



Summer internships are now available for Boys & Girls Club kids.

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Madison organizations announce collaborative internship effort

by A. David Dahmer

In a move to boost job and career opportunities for youth, the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County and an array of partners announced a press conference at the CUNA Mutual Conference Center May 7 that they are sponsoring 160 internships that will pay 15- to 20-year-old employees a total of \$250,000 this summer.

The Boys & Girls Club of Dane County (BGCDC) in partnership with the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), City of Madison, United Way of Dane County, CUNA Mutual Group, Dane County,

Metcalfe's Market, and Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin announced that they have secured funding in order to provide 160 paid internships for high school and college students this summer which will range from \$9 an hour to \$15 an hour.

"It's huge. Think about it... some of the kids will be making \$15 an hour for 40 hours a week. That's a nice piece of change for a young adult," Boys and Girls Club President and CEO Michael Johnson tells The Madison Times. "The money part is great but I think the experiences they are going to have, the people they are going to meet, and the things that they will learn will stay with them for a lifetime. I am so excited about this effort and I'm so happy people stepped up to make this happen."

"This is very exciting news because young people need career opportunities and they need to experience opportunities that can help shape their future and we are glad to have supported Boys & Girls and its partners with this initiative" said Steve Goldberg, executive director of the CUNA Mutual Group Foundation.

The partnerships will include 52 paid internships from over 20 different local businesses, including the City of Madison Municipal Government Youth Internship Program, Dane County's new County Government College Internship Program, and businesses like Metcalfe's Market, American Girl, Saris Cycling Group, Fiskars, Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation, BMO Harris Bank and UW Hospital & Clinics.

"We want to sit down with even more businesses because next year because we want to grow that number," Johnson says. "The mayor [Paul Soglin] said that his goal was to have a job for any young person looking to work. If we can pull that off, we will really be changing the tide in this city. We'll be employing young people in the summer months, putting money into the economy, and keeping the kids busy and out of trouble.

“These kids will be entering college soon and we want them all to stay in Madison and to work in Madison and I believe that those relationships with community agencies and companies that they will make through these internships will make a difference in that,” Johnson added.

The internships, mainly for students of color, low-income families, or first-generation college students, aren’t intended to be just busy work, Johnson said. “We told the employers that if they just need people to answer phones that that wasn’t the type of internships that we want,” Johnson says. “We want these kids to learn about marketing, business, financials. We want them to be treated like they are full-time employees.”

The initiative addresses troubling data about teenage and young adult employment, especially among minorities. Since 2008, the employment rate of blacks ages 16-24 in Wisconsin dropped from 40 percent to 31 percent in 2012, state Department of Workforce Development data show. The percentage of whites the same age dropped from 66 percent in 2008 to 57 percent in 2011, but increased to 60 percent in 2012 — the most recent data available.

“When I was a kid, I had a summer job every summer,” Johnson said. “And, to be honest with you, if those summer jobs weren’t there, I’d probably be knocking someone over the head and taking it. It kept me out of trouble.

“When you look at the plight of African Americans in this city, [this program] will help reduce that disparity,” Johnson added. “This program will help make a difference. You can really empower young people by providing them with meaningful employment. This is something that is tangible. If you want to talk about the achievement gap, this is something that will make a difference.”

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