Summit Academy celebrates first 100 GEDs as part of the “1,000 GED Campaign”

Initiative provides education & job training for 1,000 low-income Minnesotans

Minneapolis — Summit Academy has surpassed the 100 GED mark as part of their “1,000 GED Campaign,” which aims to provide 1,000 low-income Minnesotans with education and job training. The 1,000 GED Campaign launched in October 2017, joined by U.S. Bank President & CEO Andy Cecere, Thor Construction CEO Ravi Norman and civic leader John Stanoch.

The 100th GED student in the 1,000 GED Campaign graduated earlier this month. The effort has raised over $3 million towards a goal of $5 million to provide 1,000 low-income Minnesotans with education and job training. Initial funding for the 1,000 GED Campaign includes major contributions from U.S. Bank, Target and Thrivent Financial Foundation. The State of Minnesota contributed $1.5 million to the campaign as part of the Omnibus Jobs Bill that passed the legislature and was signed by Governor Mark Dayton in 2017.

Right now, approximately 100,000 adults in Minneapolis-St. Paul have no high school degree or GED. Summit Academy is located in North Minneapolis and primarily trains low-income adults from communities of color seeking a path to long-term employment. Summit Academy has a proven track record of success — enrolling over 800 adults each year with marketable skills in fields including construction and healthcare. A study conducted by Rainbow Research found a direct savings to taxpayers of $1.96 for every dollar invested in Summit.

The average Summit Academy graduate comes to the program earning less than $10,000/year; average wages of Summit graduates are approximately $34,000/year and 82% of program participants are still employed 3 years post-enrollment.

“The 1,000 GED Campaign is off to a great start,” said Summit Academy President & CEO Louis King. "At Summit Academy our motto is ‘The best social service program in the world is a job.’ We are doing what it takes to lift people up and ensure that our region has educated and trained employees to help our economy grow and to help people build sustainable careers.”

An example of a recent Summit’s GED graduate is JayShawn. He was working his new overnight manager position when he knew he’d need his GED if he wanted to get any further in a career. He tried other programs but successfully completed his GED at Summit Academy. He said his proudest moment was when he saw his final test score that read “Congratulations! You passed.”

Despite juggling work, school, family and housing issues, JayShawn is a self-motivated young man. He is also motivated to make his mom and young son proud.
"I can't tell my son that school is important if I never finish school," said JayShawn. "I have to show him by example. Summit gets you where you need to go, they show you what you need to learn, and they help you move forward. They want you to succeed."

He said the sense of community with his fellow students was also key. "It was like a family. We really got tight. They help you succeed."

JayShawn is continuing his education with Summit in the Electrician Apprentice program with dreams of owning his own business one day. His advice to future students, "Do it. It's up to you. It's not up to anyone else but you. You can do it." He says Summit is important to him because "they helped me succeed when I thought I couldn't succeed. Summit is great!"

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