

Press Clippings 12-12-20 to 12-14-20

---Press Clippings---12/14/2020
There are no U-46 related news stories.

---Daily Herald--- 12/13/2020

U-46 mentorship program for Black boys aims to create leaders

By: Madhu Krishnamurthy



Asharia Harris

A mentorship program initially targeting youth in the Elgin community has shifted its focus toward helping African American boys develop leadership skills.

Brothers Rise Up now provides mentoring and support to 130 Black male students in third through ninth grades across 17 **Elgin Area School District U-46** schools. The program focuses on monitoring and improving students' academic performance, attendance and behavior and offers a curriculum emphasizing character development, social skills, leadership and career development.

The goal is to help Black male students achieve their goals, improve their future prospects and provide a forum where they can share their struggles, said Jim Cook, a dean's assistant at Kenyon Woods Middle School who founded the program in 2019 as part of the nonprofit Midwest Sports Academy.

"They always can strive to be better, and just because of the environment you're in, that doesn't mean that's the person you're going to end up being," Cook said.

Before the pandemic, Cook would bring in guest speakers, including local entrepreneurs, community and corporate leaders and lead visits to colleges and businesses. Now, he engages students virtually every week via Zoom.

Students who graduate from the program are asked to give back and become "champions of character" by mentoring younger students, he added.

Student leader recognized

College of Lake County freshman Asharia Harris is among roughly two dozen recipients of the Peter R. Marsh Foundation Student Silent Servant Award.

Students are nominated by a mentor or teacher for the award, which recognizes selfless service to others in the community.

"Asharia was a natural fit for the scholarship because of the years of volunteerism she completed and the joy with which she contributed," said Sharon Sanders-Funnye, CLC director of student recruitment and onboarding and the TRiO Educational Talent Search program.

Harris volunteered with Aid to Haiti, Africare, Shiloh's PADS Shelter, Northern Illinois Food Bank, National Association for Mental Illness and the Lambda Nu Omega chapter of AKA Sorority Inc.

"It was an honor to receive this scholarship," said Harris, a Warren Township High School graduate studying psychology at CLC.

"It just shows community service and volunteerism is such an important thing to participate in."

Minority college gap

The Illinois Community College Board has granted \$18.7 million to 17 community colleges statewide to help address education and unemployment gaps in the African American and other minority communities.

The funding goes to colleges serving larger Black student populations, including the College of Lake County in Grayslake, which will receive \$1.1 million.

Under Illinois' Workforce Equity Initiative, now in its second year, grant funding helped 1,840 students -- 78% Black -- enroll in the spring of 2020.

Participating colleges can use the money to develop or enhance training and career pathway programs primarily in five high-demand employment sectors -- health care, manufacturing and construction, transportation, information technology and emergency services.

"We know there is great demand for accelerated occupational training programs like the ones offered through the Workforce Equity Initiative," ICCB Executive Director Brian Durham said.

"This money will support so many African American Illinoisans by not only providing free training programs that will turn into solid paying jobs but also by providing a wide range of wraparound services to address basic needs like child care and transportation."

An Illinois Community College Board [report](#) found minorities, particularly Blacks, were underrepresented among career and technical education program graduates. In 2019, minorities made up 37% and Blacks 12% of all CTE course completers. The report highlighted the need to fund a targeted initiative promoting workforce equity.

Tech classes for women

Oakton Community College in Des Plaines and the YWCA Evanston/North Shore are partnering to provide free web development classes for disadvantaged women.

The 12-week program will be taught virtually by Oakton instructors starting Jan. 4. Participants will learn to create customized and interactive Web pages.

The curriculum is based on Oakton's Web page development course.

"This program is designed to prepare graduates for entry-level web developer positions," said Bob Sompolski, Oakton dean of STEM and health careers.

Sompolski said women represented more than 50% of Oakton's enrollment in the fall of 2019, but under 40% of science, technology, engineering and math majors. "There are not enough women engaged in trying to make careers out of these areas," he added.

The classes also will be part of YWCA's YWeb Academy, whose programs are open to the public and provide digital skills' training to underrepresented or vulnerable populations, such as women of color, domestic violence survivors and low-wage earners.

About 25 students are expected to enroll for the first session and another 12-week session will be offered in April, said Shannon Callahan, YWCA Evanston/North Shore women's leadership and economic advancement director.

"For us at the YWCA, our mission is to eliminate racism and empower women," Callahan said, adding the group has been focused on helping women of color "rise up" and close the gap in representation.

Youth scholarships

Chicago-area immigrant youths seeking to pursue a college education can apply for scholarships for the 2021-2022 academic year from TheDream.US.

The nation's largest college access and success program for young immigrants has awarded more than 400 scholarships to Dreamers attending nine partner colleges -- Arrupe College,

Dominican University, Illinois College, Illinois Institute of Technology, Lewis University, National Louis University, North Park University, Northeastern Illinois University and University of Illinois Chicago.

Eligible applicants must be recipients in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program on Temporary Protected Status or individuals who came to the country before Nov. 1, 2015, and otherwise meet the DACA eligibility criteria.

For more information, visit thedream.us/scholarships/.

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