

SLATE Update

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. LOUIS AGENCY ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT (SLATE)



Francis G. Slay, Mayor



ST. LOUIS AGENCY ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

SLATE
americanjobcenter

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December 2014 Issue

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1 Youth At Risk Grant
- 2 Youth Success Story
- 2 IT Careers for LTU
- 4 New WIB Committees and More

SLATE Update is a monthly newsletter produced by the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE), a unit of St. Louis City government helping match area job seekers with businesses through a variety of no-cost services.

The purpose of this publication is to share the progress and outcomes of our many programs, and will be of special interest to legislators, Workforce Investment Board members, vendors, partners, educational institutions, other public agencies or anyone with an interest in workforce development.

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Photo Credit: Youth Radio

SLATE RECEIVES GRANT TO HELP DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS FOR AT RISK YOUTH

The Department of Public Safety oversees and disburses Crime Prevention Funds under Proposition S, and as the result of a recent application process SLATE was awarded **\$99,082** under the Youth at Risk, Crime Prevention Programs. In 2015, SLATE will use these additional funds to engage youth ages 15-18 in *Project Options*.

Through *Project Options*, **78** youth participants will be placed in summer jobs in St. Louis City. The youth will also be placed in skill-building service-learning opportunities with area non-profit organizations, including neighbor-

hood beautification, graphic and art design projects, maintenance, community safety strategy creation with law enforcement, helping with job fairs, and assisting with web design and social media. SLATE also anticipates working closely with the Missouri State Parks Youth Corps (SPYC) to place a number of youth in work experiences at state and local historic sites. The vast majority of funds under this grant will go directly to youth wages; staff costs will be provided by SLATE in-kind.

By program's end, SLATE further predicts that most of the youth participants will increase

one educational functional level, earn a high school diploma or GED, and/or continue on to higher education or job training. SLATE thanks our colleagues in the Department of Public Safety and the members of the Board of Aldermen Public Safety Committee for this meaningful support.

FINDING A WAY TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

*Submitted by Rosalind Mack,
MERS/Missouri Goodwill*

Patrez Jefferson, 20, participated in the WIA out-of-school program at MERS/Goodwill earlier this year. He learned about the program from a family member and decided this was a chance to better his condition and secure employment. In just 10 months, he achieved a huge success – a job with a reputable company, and the dignity and self-respect that come with such a milestone.

Jefferson has had to overcome many obstacles on his way to achieving his education and employment goals. Just over a month ago, he was laid off from his most recent job and suffered a devastating blow to his self-esteem. “It has been an emotional roller coaster,” he said to his Job Developer at MERS/Goodwill, Michael Barnett.

Barnett said that in the beginning it took numerous one-on-one meetings to help figure out Patrez’s skill set. He quickly determined that although Jefferson’s employment history might be spotty, his determination and drive were key attributes for future success. Barnett helped Patrez revise his resume and refocus his search.

He was happy when Jefferson called last week to share some wonderful news. He is now employed with UPS, making \$15/hour. “He was able to go out and get a job all by himself, which makes me proud to say that he has been successfully exited from our program,” said Barnett.

While Patrez Jefferson has expressed his happiness about being able to shop for his daughter’s Christmas presents this year, his career counselor rejoices as well: “Receiving this phone call was very heartfelt and really highlighted the brighter things in life,” Barnett said. “Jefferson has become self-sufficient and will continue to be a great asset to his community.”

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

On December 16, 2014, a group of 40 students received their certificates in Information Technology from St. Louis University. The group included **11** students who were trained through special funding from the Missouri Division of Workforce Development (DWD), awarded to SLATE to assist long-term unemployed individuals seeking a career in the IT industry.

Over the next several months, SLATE will continue to oversee the coordination of orientations, assessment and training for about **100** individuals who have exhausted their unemployment benefits (27+ weeks) and are returning to school to gain or upgrade IT skills and enter a high-demand field.

The DWD grant aims at creating pathways to employment for non-traditional IT professionals – those who have an interest or inclination for technology but need to learn specific skills, or those without a traditional degree.

For participants, the process begins with attending an orientation at any one of four participating colleges– St. Louis University, Washington University, University of Missouri-St. Louis and St. Louis Community College. Many hundreds of interested individuals are expected to take advantage of this training opportunity.

The curriculum normally consists of 8-9 classes that ultimately lead to the earning of a certificate in such areas as Information Security, Project Management, Application

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~ Michael Barnett,
MERS/Missouri Goodwill

Photo: **Ray Gude**, SLATE (top row, second left) with IT students sponsored by SLATE.

Development, Mobile Development, Business Intelligence and Microsoft Office, among others.

The curriculum has been approved by the St. Louis-based non-profit organization, *LaunchCode*, which pairs people aiming to work in technology with top-level employers through paid internships and job placement. Additionally, *LaunchCode* will act as an intermediary, pairing individuals with an interest in coding in mentor relationships with experienced coders; the *St. Louis Regional Chamber* will be the general intermediary for those who decide on IT fields other than coding.

In addition to the technical training, the *BounceBack* program component provides Job Readiness Training, including resume, network and interview building skills for unemployed individuals who feel disconnected from the job marketplace.

Once students are trained, *LaunchCode* and *RCGA* will work with their business contacts to fill project-based positions where skills and diligence are more important than experience. *LaunchCode* is responsible for placing 25 jobseekers, with the *Regional Chamber* placing the remaining 75. *SLATE* is able to offer a number of *On-the-Job Training (OJT)* and *Work Ready Missouri* funding slots to further help with the cost of bringing new hires on board.



Below are a few testimonials from students served by this program so far.

Philip Zera, who received his certificate in Business Intelligence (BI) and has already been employed as a BI Consultant, praised the program: “Because of it, I got a better pay and a better fit. Now I can choose who I want to work for... My certificate is a bridge to new opportunities.”

Melita Long has been unemployed since 2012. She studied for 3 months to receive her certificate as a Microsoft Office Specialist: “I now need to take my CAP [Certified Administrative Professional] test which costs \$400.” Because of *SLATE*'s ongoing financial support, she is hopeful she will soon attain this credential.

Gerald “Jerry” Palmer worked in IT since 1981 but the recession and consecutive layoffs made him aware of his need to upgrade his programming

skills. He was able to use his general knowledge of *INFORMATICA*, an in-demand development tool, and his newly acquired language from a Datawarehouse Development class to get a job at *Centene*: “If I went to the interview with just experience in [Microsoft] SQL Server, I would look like a novice.” Instead, *Jerry* impressed with his diversified set of skills.

The Corporate Relations Manager at Saint Louis University, *Helen Greaves*, has found that anyone undergoing long-term unemployment can lose their confidence. “This program gives them their confidence back. At graduation, students are excited and so proud of themselves,” she said.

EVENTS *Calendar*

- **Dec. 30, Jan. 14:** *SCI Engineering Info session and on-site Interviews.*

Out of 11 graduates, **seven** have already found employment in the IT industry.

ST. LOUIS WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD RESTRUCTURES

As reported earlier this year, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Workforce Boards will maintain much of the same structure as under WIA, but minimum membership has been reduced to **20**. Of this number, at least **10** members, including the Chair, must be Business Representatives. The St. Louis WIB is currently in the process of restructuring to

both meet WIOA requirements and focus on new priorities. Three new committees have been formed:

- **Business Services Committee**, focuses on the workforce needs of the regional business community and helps identify services that facilitate growth, such as OJT and paid work experiences. The SLATE staff liaison is *Bonnie Forker*. The Chairs are *Kevin Schaedler*, Habitata Building Products LLC and *Kathy Joslin*, Bethesda Health Group, Inc.
- **Disability Committee**, ensures that SLATE complies with the Americans with Disability Act, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, and related regulations.

James Sahaida and *Wanda Summers* are the SLATE staff liaisons. The Chair is *Jeff Taylor*, Job Corps.

- **YouthBuild Committee**, harnesses the advice and experience of WIB members to ensure the success of the new YouthBuild-Northside Regeneration program, a partnership between SLATE, McEagle Properties and Ranken Technical College. *Alice Prince* is the SLATE staff liaison. The Chair is *Stan Shoun*, Ranken Tech.
- SLATE's existing Youth Council has also accepted new members; the new team is scheduled to meet on January 21st, 2015. The St. Louis WIB Executive and Strategic Planning Committees will continue to carry out their respective duties.



SONOROUS SLATE STAFF SINGS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR FOOD BANK

In what is becoming an annual tradition, SLATE's Holiday Choir performed classic carols in the City Hall West lobby on December 18. As a result, over **\$350** and **50 lbs.** of canned goods were raised and donated directly to area Food Banks to assist families in need.