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

Michael K. Holmes, Executive Director

www.stlworks.com

February 2015 Issue

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Summer Jobs Announced
2. Diversity in Construction
3. Partner Profile: Hispanic Arts Council 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 *(from left)*: Alice Prince, SLATE Young Adult Workforce Division Manager, Maida Coleman, Former Missouri Senator, St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay, Darryl Chatman, Deputy Secretary, Missouri Department of Agriculture.

RANKEN TECHNICAL COLLEGE HOSTS SUMMER JOBS ROUNDTABLE FOR YOUTH

On February 26, 2015, Ranken Technical College hosted approximately 26 young men and women drawn from their student body and from the St. Louis Public Schools to discuss the value of summer jobs. The discussion tied directly to the Missouri Division of Workforce Development's new Summer Jobs League, a job placement program for young persons ages 16-24 in the greater St. Louis and Kansas City metropolitan areas.

A special panel was convened to answer questions and discuss summer job experiences from their own lives. The panel consisted of St. Louis Mayor Francis G. Slay, Former Missouri Senator Maida Coleman, Missouri Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary Darryl Chatman, and SLATE Young Adult Workforce Division Manager Dr.

Alice Prince. The discussion was moderated by SLATE Executive Director Michael K. Holmes and Patricia Coleman, President and CEO of Behavioral Health Response and current Chair of the St. Louis Workforce Investment Board (WIB).

Maida Coleman, who heads up the new Office of Community Engagement, explained how the new program leads to self discovery and career path selection: "Summer jobs give you the opportunity to have lots of different experiences and determine the direction you want to go in...we want as many young people as possible to apply."

Many of the students in attendance had defined goals. As they introduced themselves, law enforcement, cyber security, homeland security, attorney, public policy and mechanical engineering were among the career paths they indicated an interest in, or are already studying for.

Mayor Slay discussed how as a young man, he worked full-time throughout the summer and the holidays to earn extra money. "It was more than just a paycheck," he stated. "I learned basic responsibility skills. You learn how to interact with people from diverse backgrounds. You learn what you like to do. Those experiences have helped me throughout my life."

Darryl Chatman, an attorney and native of Jennings who worked in numerous summer jobs including a dairy farm, was similarly enthusiastic about the value of those experiences. "Be patient. There is dignity in all kinds of work. Do it well, no matter what it is, and good things will happen," he explained.

Alice Prince summarized the role of SLATE's Young Adult Workforce Division this upcoming summer: "Our goal is to help every young person who wants an opportunity." SLATE Executive Director, **Michael Holmes,** emphasized that summer job participants get out of the experience what they put in. "Show up, be engaged, *want* to work," he said. St. Louis WIB Chair **Pat Coleman** sees enormous potential value in the *Summer Jobs League,* privately commenting that, "It is a true win-win. The youth earn wages and gain experience; there is no cost to employers and they have the opportunity to mentor someone as he or she enters the workforce. Both parts will build our community."

The event was held at Ranken's Rodenheiser Building - Ranken Tech President **Stan Shoun** was also in attendance. Further information on the new program and applications can be found at http://summerjobs.mo.gov.

Photo Credits: Rebecca Ritter

Participants of Summer Jobs Roundtable for Youth, February, 26, 2015, at Ranken Technical College.

EventsCalendar

- **Mar. 5, 19:** *EBLAP: Legal Clinic*
- **Mar. 19:** *EBLAP: Third Party Contracts and Commercial Leases*
- **Apr. 2:** *EBLAP: Legal Clinic*
- **Apr. 2:** *EBLAP: Employment Issues to Help Protect and Grow Your Business*

HIRING MINORITIES AND WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

The St. Louis construction trades have struggled with diversity in their workforce, in part because the main supplier of construction workers, trade unions, have not traditionally been diversified. However, with an aging population of skilled tradesmen, and less and less youth interested in

Dan Lester, Concrete Strategies, Director of Contractor Relations & Personnel Recruiment.

pursuing these trades, we see a real danger of needed skills becoming extinct in the near future.

To help prevent this, while reaching out to and including minority populations and women, the City of St. Louis entrusted SLATE with overseeing Ordinance 69427, which establishes diversity goals on publicly funded construction projects of $1 million or more. The City of St. Louis, SLATE and local organized labor have also established the *Building Union Diversity (BUD)* program.

These efforts precede the events in Ferguson, however there is a renewed, community-wide focus on workforce diversity and economic opportunity. "Now that minorities have said that they want to be in the unions, unions have to recognize that and make a change," said **Earl G. Strauther, Jr.,** who supervises SLATE's Construction Intake Center.

Some of the larger corporations, such as Clayco, have already established diversity teams and have begun hiring diversity professionals for their subsidiaries. SLATE has recently formed a working relationship with a Clayco subsidiary, *Concrete Strategies,* whose projects rely on the work of many skilled concrete laborers, cement masons and carpenters. While many opportunities for minorities exist at Concrete Strategies, its Director of Contractor Relations & Personnel Recruitment, **Dan Lester,** said that they are always looking for the best individuals. "We have to have a specific type of person to work with us in each individual trade...we are taking a pot that was already small and narrowing it down even further."

Lester said that work ethic and the right attitude are huge factors when hiring anybody, not just minorities, along with the skill set. "Our major large-scale projects are a lot different than finishing steps or a patio in a backyard or a sidewalk," he said.

He is constantly searching for motivated people to place into apprenticeship programs that potentially lead to high-wage employment opportunities. "I don't know very many people with MBAs who get paid as well as a journeyman laborer," he said.

It is a gradual process, but both SLATE and Lester are looking to identify women who may have interest in the construction trades. "Females who want to work in trades are outstanding," he said. He has seen very hard working individuals, often single mothers, working multiple low-wage jobs but not being rewarded adequately for their efforts. Their hard work would be much better rewarded if they worked in construction: "They will have a valuable career and they will be able to provide for her family."

The first BUD class of nine students, including 8 African Americans and one woman, graduated in November 2014; almost all of them were employed within a few months. The next class will have 20 graduates and expectations for them are also high.

Concrete Strategies was one of the first companies who hired BUD graduates. Lester said that the two workers hired through the program are excellent: "They get the job done, they present themselves well and are constantly demanded back."

Companies such as Concrete Strategies are looking far beyond meeting their diversity goals and ultimately, are looking for people who would stay with them over the long haul. "We would like to provide for people who are working with us, provide for their families, give jobs and a place where they can feel like this is home, that they are part of the family," Lester said. "[We are] proud to partner with SLATE in order to achieve our diversity goals but, most importantly, to give back to the St. Louis community by bringing opportunities to minorities and female construction workers."

PARTNER PROFILE: HISPANIC ARTS COUNCIL

SLATE has established a partnership with the The Hispanic Arts Council of St. Louis (HAC)

to reach potential customers that are part of the region's growing Latino population.
HAC was established in 1996 as non-profit organization to promote the excellence of Latino culture through art and education. Virginia Braxs, current President and one of the founding members of HAC said: "We strongly believe that by promoting the cultural diversity and richness of the 20 plus Latin American countries and Spain, we as a society can eliminate prejudice and facilitate acceptance."

HAC offered a weekly bilingual radio program, 'Hispanic Culture', from 1996 to 2003 and presents annual concerts featuring high profile Latin American artists. Other cultural events sponsored by HAC include the Classical Guitar Society partnership and numerous Hispanic artists' exhibits.

Since 2012, HAC has also focused on educational opportunities for underserved Latino youth. Their annual bilingual Hispanic College Fairs at St. Cecilia Parish in south St. Louis for first generation college-bound Latino students are unique in that every college table has a Spanish interpreter who can communicate with non-English speaking parents as well as with English speaking students. "That way, parents are not left out of the loop and can learn and understand the higher education system in the U.S.," said Braxs.

Virginia Braxs, Director, Hispanic Arts Council

Braxs notes that today in the U.S., one of every three African American children and one of every four Latino children live in poverty— two times higher than the rate for white children. "Poverty is still colored in the 21st century... Race is no longer the primary determinant of American life chances. But its continuing effect upon economic and social policy has an exponential effect on poverty."

"By age three, white children have a significantly larger vocabulary than black or Latino children," Braxs says. "The gap can grow even larger when it comes to Latino families, especially immigrant families, where the main language spoken at home is Spanish. In both communities, this can lead to low self-esteem and academic failure... one in every three Latino students drops out from high school."

Building trust among the St. Louis Hispanic community is a goal shared by both organizations. "I believe that our partnership with SLATE will promote the building of that trust which is so needed for Latinos to feel more integrated...it will help boost access to job training and opportunities and improve their lives."

In partnership with Washington University and Anheuser-Busch Co., HAC offers the John F. Garganigo and Universidad YA!/College NOW! Scholarship Programs helping Latino youth pursue a higher education.

BALLPARK VILLAGE TENANTS RECRUITMENT AT SLATE

Hundreds of job seekers came to SLATE on February 24, to attend Ballpark Village Tenants Job Fair. Opportunities offered were in areas such as culinary, hospitality, restaurant management, maintenance, janitorial, security and banquet services.