

Sisterhood Boutique expands

Written by

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Business is good for the participants in the Brian Coyle Center Youth Entrepreneurship Program.

The store they opened in February is already expanding, thanks to donated space from Fairview Health Services. The new, larger Sisterhood Boutique is located at 2200 Riverside Ave., Minneapolis and celebrated its re-launch last week.

The Sisterhood Boutique was developed by East African women between the ages of 14 and 23 years who reside in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis and participate in the Brian Coyle Center Youth Entrepreneurship Program. More than a year ago, program participants decided they wanted to build something positive in the neighborhood for other girls and women.

After a successful grand opening in February at the African Development Center, Fairview Health Services stepped forward to donate needed additional space at their Smiley Point building in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood.

An agreement was reached within one month, through the leadership of Amano Dube, director,

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Brian Coyle Center; Paul Pribbenow, president, Augsburg College; Rulon Stacey, president and CEO, Fairview Health Services and Paul Onufer, Fairview system executive for facility operations.



"Fairview's willingness to be a leader and open their doors has truly inspired our youth to do

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even more. (It) has begun drawing more youth to join the venture, and has helped attract even more businesses, corporations and individuals to support the vision of this Boutique," said Brian Coyle director, Dube.

"The good location is drawing in more customers already," said Sisterhood member Khadra Fiqi, after a soft launch in the new space at the end of May.

The girls work on the project focuses on personal and professional development, women and youth empowerment and business skills from customer service to event planning. The colorful variety of clothing and accessories in various styles and sizes provide affordable clothing options for the students and others in the neighborhood.



Over the course of 2013, the teenagers worked with Brian Coyle and Pillsbury United Communities staff as well as Mary True Laurel, Augsburg College director of community engagement, to develop their business plan. They were mentored by professionals in the field, such as Stella Richardson, co-founder of Express Yourself Second Hand Boutique, and supported by Augsburg MBAs and graphic design students.

Additional funding support was provided for this initiative by Women's Foundation of Minnesota, Sundance Family Foundation, Marbrook Foundation and Women Investing in the Next Generation (WINGs) Fund of Greater Twin Cities United Way.



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