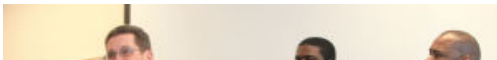




Boys and Girls Club, Urban League partner for first time on employment program

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February 03, 2015 4:15 pm • [Laurel White](#) | [The Capital Times](#) | [lwhite@madison.com](#)



For the first time, the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County

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Steven Skolaski, president of The Oscar Rennebohm Foundation, speaks at a news conference announcing a major contribution from the foundation to the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County and the Urban League of Greater Madison on Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2015.

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Laurel White

White joined The Capital Times in 2014, where she covers a variety of beats, including music, craft beer, technology, and social issues. She previously worked for Wisconsin Public Radio.



and the Urban League of Greater Madison will partner on a large-scale, long-term project to reduce unemployment among low-income residents of Dane County.

The two local nonprofits just received a three-year, \$300,000 grant to support job training and internships for area students and adults.

Job training and professional development for low-income residents have been high priorities for local nonprofits, as the **2013 Race to Equity Report** found that African-Americans in Dane County had a 25 percent unemployment rate, making them about five times more likely to be unemployed than the county's white population. The national unemployment rate for African-Americans in 2013 was 18 percent, slightly double the national unemployment rate of whites.

"The investment will help the Urban League expand its partnerships with employers to ensure a diverse, world-class workforce," said Noble Wray, board member and former interim CEO of the Urban League of Greater Madison.

The Urban League will more than double its professional development programs for low-income residents through the grant. Last year, they served about 140 people. They hope to serve 200 this year and secure "new or better family-supporting jobs" for 1,500 Madison-area adults by 2020.

The organization partners with employers like Alliant Energy, UW Health and Exact Sciences to help program participants explore careers and gain professional skills. They also offer resume workshops, help filling out job applications and mentorship for new hires.

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The Boys and Girls Club says the grant will help them provide 675 paid internships, career exploration and employment connections to high school and college students over the next three years.

The national teenage unemployment rate for children and young adults aged 16 to 19 was about 17 percent in December 2014, [according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

Finding jobs is especially hard for teens in the Madison area because of competition from UW-Madison students, said Ronnicia Johnson-Walker, TOPS program and internship manager at the Boys and Girls Club.

“There is a stigma against teenagers,” she said. “Why pay a high schooler when you can get a college student for the summer?”

The Boys and Girls Club internships, which will pay from \$8 to \$15 an hour, will be with organizations like American Girl, Saris Cycling Group, Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation, Fiskars, BMO Harris Bank and UW Hospitals and Clinics, among others.

Wray said the program’s “two-generational strategy,” which seeks to support teens with internships and parents with professional development, will make the program more successful than previous efforts.

Parents of teens enrolled in Boys and Girls Club internships will be targeted by the Urban League for professional development, but the program will be open to all Dane County adults, regardless of family status, he said.

The partnership will begin immediately.

The Boys and Girls Club of Dane County and the Urban League of Greater Madison received the funds from The Oscar Rennebohm Foundation, a charitable organization founded by Oscar Rennebohm, who was governor of Wisconsin from 1947 to 1951.

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