Progress MN: Louis King II

By: Dan Holman April 10, 2015 4:05 am 0

Title: President and CEO, Summit Academy OIC (opportunity industrialization center)

Education: B.A., political science, Morehouse College, 1982

Key turning point in career: Focusing on health care and construction after the 2001 economic downturn

What's next: Providing workers for the Target Center renovation project

Family: Wife, Beverly; children Aja, Kamaria and Lauryn

Website: http://www.saic.org/

Louis King is often described as an innovator and an agent of change. But he mostly sees himself as someone who puts people to work. As president and CEO of the Minneapolis-based vocational training facility Summit Academy, King and his staff have done just that, graduating almost 1,500 students and finding jobs for them.

King, 55, became involved with Summit after a stint in the Army. He led the 1996 merger of a pair of trailblazing entities, Twin Cities Opportunity Industrialization Center and Two or More Inc., which combined to form Summit Academy OIC.

"Twin Cities OIC was in trouble, but it had a strong infrastructure," recalled King. "Two or More was in a rapid growth. We took the energy of a small one and put it into the structure of the big one, and here we are today." Summit was forced to focus when the economy soured in the early 2000s, and that led it to find its niche: State demographic studies at the time indicated that health care and construction would be two industries in need of workers before long, and Summit adjusted its training curricula accordingly.

"We’ve been riding a demographic wave from the very beginning," said King. "Along the way, though, construction became our lead card. The Twins stadium, working with Mortenson, became our big breakthrough."

King also founded the Twin Cities Construction Consortium, a group of education institutions, and training partnerships, in an effort to bridge coming economic gaps.

King sees Summit’s legacy as having helped keep the region strong by helping disadvantaged people get economic mainstream in an affordable way and with the skills that employers need.

"This region is aging and browning, and these populations are the ones we’re going to need in the future. We’re pivotal in that whole exercise."