthLead program Maria wants to learn more about techniques and tools used in developed countries, so that she can help her own country in the future. She is also hopeful that this experience helps her English skills that she believes will allow her to have access to more ideas and knowledge.



Diana Yissela Nossa Guarín, 27

Diana Yissela is from Firavitoba, Colombia. She is currently studying alternative systems of production of sheep and goats. She is involved in a number of projects that include youth leadership, rural youth, and entrepreneurship. As a YouthLead participant she aspires to learn about American culture, gain new skills, and show young people in her community that there are opportunities like this for them too. In the future, she plans to draw on her experiences to connect youth and leaders alike in her community and others.



Daniela Londoño Bustamante, 20



Daniela is from Palmira, Colombia and studies agricultural business management. She is currently working on a project that involves breeding pigs and her future goal is to obtain a degree that's focused on animal husbandry. Daniela is excited to participate in the YouthLead program because she is confident that through her experiences and time in the US she will grow personally and professionally. After returning to her community, Daniela hopes to carry out the following projects: implement sustainable projects that will help increase growth and educate farmers on how to increase their profit margin.

Edwin Antonio Toro Ramirez, 19

Edwin Antonio is from Espinal, Colombia and he is studying farm mechanization technology. His dream is to create a business that exports bananas and use his business to help improve the quality of life in his community. He is currently gaining valuable experience by working on a project that focuses on sustainable mechanical crop production with minimal water use. As a YouthLead participant he aims to improve upon his leadership and entrepreneurial skills, so that after the program he will be able to help contribute to the development of his community. Using technical knowledge from his studies and time in the US, Edwin has plans to carry out agricultural projects that will involve youth.





Elizabeth Ascanio Mora, 21



Elizabeth is from Albrego, Colombia. She is currently enrolled in a program in which she is learning about food processing. In addition to learning about these processes, she is actively involved in a project that has young entrepreneurs meet and discuss business ideas related to food production. Her interest in the YouthLead program is due to her strong dedication to her country. She hopes that through her time as a participant she can gain invaluable skills and information that will help her make a positive change in Colombia. In the future Elizabeth wants to help youth understand how they, too, can be a force of progress through democratic means.

Erik Alejandro Rojas Ballen, 19

Erik Alejandro is from Ubate, Colombia. A student of the production and commercialization of small livestock, he is involved in a project that seeks to increase the efficiency of processing livestock. In the future Erik wants to become a leader in his country. He hopes that through frequent travel and learning new things he will be able help his immediate community and his country. His dream of becoming a leader, travelling, and helping his community led him to the YouthLead program. He is eager to take advantage of his time in the US to grow as a leader and act as a role model in his community.



Jorge Alveiro Salazar Suarez, 21



Jorge Alveiro is from Enciso, Colombia. He studies the production and marketing of sheeps and goats through alternative feeding and management systems. Based on his experiences and studies, Jorge envisions creating dairy plant in his community that will help people in the immediate area and then that region as a whole. As a YouthLead participant he is excited to be exposed to new agricultural techniques. Jorge is passionate about his ideas and hopes that by linking rural youth together and focusing on agricultural growth his community's economy can grow and create more opportunities for young people.



Mayerlein De Jesús Rosado Acosta, 20

Mayerlein de Jesús is from Santa Marta, Colombia and she is currently studying the promotion of rural and local tourism. She dreams of creating a foundation for children and youth who abuse drugs. Marylein also hopes that by next year she will have created an ecotourism trail that can attract visitors to her community and increase employment opportunities for others. She sees the YouthLead program as a key step to realizing her dreams and accomplishing her goals.



Adriana Patricia Castillo Hurtado, 30

Adriana Patricia is from Buenaventura, Colombia. A student of aquaculture technology, she is currently involved in a project that seeks to improve the quality of aquariums and inform people about how to breed fish. She believes that introducing small-scale aquariums to people in urban environments can help them reduce stress. Passionate about her project and studies, Adriana is looking forward to participating in the YouthLead program. She is excited to be able take part in such an incredible program and is eager to apply what she learns in the US to improve her project and community.



José Vidal Jerez Mendoza, 20

José Vidal is from Vélez, Colombia. His studies are focused on reproductive technologies for cattle. A goal of his is to show other young people in the countryside that it's possible to make a living in the countryside. A key to making this a reality, he believes, is taking full advantage of technology. In addition getting to know people from the US, José wants to use his experience in the YouthLead to share ideas and learn more about how he can carry out more projects in the future. He is confident that by working with youth in the agricultural sector there will be a brighter future for everyone in his community.





Miguel Angel Salazar Lopez, 26

Miguel Angel is from Aguazul, Colombia. He is currently enrolled in a special course that investigates the marketing of crops. As part of this course, Miguel is working on project that aims to market chicken and quail eggs with organic selenium. As a YouthLead participant he plans to capitalize on the experience in order to return to his community and share what he learns with other youth. By bringing together youth leaders from his community and other communities, Miguel is upbeat about the possibilities that this network can achieve. A dream of his, which he maintains will be very difficult, is to be fluent in English.

Laura Milena Gómez González, 23

Laura Milena is from Fómeque, Colombia and is studying fruit and vegetable processing and marketing. Previously she was involved in a project that restored and maintained a natural well that benefitted 44 families. Currently, she is working on three projects that include making soap from tomatoes, recycling, and drying crops. Through her time in the YouthLead program she hopes build upon her leadership skills and learn more about American culture. The knowledge from her studies and her time in the US will be important as she plans on leading youth in her community to a more prosperous future.



Yorlin Samir Vega Toloza, 19



Yorlin Samir is from Santa Marta, Colombia. His studies revolve around the mechanization of agricultural, but more specifically the role of machinery in the development of land for farming. His dream is to create his own business that specializes in making organic fodder. A step in the right direction to accomplishing his dream, Yorlin is currently working on a project that focuses on the production of organic fodder and training for operating farm machinery. When he returns to his community he wants to focus on and work with youth who want to succeed and help them realize their goals.



Johan Camilo Forero León, 18

Johan Camilo is from San José del Guaviare and he studies the role of technology in the ecological production of livestock and agriculture. Johan is currently working on a project that aims to strengthen agricultural and livestock production locally. In the future he wants to be a SENA instructor. During his time as a YouthLead participant, he hopes to learn cultivation and management techniques that combined with new technological advances he can use to make an impact in his community. Upon his return to Colombia, Johan will hold training workshops and encourage other youth to be role models for others.



Héctor Esteban Castrillon Sánchez, 26



Héctor Esteban is from Santa Fe de Antioquia, Colombia and he is studying agricultural business management. A project he is currently working on is strengthening systems for sustainable agricultural business production. In the future he plans to manage agricultural companies that will help improve his family's income and help him tackle the regions' agricultural issues. Through the YouthLead program, Héctor plans to improve his knowledge in the agricultural field and his leadership skills that will enable him to carry out his ideas in his region.

Angela Rojas González, 23

Angela Rojas González is from Cerinza, Colombia and she is studying to be an entrepreneur in the production and marketing of nursery plants. She is currently working on a project dedicated to seeding and transplanting seedlings, watering, and fertilizing land in needy places. In the future, she plans to involve local youth in the creation and the operation of an agricultural enterprise dedicated to the production and marketing of plants and vegetables. After her time with the YouthLead program, she hopes to be able to share her experiences and conquer the challenges she has faced in her community.





Deicy Zambrano Guevara, 25

Deicy Zambrano Guevara is from Campoalegre, Colombia and she is studying to be an entrepreneur in the maintenance and marketing of products. She is currently the vice president of Asomuempren, which is an association that was established thanks to the support of the SENA, through the Rural Young Entrepreneurs program. They have planted over 6000 seedlings that are in the growth stage. After the YouthLead program she plans to promote leadership and entrepreneurship in her region.