President’s Update: 1,000 GED Campaign—Prepared for Post-Welfare Economy

The post-welfare economy presents the greatest opportunity and challenge facing the region today. Market demand for more workers has opened the doors to the middle class for people who had once relied on charity and government assistance. Summit Academy, our supporters, and students will seize this opportunity and face the challenge.

Unfortunately, many are unprepared to take advantage of this opportunity. In Hennepin County alone, there are 72,000 adults who do not have a high school diploma or GED. That is nearly equal to the total population of Brooklyn Park. Imagining what it would look like to have an entire city headed by people who do not have a high school diploma or GED is inconceivable.

Since Summit Academy OIC’s contextualized GED program launched in February, over a thousand individuals have attended an information session and more than 500 individuals have subsequently taken the entrance exam.

Passing this admissions requirement is their first hurdle to self-sufficiency. We will be calling upon you to help us provide tutors to prepare our future students, many of whom have been out of school for a long time. You might also imagine how difficult life’s challenges may be without a high school diploma or GED. So we’ve discovered that student retention has become an emerging issue. In response we are building in motivational incentives and asking our friends to join us in embracing these students who are trying to move forward and join the middle class.

Finally, we believe that the GED credential should be viewed as a workforce issue by the business community. Earning a GED represents more than just a piece of paper—it shows dedication and hard work. We are not interested in blaming the individuals who were unable to get their high school diploma, nor are we interested in criticizing the K-12 public school system. Instead, we want to enable individuals to earn their GED so that they can launch careers, take care
so glad that I can bring my kids out of that rut,” said Kamonty. “I come from a family of unsuccessful people. I wanted to break that chain and I thought that the best way to do that was to apply myself to something new. I’ve passed with flying colors. It’s amazing. Thanks to Summit Academy, I’m motivated to care for my children, Kamonty enrolled in Summit Academy’s Construction GED program. He got to the point where my mom would bring home stale bread for dinner from her job at Subway” said Kamonty. “Kids shouldn’t have to worry about their next meal or where they are going to sleep. I plan to give my kids a brighter future.”

Motivated to care for his children, Kamonty enrolled in Summit Academy’s Construction GED program. He worked hard and, much to his surprise, he earned math scores high enough to get him into Summit Academy’s challenging electrician training program.

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Plans for the Future
The 1,000 GED Campaign is our first step at seizing the opportunities and addressing the challenges in the post-welfare economy. With your continued support, we will meet these challenges and continue to demonstrate that the best social service program in the world is a job. We intend to raise $3 million dollars over the next three years so that we can help our students move from an average annual earnings of $6,000 prior to enrolling to $35,000 following graduation from Summit Academy.

In 2017, we are expanding our construction program offerings to meet the market demand for transportation and welding skills. We will also conduct thorough market studies of a couple of potential emerging program opportunities—financial services and culinary—to determine market demand and feasibility. Please join us in this exciting venture.

Kamonty Wade
2016 GED Electrician Graduate
Despatch Industries, Electrical Panel Assembler

“When I was growing up, each day was a battle for me and my siblings. We were often homeless and it got to the point where my mom would bring home stale bread for dinner from her job at Subway” said Kamonty. “Kids shouldn’t have to worry about their next meal or where they are going to sleep. I plan to give my kids a brighter future.”

Stephanie Ford, 2016 Electrician Graduate, Gephart Low Voltage Systems, Low Voltage Installer

Single mom Stephanie Ford needed a better paying job and career to support her two young children, one of whom has autism. She acknowledges, “I grew up in north Minneapolis raised by a single mom. There was never any money, so college wasn’t an option.” So when looking for a new opportunity, she enrolled in Summit Academy’s new in-house electrician program.

Twenty weeks later, Stephanie graduated and was immediately hired by Gephart Electric for the U.S. Bank Stadium construction. Now she is working on the Target Center renovations. “I’m on Gephart LowVoltage Systems team and I love it. I couldn’t ask for a better company to work for. Anytime you watch a Viking’s game at home, it’s because of the wiring my Gephart crew and I did,” said Stephanie. “Because of the opportunities that Gephart and Summit Academy gave me, I am completely debt-free and I was able to buy my own house.”

In addition to her role as a low-voltage installer, Stephanie serves on Mortenson Construction’s safety committee, continues her education at the MN Statewide Limited Energy JATC and was recently asked to join the IBEW Local 292 Unon Safety Committee. She states, “I look forward to building my skills and becoming a lead technician in the future.”

Tycebell Holliday, 2012 Carpentry Graduate

“I went to prison when I was 17 and I came home when I was 21. I realized that I needed to change, but it was hard because of my background,” says Tycebell Holliday. When he was unable to find a job, his father recommended enrolling in Summit Academy’s no-cost construction program.

Determined to succeed at Summit Academy, Tycebell focused all of his time and energy on his education. “At first it was a struggle because I was always broke. Many times I couldn’t concentrate because I didn’t have any food or a place to sleep.” Ready to give up, Tycebell sought help from Louis King. With Mr. King’s assistance, Tycebell received a Cub Foods gift card to buy groceries as well as an after-school work-study job at Summit Academy for the remainder of his 20 weeks. “Nobody had ever done anything like that for me before. That was a wow moment for me! Mr. King didn’t even know me that well, but he just did that to help me succeed. From then on, I always did my best so that he wouldn’t regret helping me,” says Tycebell.

After graduating from Summit Academy, Tycebell worked in the construction industry for many years until he was able to start his own business. “My life is so good now. That’s the best feeling that I’m able to make my whole family happy. I’m determined to keep my wife smiling and leave something for my son’s future.”
Summit Prep Tutors

Introduced in 2015, Summit Prep is a volunteer-based program designed to tutor future students to successfully complete Summit Academy’s admissions testing, in addition to providing ongoing tutoring help for students during their Phase 1 classroom training.

Recently, Summit Academy sent six of our Summit Prep tutors to the Minnesota Literacy Council’s 3-day workshop for tutor volunteers. “The training provided Summit’s tutors with valuable strategies for teaching reading, writing and math. Tutors gained a greater understanding of best practices to use when teaching adult learners, and of challenges learners may face when trying to improve their reading and writing skills,” says Charlotte Burgess, Summit Academy’s Director of Student Services and Deputy Title IX Coordinator.

Upon successful completion of the training, the following current tutor team members at Summit received official certification as Reading, Writing and GED Tutors from the Minnesota Literacy Council and Department of Education:

- Don Kemp, Math Tutor; Summit Academy Staff
- Nick Condon, MN Opportunity Corps Member
- Keith Horton, Volunteer Tutor
- Michael Manns, Volunteer Tutor
- Keith Curtner, Volunteer Tutor
- Damon Farber, Volunteer Tutor

As a volunteer tutor, for as little as a couple of hours per week, you can make an impact and change students’ lives forever. If you’re interested in becoming a part-time volunteer tutor, contact Nick Condon at volunteer@saoic.org or 612-278-5257.

Donor Highlight: Rand & Petrina Levy

Petrina and Rand Levy walked into Summit Academy for the first time last year and, ever since, have been making a positive lasting impact on Summit Academy, its students, and the surrounding community. Petrina, now a board member, was instrumental in creating the first Summit Soiree donor event, which was held in conjunction with Summit Academy’s Annual Golf Classic.

Petrina’s husband, Rand, is a music promoter and president of Rose Presents. He has been an amazing advocate for Summit Academy. Recently, at Summit Academy’s Annual Donor Appreciation Reception, Rose Presents unexpectedly donated $13,702 to Summit Academy as a direct result of the Prince Tribute event.

Thanks to supporters like Petrina and Rand, we are providing those most in need with the necessary skills training to become self-sufficient, while simultaneously helping to solve a solution to the serious workforce shortage.

Good Friends, Food and Fun at 2016 Rib Fest

Dougherty Mortgage and Dominium recently sponsored a special Rib Fest event at the A-Mill Artist Lofts to raise awareness about Summit Academy’s no-cost vocational training programs, including the contextualized GED.

Seventy-five guests were present at the historical venue for an evening of socializing and a delicious BBQ-themed meal. New friends of Summit Academy learned more about the high-impact programs that empower individuals to secure living-wage jobs and start new careers. Inspirational testimonials were given by Construction GED graduate Jasmine Hawkins, as well as by 2013 healthcare graduate Shawn McKinney, who is now a St. Community Health Worker and leader at Whittier Clinic (part of Hennepin County Medical Center).

A very sincere “thanks” goes to our event hosts, Pam Safar, David Juran, Mark Moorhouse, Bill Parker, Jim Turborg, Jay Weis, Kris Young and Jim Beck, who introduced Summit Academy to a wonderful group of people.

Your Investment Changes Lives

Thank you to all of you who have dedicated your time, expertise and resources to Summit Academy! Our work would not be possible without the generosity and partnership of people like you.

As you make your year-end giving decisions, we ask you to please consider a charitable gift to Summit Academy. There are a variety of ways in which you can support Summit Academy’s work, including cash gifts and gifts of stocks, bonds or mutual funds. In addition to providing students enrolled at Summit Academy a life-changing educational and career pathway, a gift of appreciated securities offers you significant benefits. These benefits include an immediate charitable deduction for the full market value of the stock and avoidance of the capital gains taxes, typically due upon sale.

Another way to demonstrate your commitment to improving the lives of Summit Academy’s hard-working students is by establishing a deferred gift for Summit Academy through your will, trust or estate plan. Deferred gifts represent a lasting benefit to the work of Summit Academy, and can offer significant tax benefits for the donor.

For more information about making a gift, please contact Jennifer McGee at jmcgee@saoic.org or 612-278-6595. To make an online donation visit: www.saoic.org/make-a-donation.
June 12, 2017 - Oak Ridge Country Club
15TH Annual Summit Academy Golf Classic & Summer Soiree

Thank you for your contributions to Summit Academy’s Capital Campaign

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