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Working For Youth initiative employs over 400 youth most at risk of experiencing violence, raises \$600,000 for the stipend fund in 2 months

Kansas City, Mo. — At the midpoint of its 2021 summer program, local youth employment and anti-violence initiative **Working For Youth** is celebrating significant milestones for the program’s inaugural year: 427 youth most at risk of experiencing violence are employed through 89 partnering employers in the metro area with 73% of youth’s compensation provided through generous donations from the Working For Youth fund.

In spite of extraordinary circumstances due to COVID-19, Working For Youth has also raised \$600,000 in funds since its launch on April 8 — almost entirely from community-sourced funding — with a goal to raise \$1 million for next year.

Working For Youth is an evidence-based model aimed at changing the trajectory of teens most at risk of violence and the community by expanding employment opportunities to young people in Kansas City. **Hire KC, Entrepreneurship KC,** and **KC Common Good (KCCG)** — in partnership with **Mayor Quinton Lucas** — are collaboratively growing the city’s capacity by training, coaching, and employing nearly 10% of Kansas City’s 5,000 youth, ages 14 to 18, living east of Troost.

The Working For Youth initiative largely owes its success to the grassroots, community-led effort from Kansas City businesses and organizations committed to change, says KCCG President **Klassie Alcine**.

“So far, we’ve doubled our initial capacity of both our partners and our employed youth, which is a testament to the power of our community,” Alcine said. “The

Kansas City community owns the progress and the solution. Young people deserve the chance to succeed, and together, we can address the root causes of violence to instill hope and ensure a successful future for every young person in the Kansas City region.”

Through the program, Hire KC and Entrepreneurship KC interns have received virtual and in-person opportunities to expand their network and career opportunities post-high school, gained valuable work experience to develop both personally and professionally and earned a stipend for their summer experience.

Working For Youth has so far partnered with 33 community partners, and **Community America Credit Union** has provided financial literacy training and bank accounts for program participants who need it. By eliminating the silos between employers and youth organizations, the initiative is creating an ecosystem that maximizes economic empowerment for more than 1,000 youth and bolsters workforce development through skills training and mentorship.

Elaina Page, Owner of Next Paige LLC, Talent and Management Company, was proud to serve as an employer this summer with Working For Youth:

“Helping the next generation is viable to our growing community,” Page said. “It gives me great appreciation to give back to our youth. I’m truly proud of these girls — They’ve learned and grown so much within just a few weeks.”

The program is derived from a Nebraska-based grassroots nonprofit called [Step Up Omaha](#), which mobilized in 2008 to align diverse, cross-sector public and private partnerships to successfully expand opportunities for youth who had been historically marginalized, resulting in a **74% decrease** in violent crime and a **27% increase** in the high school graduation rate.

"Paid internships provide experience and exposure which are critical in expanding career pathways," said **Dr. Leigh Anne Taylor Knight**, Executive Director and COO of The DeBruce Foundation. "The DeBruce Foundation is privileged to be a partner in this community effort that will impact the lives of many youth in our region, broadening their horizons and helping lay the foundation for future success."

An upcoming press event with Mayor Lucas and program partners, will be held **July 23** at Manual Career Technical Center (1215 E Truman Rd, Kansas City, MO 64106)

at 10:30am. For more details, reach out to Klassie Alcine at klassie@commongood.org.

While acknowledging this year's successes, Working For Youth hasn't paused to rest; the initiative is already calling for corporate sponsors and employers for its 2022 program.

To donate to this initiative, visit [the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation](#) and contribute to the Working for Youth Fund online, check, credit or debit card. To learn more or get involved, visit workingforyouth.org.

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About KC Common Good

Founded in 2018, KC Common Good is addressing the root causes of violence to instill hope and ensure a successful future for every individual in the greater Kansas City region. The mission of the organization is to create an environment where all citizens can live safely and have access to real opportunities. Where there's good, there's hope. Learn more at kccommongood.org.

About Hire KC

Hire KC is bridging the gap between school and work, helping to prepare the next generation with the life know-how and essential skills necessary to lead to good and promising jobs. Learn more at hirekc.org.

About Entrepreneurship KC

Entrepreneurship KC is a collaborative partnership between [Cherry](#) and [STARTLAND](#) working to create the next generation of entrepreneurs by providing scaffolded immersive entrepreneurial experiences to area students. Learn more at entrepreneurshipkc.org.

About DeBruce Foundation

The DeBruce Foundation is a national foundation whose mission is to expand pathways to economic growth and opportunity. The Foundation is geared toward helping individuals unlock their potential and find career pathways. By developing solutions such as the Agile Work Profiler, we change how people pursue careers. By partnering strategically, we increase experiences and exposure to widen career opportunities. We develop young people by engaging them in decision-making through initiatives such as DeBruce Career Corps. Learn more at www.DeBruce.org.