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MAYOR EMANUEL JOINS FATHER PFLEGER IN LAUNCHING NEW YOUTH JOBS PROGRAM TO EMPLOY 50 IN THE AUBURN-GRESHAM COMMUNITY

Pilot will help 50 disconnected youth gain support, mentorship and full-time employment

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today, in partnership with Father Michael Pfleger and Saint Sabina Church, announced the launch of the Auburn-Gresham Pilot, a new program focused on the opportunity crisis facing men of color on the south and west sides of Chicago. This City of Chicago initiative will provide 50 of the most severely disconnected youth and young adults between the ages of 16-28 with full-time employment, as well as access to support and services to maintain employment.

“Whether it is through education or jobs training, an investment in Chicago’s youth is the best investment for Chicago’s future,” said Mayor Emanuel. “As part of our commitment to creating opportunity and investing in our communities, this pilot will ensure that, one community at a time, our young men have the tools they need to get back on track to secure a good-paying job and a brighter future.”

Beginning this summer, Mayor Emanuel’s One Summer Chicago and Saint Sabina’s Internship program will provide summer employment to the 50 youth, providing both immediate employment and support to transition into full-time more permanent jobs. The pilot will include direct engagement with employers to identify and place youth in jobs, as well as address barriers that prevents them from leading stable lives, such as housing.

The pilot expands upon Mayor Emanuel’s One Summer Chicago by supporting at-risk young men of the Auburn-Gresham community, many who have who have engaged with the justice system, with skills training and mentorship that will allow them to be hired in existing jobs. This investment will, in turn, build the economic foundation of the community by empowering its most disenfranchised members to be a powerful force for change.

The program will emphasize a strong element of personal responsibility through intensive mentoring and coaching designed to address the root cause of disengagement for each of its participants and to foster in them life and work skills that will help them to sustain employment and get back on track. In addition, weekly group sessions will follow the Council of Personal Thought and Action (COTA), which includes creating a personal plan for success. Participants will complete a minimum of 5 hours per week of engagement with their coach, group meetings with their cohort, and social emotional learning delivered by the COTA program.

As participants prepare to become employed full-time, they will log an additional 10 hours per week of coach-guided, individual activities focused on job training and readiness and job searching and interviewing. Each of the participants will also select and complete a community service project of their own to give back to the Auburn-Gresham neighborhood.

“These are youth that have the cards stacked against them, because they have been involved with the criminal system. They aren’t in school and don’t have jobs,” said Father Mike Pflieger. “A job and mentoring gives them an opportunity to not only succeed, but to be leaders in their community.”

To serve this at-risk population while ensuring that investments are effectively benefiting those most in need, the City of Chicago, St. Sabina, the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, workforce partners, and public agencies, have pledged to leverage their collective resources in an effort to reduce the number of youth and young adults who are disengaged and more at-risk for engaging in criminal activity. The pilot aims to employ participants, help to retain employment and lower recidivism amongst those with criminal backgrounds.

This yearlong initiative will operate on a cohort model, working with participants on employment outcomes, social emotional needs and other areas of measurable success that may have previously impacted their ability to sustain employment and other factor of well-being. In addition, the University of Chicago Urban Labs will study the success of the pilot in two phases, focused first on implementation and later on program effectiveness.

“The Auburn-Gresham Pilot focuses on a population that many in our city and our nation are quick to write off,” said Kelly Hallberg, Managing Director of Urban Labs. “By providing a promising mix of programming and services, and doing so in a way that begins to generate better evidence on a challenge facing every American city, Chicago is at the forefront of helping our nation make progress on a challenge that threatens not just our future as a city but our nation’s future.”

“We are attempting to foster opportunity and success by finding the right balance between employment and support,” said DFSS Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. “It is not enough to provide these young people with a job, we need to also provide them with the support and skills they need to succeed.”

The Auburn-Gresham program builds on the investments made under Mayor Emanuel’s One Summer Chicago, the City’s youth summer employment program. Since One Summer Chicago was launched in 2011, Mayor Emanuel has more than doubled the number of available opportunities to keep youth safe and engaged each summer from 14,500 in 2011 to 30,000 this year. To date, more than 100,000 youths from neighborhoods across the city have gained valuable job training and work experience through the City’s burgeoning public-private program.

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