

MUL Summer Construction Program prepares youth for careers

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After 10 weeks of training, 14 youth recently graduated from the Minneapolis Urban League LEAP program, a summer construction internship program for city of Minneapolis high school students. The program is designed to prepare them in careers in the building and construction trades. The LEAP program is in its 11th year and is a partnership between the City of Minneapolis, local trade unions, employers, and the Minneapolis Urban League.

“The Minneapolis Urban League is pleased to be at the center of this powerful collaboration between the City of Minneapolis, The Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Union, and the participating employers,” said Scott Gray, MUL President & CEO. “As we build this Gateway to Opportunity, partnerships such as the one we’ve formed with the LEAP program will be paramount for preparing our youth for career ladder opportunities.”



Additional funding for the LEAP program was provided through the City of Minneapolis with the Economic Recovery Act dollars. “The City of Minneapolis was excited to be part of the LEAP

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program because it provided shovel ready projects and put youth to work immediately,” said Kay Franey, Economic Recovery Act Coordinator for the City of Minneapolis. “We are always pleased to work with Roosevelt Gaines and the Urban League because of the way he connects with the youth and helps them to be successful.”

LEAP provides paid summer internships that can lead to permanent opportunities with the partner employers. At the culmination of the program, these students are prepared to pursue apprenticeships in the trades and some will go directly into the workforce with the companies where they completed their internship.

“As a representative for the trades, we are always looking for a work force. It’s very valuable for us to have partners like the Minneapolis Urban League that help to prepare students for careers in the building and construction trades,” said Michael Hawthorne, Business Manager for the Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Council. “The students we get out of the Urban League Program have a better retention rate. They are better prepared for this type of work and have more success.”

Participants were referred by four city high schools, Patrick Henry High School, North Community High School, The City, Inc. and The Minneapolis Urban League Academy and are provided a job readiness assessment, program expectations, on-the-job behavior instruction including attendance requirements. The students work on an actual worksite, learn about the many trades included on a project, and are trained to work with a crew on building and construction projects. This year students worked on projects with union contractors: Carl Bolander & Sons Co., McGough Construction, U of M UROC Project, and Weekes Forest Products, Inc.

“I learned a lot about masonry and think I would like to move forward in a career in that area,” said Shain Williams, one of the LEAP Program participants. “I’m going to college in the spring and I’ve decided to study more about construction and business. Ultimately, I’d like to own my own construction company.”

Gaines, LEAP program coordinator, said the key to success and biggest challenge for many of the students is being open to changing behaviors. “We want to prepare them with the fundamentals of being successful on a worksite,” said Gaines. “We require attendance at all training sessions, on time arrivals, and finishing tasks. The kids learn that by adjusting their behavior and working in a new environment that they can be successful in this industry.”