



Kenosha Emerging Leaders Academy to provide opportunities for youth

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KENOSHA - A collaboration announced today (April 26, 2022) between the City of Kenosha and local partners in youth development, education, technology, career development, and workforce preparation will offer opportunities for local youth, ultimately creating a pipeline of local talent to area colleges and future employers.

As one part of a plan to develop and revitalize the City's older neighborhoods, the City of Kenosha is developing the Kenosha Emerging Leaders Academy (KELA) in partnership with Carthage College, the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Herzing University, Gateway Technical College, Jockey International, Best Buy, the Kenosha YMCA, the Students Engagement thru Groups and Activities (S.E.G.A.) program, gener8tor and the Mahone Fund.

KELA, which is set to open later this year in the former Brown Bank building, located at 23rd Avenue and 63rd Street in the Uptown neighborhood, aims to provide students and young adults with the skills and resources to pursue college and/or career paths.

The KELA building is located within a few blocks from the proposed Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood (KIN), a live, work, and play neighborhood focused on innovation, education, training, learning, and work opportunities. According to Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian, KIN represents the future economy of the Kenosha community, and it will change the region's economic trajectory and offer inclusive, diverse, innovation-based opportunities to position Kenosha competitively as a destination for technology and entrepreneurial development.

“The formation of KELA and its "Steps to Success" programming is so needed and critical for the young people in Kenosha, especially for our low-income and young people of color who live in neighborhoods surrounding Uptown and the Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood,” said Mayor Antaramian. “This unique collaboration will provide them access to career development, higher education, training, and exposure to various careers from building trades and entrepreneurship to business and technology careers.”

Several local non-profit organizations will work in tandem with notable companies to power the key components of KELA.

Jockey is sponsoring the Kenosha YMCA Teen Achievers program. The program is for middle school students and will focus on reading and math, life skills, college and career readiness, positive relationships, and positive identity. It is designed to engage students through project-based learning that will help them explore their interests and prepare for their next step.

Through a partnership with Jockey International, Kenosha YMCA, and the Best Buy Foundation, KELA will host a new Best Buy Teen Tech Center®, a safe, after-school space where students will have access to the latest technology and develop critical skills through hands-on activities. Adult mentors and volunteers provide the support for teens to create, innovate and explore their passions in areas like robotics, photography, and music production. Teens will have access to computers, digital cameras, a music studio, virtual reality systems, and 3D printers.

“We are excited and proud to partner with Jockey and the YMCA to bring a Best Buy Teen Tech Center to Kenosha,” said Andrea Wood, Best Buy’s vice president of social impact. “Best Buy’s commitment to improving tech equity among teens has never been more relevant than it is today. We hope the new Teen Tech Center will offer the youth of Kenosha new opportunities to build brighter futures through tech.”

“The magic of the Kenosha Emerging Leaders Academy will be in the collaboration,” said Cindy Altergott, CEO of the Kenosha YMCA. “Innovation comes from collaboration. We’re all excited to build upon one another’s programming to strengthen the impact that any one of us could have individually. I know I speak for all the partners when I say we are most excited to see what the students will learn and achieve at the Academy and we look forward to seeing them become the next leaders of our community.”

The Mahone Fund's Career Exploration Organization (CEO) mentoring program will match first-generation and/or lower-income students of color with an academic and business mentor to assist them in pursuing their academic and career goals.

Also in the works is a year-round employment program to provide students and young adults job training focusing on work ethic and core values. The S.E.G.A. program will open a pipeline to careers in emergency services, healthcare, education, building trades, technology, and more.

Milwaukee-based gener8tor adds an entrepreneurial component to KELA. Gener8tor brings together startup founders, investors, corporations, job seekers, universities, musicians and artists. It will offer access to business programs that develop business ideas into business start-ups or growth opportunities with an emphasis on assisting female entrepreneurs and/or people of color.

On-site staff from the four higher education partners will allow students to develop early relationships with local colleges and universities. They'll have access to pre-college advising, financial aid counseling, financial literacy assistance, training and classes — including GED/HSED programming, access to college credit programs and admissions advising.

“The need for an accessible college education for local residents has long been recognized by Kenosha's leaders,” says Carthage College President John Swallow. “Mary Bradford requested the founding of the Kenosha Vocational Institute, now Gateway Technical College, in 1912; Snap-On executives led the way in the 1950s, persuading Carthage College to move to Kenosha in 1962; and George Molinaro spearheaded the establishment of UW-Parkside in 1965, building on an earlier UW presence. These higher education institutions, together with Herzing University, honor that legacy today by fully participating in this new initiative of the City, helping all children see post-secondary education as part of their future.”

Renovations to the bank building are scheduled to begin in a few months and KELA is expected to open its doors to students in winter or early spring 2023.