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Public-private partnership will give 160 Madison teens paid summer internships



78

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May 08, 2014 1:30 pm • By Jessie Opoien | The Capital Times

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This summer, 160 high school and college students from

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Mary Burke speaks at a new s conference announcing a major jobs initiative for students on Thursday, May 8, 2014. Mike DeVries -- The Capital Times

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Madison will go to work in paid internships at local businesses, nonprofits and government agencies.

The initiative, a partnership between the **Boys & Girls Club of Dane County**, the **Madison Metropolitan School District**, the **City of Madison**, the **United Way of Dane County**, **CUNA Mutual**, **Dane County**, **Metcalf's Market** and **Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin**, was announced Thursday.

Of the 160 teens receiving internships, 80 percent are students of color and come from low-income communities, said **Michael Johnson, CEO of the Boys & Girls Club**. The internships will pay from \$9-15 per hour; collectively, the students will earn \$250,000 over a seven-week period.

The partnership grew from years of discussions, Johnson said. It started about four years ago when **gubernatorial candidate Mary Burke**, a Boys & Girls Club board member and co-founder of the AVID/TOPS college readiness program, wanted to provide a strong internship opportunity for students.

That program started by providing about 12 internships, Burke said.

"We know that these internships are not just about earning money or a summer job, but it's about developing those lifelong skills, those workplace skills, those mentoring relationships that are going to fuel the aspirations and the dreams for these young people for many years to come,"



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Burke said.

Johnson, Burke and Mayor Paul Soglin said they'd like to see the opportunities for teens grow in the years to come. Soglin said it's his goal for every teen in Madison and Dane County to have a paid summer internship that provides a pathway to a career.

"One of the challenges in our community is a gap in income in households throughout Dane County," Soglin said. "What we're going to do is close that gap, and one way to do it is through the creation of jobs that lead to careers. We know it

works. It's going to be an opportunity for every young person in Madison and Dane County."

The city's component of the program will be named for **Wanda Fullmore**, who recently retired after serving for 39 years as office clerk for the mayor's office.

"It was in recognition of the years, those four decades with the City of Madison," Soglin said. "She came to us as a 17-year-old and **retired just a week ago**. And during that period of time, we saw her grow from someone with dedication, commitment, energy, a personality unmatched — but no experience. But we saw an opportunity there for someone to learn on the job, and we all know what the result was. She was offered a job from competitors of ours every week of the year."

The internships are designed to expose students to careers and opportunities they might not have otherwise experienced. Students will work in marketing, event planning, product development, youth development, health and medicine and more. When they apply, they'll list their preferences, and be matched accordingly as much as possible.

Participating agencies include American Girl, Fiskars, UW Hospitals and Clinics, the Overture Center for Performing Arts, WORT 89.9 Radio and Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Company.

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"This kind of initiative puts kids in the doors, inside the hallways of businesses," said Nichelle Nichols, chief academic officer at the Boys & Girls Club. "To have them working directly with adults who are committed to showing them the ropes, showing them the potential — that can be really game-changing for a lot of young people about how they see themselves, how they see their future, really being able to dream about something they haven't been exposed to."

Carlos Hernandez, Julian Walters and Tray Brunner all graduated from the AVID/TOPS program and will intern at CUNA Mutual this summer. The money is good, they said, but the experience is even better.

"For me it's just important because it's a real hands-on experience," said Hernandez, a student at Madison Area Technical College. "Learning what you're good at and what you should pursue while you're still young and you still have time in school to change your mind."

Hernandez is using his internship to explore an interest in marketing. He's been planning on transferring to UW-Milwaukee to major in architecture, but he thinks he might want to study marketing at UW-Madison. He's excited to get some practical experience this summer.

Walters, a student at Mount Zion Academy, said he's looking forward to the experience and ability to network with people. He liked the idea of being able to try a career path and not lose anything for trying.

Walters said when he started high school, he knew he wanted to go to college, but AVID/TOPS made it a realistic goal for him. Hernandez agreed: having a shared goal with a close-knit group of students meant a lot to him.

"I think AVID shaped the person I am right now," said Brunner, a UW-Milwaukee student. "I struggled a lot sophomore year, but I had the guidance from my teachers and the AVID/TOPS program and also the Boys & Girls club, just to keep me focused. That's what motivated me. I got time management skills, organizational skills and being able to focus."

Johnson also announced Thursday that 94 AVID/TOPS students will graduate from the program this year. All 94 have been accepted to colleges, and of those students, 74 percent are first-

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Tags Jessie Opoien, Boys & Girls Club Of Dane County, Michael Johnson, Mary Burke, Internships, Employment, Tops, Cuna Mutual

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