

# 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](http://www.stlworks.com)

Issue 1 | 2016

## ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1 Neighborhood-based American Job Centers
- 2 YouthBuild Changes Lives of its Graduates
- 4 IKEA's Transformative Influence to St. Louis

*SLATE Update* is a quarterly newsletter produced by the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE), a unit of St. Louis City 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.

To subscribe/unsubscribe to *SLATE Update*, please send a request to [sbostick@stlworks.com](mailto:sbostick@stlworks.com).

DISCLAIMER: *SLATE* is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Missouri Relay Services at 711.

## STL CAREER PATHWAY BRIDGE OPENS NEIGHBORHOOD AMERICAN JOB CENTERS IN ST. LOUIS CITY AND COUNTY

Last spring, the Department of Labor awarded a coalition comprised of SLATE, St. Louis County and the Family Workforce Centers of America with a special **\$5 million** demonstration grant. This act established the regional *STL Career Pathway Bridge* network of neighborhood-based workforce development centers. A similar grant was awarded to Baltimore, and there are plans to replicate this strategy in other urban cores.

Since that time, SLATE has moved forward to create two new STL Workforce Centers. One, in North City, is located at Prince Hall; the other, in South City, at the intersection of Cherokee & Ohio. The new facilities opened their doors to customers on November 15, and serve as accessible, full service hubs for communities that have historically struggled with high rates of poverty and unemployment, and lack of access to opportunity.

Three other Centers –at the MET Center, Paddock Forest and in Ferguson – are currently or will soon be operational in St. Louis County.





Full-time staff have been assigned to each City Workforce Center in addition to Job Developers and a Workshop Coordinator that float between locations. They are conducting intensive community outreach to potential customers and starting to host job fairs for employers. It is anticipated that the new Centers will improve employment outcomes for thousands of youth and young adults in their late teens and twenties, including long-term unemployed, underemployed, and young African-American men incarcerated for non-violent offenses.

**Wanda Summers**, SLATE’s Functional Leader/Adult Services Manager overseeing the implementation of *STL Career Pathway Bridge* in the City, has been impressed by the breadth and depth of support shown for the project. The St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, Metropolitan St. Louis Transit Agency, and the Missouri Office of Administration all stepped forward to help find appropriate Center locations, accessible to individuals with disabilities. These organizations,

and many more, also played a key role in completely furnishing each Workforce Center.

“We couldn’t have gotten off the ground without our benefactors,” states Summers. “This is a true team effort, and I’m excited to be part of it.”

**YOUTHBUILD IN ST. LOUIS PUTS YOUNG PEOPLE TO WORK BUILDING NEW HOMES; ENERGIZES DESIRE TO SUCCEED**

Low-income young people in St. Louis have the energy, talent and intelligence to succeed, but barriers and lack of opportunity can prevent them from fully realizing their potential. A press conference held on April 20, 2015 formally welcomed the *YouthBuild-Northside Regeneration* program to the City of St. Louis to help address these issues. The Department of Labor awarded **\$1.1 million** to SLATE last year to create a construction skills training program in partnership with Ranken Technical College. The program is committed to rebuilding the City’s 5th Ward while helping local residents to learn skilled trades.

The funds are serving **75** disadvantaged youth ages 17- 24. City of St.

Louis Mayor Francis G. Slay noted that “these grants are part of a broader effort to invest in the future of our nation’s youth and give them a helping hand up the ladder of opportunity.”

*YouthBuild*, a nationwide community-based alternative education program, targets young people who may be struggling – perhaps they’ve been in trouble with the law, dropped out of school or became a parent – but who are looking for a second chance and a positive direction for their lives.

Through a partnership with Ranken Technical College, dedicated learners are receiving valuable skills, using them at work sites, and getting paid for doing so. Emphasis is placed on leadership development, financial literacy, academic enhancement, technical skills training in construction, community service, and securing permanent employment.

*YouthBuild* participants work on homes alongside members of the Associated General Contractors of St. Louis, which represents dozens of organized labor unions. These contractors and laborers provide advice and expertise to the program.

“*YouthBuild* will directly connect to the ongoing efforts by so many organizations to renew our urban core,” Michael Holmes, Executive Director of SLATE, said.

At this time, four cohorts totaling **44** youth have graduated from the program with astonishing results – troubled youth embrace the opportunity to become responsible young adults with a commitment to work, education, family, and community. The program has taught them hands-on construction skills, while giving them a sense of personal responsibility and a willingness to give back to their neighborhoods.

**PATHWAY BIRDGE STL WORKFORCE CENTER LOCATIONS:**

- **MET Center** 8347 Plymouth Ave, 63133
- **Cherokee & Ohio** 2715 Cherokee, 63118
- **Prince Hall** 4411 N. Newstead, 63115
- **Paddock Forest** 6877 Parker Road, 63033
- **The Crossings @ Halls Ferry Plaza** 10990 Halls Ferry Road, 63136 (*opening pending*)

“The program prepared me for the real world, it gave me a career to fall back on so I wouldn’t have to be out on the streets making the same mistakes.” ~ **RANDY BOLDEN, PARTICIPANT**

**Randy Bolden**, 21, underwent a life changing transformation after attending YouthBuild’s 2-week ‘mental toughness’ workshop. “I had to suck up my pride and become a man. The program prepared me for the real world, it gave me a career to fall back on so I wouldn’t have to be out on the streets making the same mistakes...I want to be a provider for my family, a role model for my little brothers and sisters,” he said.

Now age 20, **Michael Murphy**, admitted to following the wrong path prior to YouthBuild and ending up in jail, alone and broke. “I make better choices now. I try to get everything done the way it’s

supposed to be done and don’t take shortcuts. This program makes you smarter,” he said.

Overcoming barriers and keeping youth motivated can be a challenge, according to YouthBuild Coordinator, **Shekima Hunter**, but emotional as well as educational support is essential. Her staff act as a second family, a fact appreciated by participants. “When you get a great support system like this, you can’t help but appreciate it and try to live up to it,” Murphy said.

**Mario Lopez**, 23 and a father of two, agrees: “When I started missing days, they [mentors] immediately helped with my child-care situation. YouthBuild program

is a win-win because if you need employment and education, it will provide you with both.”

The program enrolls participants in the HiSET (high school equivalency) program, if needed. Once students pass their academic tests, they move on to learning construction skills in trades such as carpentry, electrical, drywalling, painting and others. Students receive a \$7.65/hour stipend while they work on construction sites. After that, participants go through a career building piece which prepares them for future employment in construction, and exit the program upon obtaining employment.

In addition to low-income African-American young men, the program has attracted a number of women – six of them will be graduating YouthBuild this year.

Other partners assisting with strategic direction, recruitment, support, evaluation or job development include the Construction Career Center, St. Louis Public Schools, the St. Louis Development Corporation, the Missouri Division of Youth Services, MERS/Goodwill Industries, St. Louis Job Corps, Preferred Family Health, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the 22nd Circuit Court Juvenile Division, the St. Louis City Juvenile Detention



YouthBuild (left to right): Mario Lopez, Shekima Hunter, Michael Murphy, Fredrecka McGlown, Randy Bolden.

Center, Missouri State University and the local St. Louis Workforce Development Board (WDB).

“YouthBuild is more than a training program, it is where the seeds of hope, confidence and lifelong success are planted. The true impact will last many years and decades into the future,” said **Rosalind Mack**, MERS/Goodwill Industries.

### **IKEA IS A TRANSFORMATIVE INFLUENCE IN ST. LOUIS**

The St. Louis area’s excitement was palpable when it was announced that IKEA would build a new store within the City’s Midtown/Cortex District, a center of innovation projected to bring more than 10,000 jobs to the community. In addition to providing a wide range of affordable, stylish home products, IKEA’s presence created more than **300** jobs needed to support store operations.

Immediately, the public wanted to know when and how the hiring process would be conducted. In the absence of local HR personnel, IKEA worked closely with SLATE to recruit City residents, working out a hiring process that would ensure equality of access and opportunity.

In all communities in which it operates, IKEA is dedicated to the principle of inclusiveness. **Ken Riddick**, SLATE’s Business Representative who helped IKEA with outreach, described IKEA’s approach: “It doesn’t matter if they [custom-

ers] are rich, poor, white, black, Muslim or Christians – this is who IKEA is as a store. They wanted to bring in [everyone in the] community,” Riddick said.

With SLATE’s help, IKEA was able to reach out to not only people who knew them and loved their products, but also to those who were eager to apply for jobs. “Through us, IKEA broadened their recruitment outreach, attracting people who brought their family and friends with them to shop there,” said Riddick.

The two organizations hosted four info sessions throughout central St. Louis City, making a special effort to reach the Latino community. IKEA was also one of the largest employers present at a series of jobseeker events within underprivileged African-American communities in North St. Louis, notably the Ferguson 1000 Job Fair. The overall outreach effort was successful, with residents of every one of the City of St. Louis’ 28 Aldermanic Wards participating in IKEA’s hiring.

Riddick said that such unprecedented outreach was unique for St. Louis and couldn’t have been achieved without IKEA working alongside a public workforce agency like SLATE. “Without SLATE involvement, IKEA would have still successfully filled open positions with



quality candidates, but they may not have represented the St. Louis community at large,” Riddick said.

On short notice, SLATE was able to prepare hundreds of interested applicants for IKEA job opportunities, teach them to apply online on IKEA’s website, and assisted with resumes and cover letters.

By bringing quality products and stellar service to the heart of the City of St. Louis, IKEA has had a far-reaching economic impact. “If it wasn’t for IKEA, people from hundreds of miles away wouldn’t have come here. The store has become a destination point, an entertainment, attracting people to come to shop here. It’s transformational from that standpoint because it’s bigger than just a little patch of a 15 mile radius where you put a retail store. Their presence in St. Louis has been phenomenal,” said Riddick.

**Joseph Roth**, Public Affairs Manager for IKEA, recently expressed his gratitude for SLATE’s help with recruiting individuals now entrusted with introducing St. Louisans to the unique IKEA shopping experience.

“Our partnership with SLATE definitely helped ensure we hired coworkers that could create a welcoming environment for all our customers,” Roth said.

CONNECT WITH US:



@slatemcc



@slate\_mcc