

STEP-UP program employs 1,850 youths this summer

Written by
Tuesday, 03 July 2012 14:58



Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak visited six STEP-UP interns today who are gaining in-depth skills and experience at Agosto, an international high-tech firm based in the city.

Pictured: Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak visits STEP-UP Achieve Minneapolis Interns at Agosto. Back row, left to right: Agosto CEO Aric Bandy, Intern Eros, Mayor Rybak, STEP UP Achieve Minneapolis Director Jeremiah Brown, Agosto SVP Sales and Co-Founder Rick Erickson, Minneapolis City Council Member Don Samuels. Front row, left to right: Intern Claire, Intern Erica, Intern Hafsa. One of the world's fastest-growing Google Apps and Cloud consulting firms, Agosto is one of 220 Twin Cities employers that are hiring and training 1,850 Minneapolis youth this summer, through the STEP-UP program. Through STEP-UP, the City of Minneapolis, in partnership with AchieveMpls, recruits, trains and places talented low-income young people, ages 14-21, in meaningful summer jobs at top local companies, government agencies and nonprofits.

“STEP-UP has matured to the point that our employers offer young people not only meaningful work experience, but in-depth skills building and career laddering that they can expand through the summer and build on later in school and in future internships,” said Rybak. “This is how we build the economy of the future; by giving the young people that are our future the tools and training they need to help our fastest-growing sectors grow even faster.”

At Agosto, STEP-UP interns gain unique on-the-job experience in the information technology (IT) sector and add technical, project and change management skills to their portfolios. The interns work with local nonprofit organizations this summer to implement and provide support in Cloud technology and pro bono Google Apps. The mayor said in a press release that the hands-on work is designed to give interns greater skills and confidence which will lead to greater opportunities for placement and success in future employment.

“When I was starting my own career, I personally benefitted from internship opportunities and

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was also mentored by executives who were well established in their careers,” said Aric Bandy, CEO of Agosto. “Today, it’s much more difficult for graduating students to gain the experience they need to break into the IT sector especially considering the economic and diversity barriers some of these students face.”

Several of the Agosto interns participated in the first-ever Google for Youth Entrepreneurs Day training held in Minneapolis. The training provided basic skills in Google tools so that interns could begin their STEP-UP internships with a better understanding of how technology and the Internet can be of help to them, as well as spark these young people with an entrepreneurial drive that will serve them well later in life.

Since its creation in 2004, STEP-UP has employed nearly 16,000 Minneapolis youth, helping them to explore career interests, gain invaluable work skills and make strong professional connections for the future. Of the youth placed through 2011, 86 percent have been youth of color, 93 percent have come from families living in poverty and 50 percent have come from immigrant families. STEP-UP was recognized as an outstanding model for youth employment and public-private partnerships at a White House conference in early January.