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Working For Youth initiative to eliminate silos, employ 500 at-risk youth this summer

(Kansas City, Missouri) – 2020 was the most violent year on record for Kansas City’s youth, and one local coalition is making it its mission to change that trajectory.

Working For Youth is an evidence-based model aimed at changing the trajectory of at-risk teens and the community by expanding employment opportunities to young people in Kansas City. **Hire KC, Entrepreneurship KC** and **KC Common Good** (KCCG) are collaboratively growing the city’s capacity to train, coach and employ 500 youth this summer—10% of Kansas City’s 5,000 youth, ages 14 to 18, living east of Troost.

“Our vision is for all area youth to have a chance at career exploration, job training and internship experience,” said **KCCG President Klassie Alcine**. “Young people need the opportunity to thrive, and we’re the key to their success. 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. There’s never been a more critical time to unite in support of the next generation.”

The initiative is uniting sectors, from business to government, nonprofit to philanthropy, to create a more diverse, inclusive and equitable workforce and a stronger, safer and more prosperous community for all. Working For Youth is partnering with 20 youth organizations, and **Community America Credit Union** will provide 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

500 youth and bolsters workforce development through skills training and mentorship.

The 2021 summer program begins in early June, and both virtual and in-person opportunities are in high demand. Prospective interns are granted the opportunity to expand their network and career opportunities post-high school, gain valuable work experience that develop them personally and professionally, and earn a stipend for their summer experience.

“Future generations have an innate ability to apply and understand different technologies which sets them apart in the workforce. Hiring young people has a positive impact on driving businesses forward and through the Working for Youth partnership, our community can develop and create a diverse and equitable workforce,” said **Thalia Cherry, CEO of Cherry Co.**

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.

Employers are able to get involved in two ways: Providing an internship opportunity for 14- to 18-year-olds or financially sponsoring an eight-week youth employment and mentorship opportunity at the cost of \$2,000 per participant. In addition to making a difference for that individual, employers can help build a diverse pipeline of qualified staff, drive innovation through the inclusion of the emerging generation’s technological competencies and strengthen the Kansas City community. Working For Youth has received funds from local foundations, including **Health Forward Foundation**, but more funds are needed to support the \$800,000 initiative.

“Every single victim has loved ones—parents, siblings, children, spouses, friends—whose lives are changed forever because of our violence epidemic. We cannot become numb to our violence problem or shrug our shoulders like this is too big of a problem to solve,” said **Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas**. “Curbing violent crime requires more than just law enforcement-related solutions—and we all have a role to play. We ask the business community to step up to provide summer internship opportunities for students who want and need them. I’m proud to collaborate with KC Common Good in our shared mission to create a safer community for all through hope and opportunity.”

Registration is now open for both employers and youth. To learn more or get involved, visit **workingforyouth.org**. To donate to this initiative, go to the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and contribute to the Working for Youth Fund online, check, credit or debit card.

The site was created and built by **We Code KC** youth. We Code KC focuses on creating a pipeline of future-ready professionals by exposing youth and young adults to various technology and computer concepts.

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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.