Resiliency Through Disaster: Innovation and Excellence

Since March of this year our world was turned upside down and inside out due to pervasive COVID-19 pandemic. The cumulative economic, educational and emotional impact on communities of color has been most pernicious. The closing of schools and the abrupt shift to remote instruction has severely disrupted the educational attainment of African American youth thereby exacerbating the achievement gap. Because ninety-percent of HAWK’s programs, Learning Communities and Saturday Leadership Academy, are situated in schools and/or in-person, we found ourselves in a dilemma of suddenly being unable to serve our students.

Early on in the pandemic crisis, the leadership of HAWK made a dramatic decision to pivot its business model whereby 60% of its programs would be offered on-line. The shift to a different model gave birth to a new program, Bridge to the Future. With funding from Pro Youth and Families, we were able to launch a dynamic online learning program this summer serving 25 students, and then replicating the model we served 24 this past fall. Junior high students received $300 for completing the program while high school students received $500.

“We are building an online learning model that creates a new future”
In anticipation of returning to on-site/in-person instruction sometime next year, we are developing a hybrid model that blends virtual and in-person instruction. With a grant from Sierra Health we plan to digitize all of our curriculum to support online instruction and mentoring. Furthermore, we are innovating our online capabilities and retraining our instructors and mentors. Additionally, we are partnering with digital companies to supplement our curriculum in order to expand our instructional capacity to support our youth.

**Status of Current Programs:**

Unfortunately, funding for our **Learning Communities** at American Legion and Burbank high schools, and the **Saturday Leadership Academy** were casualties of the impact of COVID. The loss of $55,000 from the City of Sacramento was a temporary setback. Fortunately, HAWK leadership was able to solicit one-time extramural resources from Sacramento City Unified School District and private donations to continue to serve American Legion and Burbank high schools. However, we are still pursuing funding to fully support our **Saturday Leadership Academy and Career Advancement Academy**. While funding from Sacramento County of Education and State of California enables us to continue serving **North Avenue, Elinor Hickey and, John Still Middle School**, teaching via remote instruction has been a challenge. Nonetheless, we are focused on innovation and quality as our programs evolve to meet the needs of our youth.

**NEW HAWK INITIATIVES:**


Center for Urban Entrepreneurship (CUE) - Partnership with California African American Chamber of Commerce (coming soon).

Saturday Leadership Academy - Youth interns will be engaged in project-based learning and community service activities.

Career Advancement Academy - New life skills curriculum and organizational structure in development.

Fortune Schools - Bridge to the Future (beginning in February).

TRUST - Teaching youth to be socially responsible with regard to their health and wellness.