



AVENUE SCHOLARS.
Your Foundation for Success



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ABOVE. An Avenue Scholars student practices the paint preparation step in automobile body restoration during a Career Awareness event at CarStar. **RIGHT.** Avenue Scholars juniors discuss a mock marketing project during a Career Awareness event at the Henry Doorly Zoo.



Career Awareness Program inspires Scholars

High school juniors in the Avenue Scholars program have benefitted from a busy fall of exploring careers. This year, Avenue Scholars, through its Career Awareness program, has partnered with 19 different businesses/organizations to offer a total of 26 events.

Businesses/organizations new to Career Awareness were Munroe-Meyer's Autism Care for Toddlers Clinic, AIM Institute, Werner Technology, Steamfitters Union, Sheppard's Business Interiors (SBI), Elman Print, Scott Data Center, Cornhusker International, No More Empty Pots, Hilton Garden, Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo, ACCESSBank, and McGill Gotsdiner Workman & Lepp.

Returning partners: Woodhouse Auto, Baxter Auto, CarStar, Fulton Homes, Quality Career Pathways, and QLI.

"Businesses truly understand the value of Career Awareness experiences. Thankfully, our business partners have been willing to partner with us to offer in-person experiences this year," said Lindsay Decker, Career Exploration Coordinator.

Although the continuing Coronavirus Pandemic has limited the number of students who can attend each event, Avenue Scholars has been creative in providing ample opportunities for every student who wishes to participate.

"In an effort to honor business health guidelines and to keep our students as safe as possible, we've collaborated with businesses to offer multiple sessions of their event so that we can serve as many students as possible who might

have an interest in their particular industry," Decker said.

The overall goal of the Career Awareness program is to enable students to be better informed of their potential career pathways and what steps they will need to take in pursuing those careers. The program has made a difference in students' success in finding careers that fit their interests.

"Our business partners are truly skilled in understanding how to expose students to their industry. It's really an exciting thing to witness — business and education merging together," Decker said. "For example, I loved watching our culinary students cook a meal and learn various culinary techniques with No More Empty Pots. It's funny because I typically spend months planning these events, so it's always special to watch students' faces light up when they're having fun and connecting with a business partner — that's how you know a seed was planted in a student's mind."

Decker sees every event as a successful experience for students.

"Career Awareness gives students a chance to experience an industry through their senses. A student can take in what they've learned and see if they can imagine themselves in a similar role, she says. "I always joke that whatever the outcome with a Career Awareness event, it's always a win to me. If a student didn't like the event, that's a win. If they did like the event, that's a win, too! Regardless of the outcome, they're getting close to discovering what's important to them when it comes to imagining themselves at work."

Jim Sutfin welcomes opportunity as new COO

Millard Public Schools Superintendent Jim Sutfin says he is “humbled and grateful for the opportunity” to take over the role of Chief Operations Officer at Avenue Scholars officially on Aug. 1, 2022.

He will retire from MPS in June. Sutfin, who has 33 years of experience in public education, started his career as a science teacher in the Bellevue Public Schools in 1989. As an employee in MPS the past 27 years, he worked his way up from classroom teacher to leading the Millard Public Schools’ growth as superintendent since 2014.

“I am passionate about public education; I love being an educator,” Sutfin said. “During my tenure as superintendent my favorite organization to work with and partner with was Avenue Scholars. Their mission and their leadership have made it an easy choice to take this job when it was offered.”

As COO, Sutfin is excited to having a role in programming that “benefits kids.”

“It’s a great job — to be overseeing the educational

programming that occurs between Avenue Scholars and school districts and higher ed,” he said. “It’s giving me the opportunity to work alongside the skills set I have developed as an educator while expanding that [experience] in a role to help school districts and Avenue Scholars provide the best benefits for kids.”

The ability of Avenue Scholars to give students a greater chance of attaining meaningful and rewarding careers has impressed Sutfin.

“Avenue Scholars presents solution-oriented programming,” he said. “They recognize there will always be obstacles and challenges, but that by working together we can always overcome those obstacles. Their serving mission of giving students means and hope is powerful.”

Sutfin is thankful for having had a “mentor/mentee relationship” with Avenue Scholars CEO Ken Bird.

“That’s one of the reasons Avenue Scholars is a good fit for me,” Sutfin said. “Avenue Scholars believes in the mentoring system. That mentoring relationship-based philosophy works for kids and helps them become believers in their own dreams.”



Scholar looks forward to career in construction

Grant Hummer, a 2021 Papillion LaVista High School graduate wasn’t sure what he was getting into when he applied for enrollment in the Avenue Scholars program during his sophomore year, but when Hummer “found out Avenue Scholars is career-based and that they would help me find a career I might be interested in and enjoy,” he knew the program was exactly what he needed.

Classes, job shadowing opportunities, and career awareness events helped confirm that construction work or construction management provide the best avenue for a bright future.

“I knew I liked to work with my hands through taking woods and manufacturing classes in high school,” Hummer said. “The MCC construction jobs day and the on-site visit of Turner Construction at the Facebook facility opened my eyes to what a big industry it is and that there are many aspects to it. I feel there is something

out there for me, whether it’s construction management or starting out as a framer.”

Hummer is currently employed by Habitat for Humanity building houses from the foundation up, including siding and “all the interior finishing.” He is also enrolled at Metropolitan Community College to earn an Associate’s Degree in Construction Science and Building Management. Hummer acquired the Habitat for Humanity internship through Intern Omaha. The internship has proven to be a great building block for a career in construction.

“I really like the job,” he said. “I’m enjoying learning a lot with the great group of people I work with. I can apply what I learn here to my classes at Metro, and what I’m learning at Metro



I can apply at Habitat for Humanity.”

Avenue Scholars has made a tremendous impact on Hummer’s future.

“It has been so much more helpful than most regular high school classes,” he said. “You get more real world ideas and gain useful skills, you are introduced to jobs you like, and you learn to budget your money. You end up finding skills you have that you didn’t know you have.”

Hummer is excited for the future.

“I want to run my own business some day,” he said. “I might stay with Habitat and do other construction work on the side for now, but I know that at some point I want to venture out and do my own thing.”

Hummer will never take his Avenue Scholars experience for granted.

“As I have grown, I have come to realize how important it is,” he said. “At the end of the day, you are going to school for free and finding a career you’re really interested in. It truly is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”



Inaugural Intern Omaha Expo ‘huge success’

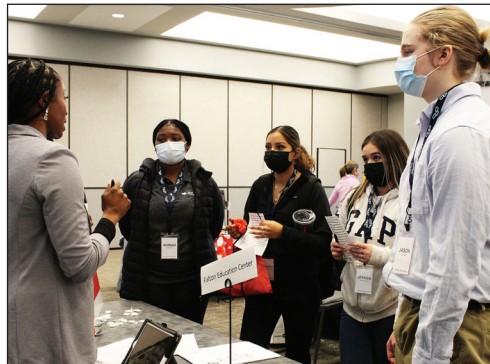
According to survey feedbacks, both Avenue Scholars and business partners reaped great benefits from the Intern Omaha Expo, held Nov. 18 at the UNO Scott Conference Center.

“The inaugural Intern Omaha Expo was a huge success,” said Kathy McGauvran, Intern Omaha Business Outreach Coordinator. “We were so impressed with the level of student engagement as they interacted with our business partners learning about IO opportunities available to them beginning June, 2022.”

McGauvran said 35 businesses were represented at the Expo, and 14 schools attended.

Over 400 high school juniors attended the Expo, including 250 Avenue Scholars juniors. The event has inspired renewed participation and excitement.

“The Intern Omaha applications to this fourth cohort of Intern Omaha opened the Friday after the Expo and we have had a great response. To date, over 550 applications have been submitted,” McGauvran said. “As for our business partner feedback, 100% of the attendees said they want to come back again next year. We were thrilled with all aspects of the Intern Omaha Expo and are beyond grateful to have had this opportunity to bring students, districts, and businesses together.”



Avenue Scholars students (TOP) fill out forms to determine which job recruiters they want to visit during the Intern Omaha Expo. Other students (ABOVE AND LEFT) listen to recruiting pitches from employers.

Gustin joins Intern Omaha staff

Audrey Gustin has joined the Avenue Scholars staff as an Omaha Internship Coordinator.

Education: Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Relations from Doane University (Crete, NE).

Job Experience: Human Resources, Baxter Auto; Child & Family Services, Promiseship; Retail Management, Westlake Hardware.

Job Description: Recruiting students and business partners to

participate in the Intern Omaha program; inform school districts, students and business partners regarding program; facilitate quarterly check-ins with interns and their supervisors.

Comment: “Building relationships is something I love to do. At Avenue Scholars I get to do this every day with my co-workers, students, districts, and business partners.”



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*“Avenue Scholars, the leader
in bridging the gap between
education and business,
guarantees careers for our
youth of hope and need
through supportive relation-
ships, individualized coaching,
education, and training.”*

Community Engagement

Avenue Scholars staff, new Youth Council focus on Social Justice



JAMAR DORSEY, Ed.D.

Hello all and welcome again to the Community Engagement Corner. I am excited to share with you the many activities Avenue Scholars staff and students have engaged in the last quarter.

Avenue Scholars staff started the 2021-22 school year in a big way. Three standout areas for Avenue Scholars in the space of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are the Avenue Scholars book club, educational lecture series, and the return of Power Hour. Also, Avenue Scholars along with Girls Inc., NorthStar, Completely KIDS, and Partnership for Kids have initiated a joint Youth Council campaign focused on social justice.

The Avenue Scholars book club, named the Inclusion Book Club, held its first meeting this fall to establish the reading materials we would read and discuss to gain perspective on how to better impact the greater community. The group, composed of 15 Avenue Scholars staff members, has selected to read the following books and meet quarterly to discuss them: *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, *The Fire Next Time*, and *White Fragility*.

Professional development for staff also started in the form of an educational lecture series. The educational lecture series is creating intentional space and time for staff discussion and learning topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. The three-part series will help staff understand concepts and create an action plan on how they can continuously grow in these areas. The series will introduce concepts such as unconscious bias, inclusive language, and microaggressions. In the first session staff members were able to get comfortable with being uncomfortable as we look to change our perspective by being more educated and informed.

The Avenue Scholars Power Hour segment in the month of October featured Jeanette Gabriel, PhD, of the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Dr. Gabriel shared information on how racially restrictive covenants have made housing opportunities for people of color very difficult in the city of Omaha. She also challenged the staff to read the book *The Color of Law*. The Color of Law gives an account of practices established in the 1950's through the 1980's.

Lastly, I want to highlight the Youth Council's work to meet its objective of implementing a student-led focus group of three to four students from each organization. This Youth Council will be a platform where students can speak their truths and address issues through dialogue on a quarterly basis. Additionally, students will identify a project-based activity that addresses and seeks to resolve a community issue. At the first meeting hosted at NorthStar by Jim Stevens, Director of Education, the participants were able to define social justice and what it means to them. The homework for the group is to go back to their respective organizations and develop ideas on how they can educate the greater community. At a parent meeting, held at Avenue Scholars Nov. 10, parents were able to engage staff members from all organizations and express gratitude that their student was selected to participate. One parent in particular, Mynasha Spencer, whose daughter is a participant at Completely KIDS, has reached out and volunteered to help the students develop leadership skills they can use at school, college, and the workplace.

Until next time — don't conform to the environment; make the environment conform to you!

Scholar Shea Burch excels at work place, explores career options

Shea Burch, a 2019 Millard South graduate, is making the most of her school and work opportunities as she explores her career options of continuing her job as a Design Consultant



at Outdoor Living or finding a niche in the beauty and skin care industry.

"I'm really weighing options of staying in my job at Outdoor Living and expanding my role into sales, or exploring other interests," Burch said. "I've always been interested in finding a career opportunity in the beauty and skin care field."

Currently, Burch is enrolled in the Business Administration program at Metropolitan Community College.

At Outdoor Living, a small company that sells and installs underground swimming pools and hot tubs, Burch's work focus was going out to homes to provide an orientation and instruction in operating and maintaining the hot tubs after installation. When the company added polywood outdoor furniture to its sales line, her manager created the new "Design Consultant" role for Burch and another co-worker.

"Now, it's our responsibility to go out to the homeowner's backyard and help determine the best arrangement of where the hot tub should be placed next to the pool and where the furniture might best be arranged in the overall outdoor design," she said.

Avenue Scholars provided Burch the direction and motivation she needed as a junior in high school.

"They have really supported and encouraged me," she said. "They really helped in high school the most because I had no idea of college. They gave me the direction for what I want to do with a career and then gave me that extra push."