Twin Cities' Summit Academy Offers GED and a Trade
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After dropping out of high school, Eric Warren-Spears never thought he would end up homeless on the streets of Chicago. Knowing he needed a change, he decided to move to the Twin Cities last October.

Now, he's sitting in his reading comprehension class at Summit Academy. Warren-Spears says he was inspired to attend Summit Academy by a TV commercial.

"I seen a commercial. I called right there," he said.

Warren-Spears, like the rest of his classmates, enrolled in either Summit Academy's Construction or Healthcare GED Training Program. It's a 30-week program, and the first 10 weeks focused on preparing students to take their GED.

"I tested yesterday. I did the math and the science; I passed both of them," he said.

Warren-Spears wants to be an electrician. In the next 10 weeks, he will learn construction mathematics, hand and power tools and blueprint reading. The final 10 weeks are focused on a specialty, like being an electrician to heavy equipment operator.

"Sixty-five percent of the people we come into contact with have never tried to take the GED tests before," Summit Academy President and CEO Louis King said.

He says 90 percent of his students were unemployed before enrolling.

"And there's absolutely no cost," King said.

The program has been a blessing for CJ Jackson-Strong, who also wants to be an electrician.

"They give me a lot of opportunities here, and then it's up to you to utilize those opportunities," Jackson-Strong said.

Warren-Spears agrees. A future that once looked bleak is now shining with promise thanks to Summit Academy.

"Because an education will take you a long way," he said.