

Workforce development creates gateway to opportunity

Written by Ivan B. Phifer

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Scott Gray became president and CEO of the Minneapolis Urban League (MUL) in July 2009.

The next year, Gray along with three coworkers; Kennedy Barber, David Johnson and Shawn Lewis, were instrumental in creating the Gateway to Opportunity initiative.

"You have to create an integrated model to make sure folks are working," said Gray.

Gateway to Opportunity has four existing components; health and wellness; college readiness and career development, workforce solutions and wealth accumulation.

Two of Gateway's initiatives include Big Step and RENEW.

Launched two years ago and modeled after the Milwaukee Urban League program, Big Step is a partnership with labor unions Local 132 of St Paul and Local 563 of Minneapolis. After completion, individuals obtain a union card, which is valuable in seeking skilled labor employment.

"When we think construction, we think laborers and carpenters, especially in the African-American community," said Barber construction program manager for MUL.

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