

Inspiring stories of success amidst harrowing statistics

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In Minnesota, the demand for college-educated workers is forecasted to exceed the supply available to employers in the next few years due in large part to decreasing numbers of high school graduates and the lower rate at which low-income students are accessing college. However, Minnesota students, administrators, community leaders and colleges prove this trend can be reversed in their interviews and stories shared in a new documentary, *College IS Possible*, co-produced by Twin Cities Public Television's MN Channel and Admission Possible. The *College IS Possible* documentary premieres Sunday, Sept. 20, 2009 at 8:00 p.m. Central on tpt/MN Channel.

The documentary, funded by Travelers and the McKnight Foundation, is part of a series of college access documentaries that begin airing this fall as students start back to school. The programs provide a variety of perspectives and are meant to encourage individuals, students, community groups and businesses to play a role in expanding on the solutions identified.

"We need higher expectations for our kids," said Jim McCorkell, Founder and CEO of Admission Possible. "We can no longer say in America that a high school degree is enough. We need to be talking about sending every student on to post-secondary education."

Through several interviews, the documentary identifies that college preparatory programs, mentorship and committed support from both caring adults and peers are helping low-income high school students gain the resources, inspiration and confidence they need to pursue - and succeed - in college.

Programs that offer comprehensive curriculum and address all the materials required by colleges give students an advantage. "Colleges look at test scores and GPAs, and they want to have an essay that's well-written and a resume that's well thought out," said Carrie Carroll, Assistant Vice President of Admissions at Augsburg College. "If a student has all of those things and just doesn't know how to put them together for an institution, they are going to be overlooked in that process."

"My dream is to become a teacher, so going to college is definitely part of my plan and future goals," said Maryam Ayir, who graduated from St. Paul Central High School and Admission Possible in 2009 and began at Augsburg College this fall. "I didn't know exactly what the college application process was, but I knew I could go to my college coach for any questions I had, and he could answer them."

A caring adult who can act as a guide through the college application process is critical for high school students seeking a post-secondary degree. Parents often play this role, but for many first-generation college students and students whose parents' first language is not English, it can be challenging to find a mentor that understands the complexities of college admissions.

"Volunteers who can be allies, coaches and advocates to students who might not otherwise have them can help navigate obstacles as they come up," said Kathy Tunheim, local executive and active member of Twin Cities Compass. "These issues are not insurmountable, but they are problems a student needs help to overcome."

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College IS Possible is part of a series of documentaries focused on education. Challenging Expectations and Vanishing Graduates & Minnesota's Future explore barriers to education and Challenging Expectations: Student Voices features youth-only perspectives, opinions and experiences on education. All will become available online at www.LearnMoreMN.org.

To see preview segments, view the full documentary (available Sept. 21) or find additional air dates and times, go to [www.AdmissionPossible.org/College IS Possible Documentary](http://www.AdmissionPossible.org/College_IS_Possible_Documentary)