



AVENUE SCHOLARS

Your Foundation for Success



the **PATHWAY**

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RIGHT. Avenue Scholars participants enjoy conversation with one of the Young Professionals at the November Summit. BELOW. Marcus Wagstaff, representing Playmaker Investments, delivers a presentation on "Unfinished Business (Growth Mindset)."



Young Professionals Summit wows Scholars

Avenue Scholars Foundation hosted its first Young Professionals Summit Friday, Nov. 15, at the Ramada Plaza Omaha Hotel and Convention Center.

The summit provided post-secondary students and high school students in the Avenue Scholars program with personal and professional development workshops, as well as networking opportunities with community leaders.

The 169 students who attended the summit are either attending community colleges or participating in on-the-job training in high-demand industries, including health care, information technology, business, auto-diesel technology, and trades and construction.

Students were given the opportunity to hear a variety of speakers in morning and afternoon breakout sessions. During the lunch break Terrence Gillian, Post-Secondary Career Coach, gave a keynote speech on motivation.

Topics and presenters included "Business Etiquette" with Lisa Lackovic, Endicott Clay Products; "Unfinished Business" (Growth Mindset)" with

Marcus Wagstaff, Playmaker Investments; "Creating the Financial Life You Want" with Julia Craig, Family Housing Advisory Services; "Social Media for Job Seekers" with Kristin Lowrey, Remedy Intelligent Staffing; "Civic Engagement" with Dan Walsh and Lucia Pedroza; "Be the Change" with Lt. Sherie Thomas; "Entrepreneurship" with Galen Anding; "Customer Service" with Lyndsie Gibbs; "Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace" with Gibril Mansaray; "Let's Talk Credit" with Amanda Schroeder; "Negotiation Skills" with Quinn Texmo; and "Mindfulness and Meditation" with Lindsay Decker.

According to a feedback survey of attendees, all sessions were well received, providing valuable resources, information, and motivation.

"The 'Unfinished Business' speaker presented tons of good information about having a positive attitude," one student said. "Just amazing. I really needed that."

Another said, "I learned a lot! I really liked Mr. Gillian's speech. It motivated me and made me think about my future."



Omaha South grad goes straight to work

When the proverbial light came on for John Murillo, a 2015 Omaha South graduate, he was ready to go straight to work.

Avenue Scholars staff were there to help Murillo find the light switch during his junior and senior years of high school, and they continue to support his career advancement.

"They helped me come up with a plan after high school," Murillo says. "A, B, and C, in case this plan didn't work out."

The plan included utilizing the Avenue-Horatio Alger Career Scholarship to obtain an Associate's Degree in Auto Collision from Metropolitan Community College and getting a job working body repair at CarStar the summer after graduation from high school.

"The scholarship helped me get tools; it helped me start my career," Murillo said. "Everything (college) is paid for. Starting my career debt free is a huge advantage."

Murillo will complete his degree in February and plans to continue working at CarStar full-time as a body technician, focusing on panels, frames, and structural replacements.

"I'm happy I'm doing something I like," Murillo says.

Scholarship motivates Scholar to start career at CarStar

Driven by the Avenue-Horatio Alger Career Scholarship and support from the Avenue Scholars program and the Metropolitan Community College Navigators, David Gonzalez-Lopez will be the first in his family to earn a college degree.

"I would not be here without the scholarship," he said. "It got me this job; it motivated me to get here."

In May, Gonzalez-Lopez plans to receive an Associate's Degree in Auto Collision from MCC.

Gonzalez-Lopez, a 2017 Omaha Bryan graduate, started work at CarStar in May 2019.

"I am excited to work here," he said. "I started in detail; then I got into assemble and disassemble. Recently, I started doing my own projects."

After graduation from MCC, he plans to continue working full-time at CarStar, doing "mostly body work as a technician."

Gonzalez-Lopez is also excited about what his career success might mean for his family.

"It's our tradition, or culture, to stay in the family until we're older," he said.

"I hope to be moving out soon with my family, my parents, to a nicer house."



Scholar earns job with Hawkins Construction

Through work experiences with the Heartland Work Force and Hawkins Construction this fall Eduardo Flores-Juan, a 2019 Omaha Bryan graduate, is building confidence that he will achieve his goal of becoming a construction manager one day.

Coordinating with the Heartland Work Force, Avenue Scholars enrolled Flores-Juan and other scholars in a garage renovation project at the Latino Center of the Midlands on South 24th street.

Toward the end of a six-week trial period of doing dry-wall, electricity, decking, and framing on the garage project, a Hawkins Construction manager inspected the work of Flores-Juan, along with other interns, to determine who the company wanted to hire for a big project at Omaha Eppley

Airfield. Flores-Juan was one of those selected to work for Hawkins for another six weeks.

Flores-Juan admits he was nervous the first week on the new job.

“Hawkins was a whole new work environment,” he said. “Big tools, new machinery. I was nervous that first week. I had to teach myself manual [transmission]. There were lots of new things. Once I learned, it just became an everyday thing.”

At Metropolitan Community College, Flores-Juan is enrolled in the Construction Management program. After two years, he plans to finish his degree at the University of Nebraska-Omaha or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

“That’s for the paper/of-



“...the physical side of the business,” he said. “When I become a construction manager, I still want to do the physical part so I can show I know what I am talking about.”

Although Flores-Juan is not employed at Hawkins for the winter season, the construction manager said “he has plans for me to come back to work on the project on the airport taxiways this spring.”

SUCCESS

To laugh often and much;
to win the respect of intelligent people
and the affection of children;
to earn the appreciation of honest
critics and endure the betrayal
of false friends;
to appreciate beauty;
to find the best in others;
to leave the world a bit better
whether by a healthy child,
or a redeemed social condition;
to know even one life has breathed
easier because you lived;
This is to have succeeded.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson



As the 2019 calendar year closed out, Dr. Ken Bird, President/CEO of Avenue Scholars Foundation, called attention to the organization’s early days in the following note to staff:

“In 2008 when we started Avenue Scholars, I challenged our staff (of five) to use Ralph Waldo Emerson’s definition of success as a measure of Avenue Scholars’ success going forward.

“When I reflect on where we have been, and dream about where we are going, I feel stronger now than ever before that Emerson’s definition is the right measure of success for us.

“His quote represents a wonderful way to reflect on the work you do every day.”

AVENUE SCHOLARS

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“Our mission is to ensure careers for committed students of hope and need through education/ training and supportive relationships.”

Focus on Careers

Fall 2019, Avenue Scholars organized 12 Career Exploration events at 11 locations, including Mutual of Omaha, Werner, Baxter Auto, Turner Construction, Midlands Hospital, Union Pacific, Woodhouse Auto, Builder Trend, Lakeside Hospital, Car Star and MCC Fort Omaha Campus.

The events explored careers in the fields of Information Technology, Auto/Diesel, Trades, Auto Technology, Healthcare, Business, and Auto Collision.



Avenue Scholars listen closely to introductory remarks during a Career Exploration Event at Baxter Auto.



ABOVE. Scholars practice using surgical instruments during a Healthcare Career Exploration post held on the MCC Fort Omaha campus. **RIGHT.** Joseph Ireland, a Millard South Scholar, tries his hand at spray painting an automobile fender during a Career Exploration Post at CarStar.



ABOVE. Scholars practice getting dressed in the proper gear for working in a nursing unit or surgical unit. **LEFT:** Eddy Gomez, an auto technician employee at Woodhouse, works on preparing an automobile bumper for a new paint job. Gomez first toured this body shop on a Career Exploration Post in 2017 when he was an Avenue Scholar at Ralston.