



Pathway Newsletter

AVENUE SCHOLARS



Avenue Scholars Announces New Leadership Structure

Phase I of Succession Planning Begins:
Lindsay Decker becomes President & COO

Avenue Scholars is pleased to announce a new leadership structure as a part of the organization's succession plans. Dr. Ken Bird, the Founding President/CEO, will continue to lead the organization as CEO until September 1, 2024. Alongside him, Lindsay Decker, the current Senior Director of Communications & Development, will step into the role of President & Chief Operating Officer (COO).

"The Board of Directors is proud to support the promotion of Lindsay Decker as the President and Chief Operating Officer of Avenue Scholars," Susie Buffett, Chair of the board said. "Lindsay's passion and vision align closely with our mission, and we are confident that under her leadership, we will continue to make meaningful strides towards supporting more Scholars and connecting them to meaningful jobs in the Omaha area. We are so grateful to have worked with Ken Bird the last 15 years, as he built the stable foundation for the work moving forward."

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First Scholar Completes Metro's Commercial Driver's License Program

From a young age, Beh Kar, a Thailand native and Omaha Northwest High School graduate, was drawn to a career in truck driving, inspired by his family's history in the trade. After relocating to the U.S. at age one due to civil unrest in Thailand, Beh pursued his aspirations and became the first Avenue Scholar to complete the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program at Metropolitan Community College (MCC), specializing in manual transmission.

Beh's internship at Woodhouse Auto Family further solidified his ambition to one day launch his own trucking or automotive business. Tonya Fairgood, his Postsecondary Career Coach, praises Beh's determination and passion for the CDL program, noting his discipline and business-minded approach. His High School Career Coach noticed the same when he started at Woodhouse.

"He was very verbal about his goal to be successful at Woodhouse. He advocated for himself when he needed additional tools. He called me to say, 'I really don't like borrowing tools from other people. I want to get my own. Can you all help me with that?'"

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Avenue Scholars

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Scholars Excel in Summit Dental Health Partnership

Summit Dental Health has joined forces with Avenue Scholars to create opportunities for young individuals aspiring to healthcare careers, especially as Dental Assistants. This collaboration offers them a pathway through paid on-the-job training, starting wages at \$17 an hour, and chances for career advancement, addressing both an industry need and supporting youth in their career development.

Layla Turner, a Benson High School alum, exemplifies the success of this partnership. Now a full-time Dental Assistant at Summit, she's not only gained valuable work experience but also aims to progress to a Dental Hygienist, encouraged by the tuition reimbursement offered by Summit for further education.

"Summit does offer amazing benefits and pay for schooling so you can achieve your goals," Layla attests. Her journey from high school to the professional world was significantly supported by her Career Coach Terrence Gillian and Postsecondary Career Coach Canei Rodriguez, reflecting the comprehensive support system Avenue Scholars provides its Scholars.

Avenue Scholars facilitated Layla's certification as a Dental Assistant, introducing her to potential employment at Summit. There, she found not just a job but a supportive community, and this environment has been instrumental in her training and professional growth.

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Scholars Pursue Career Dreams and Foster Business Skills



Two standout Scholars are Omaha Westside senior Angela “Angie” Ayika, and Omaha Bryan senior Noemie Olmedo. Both young women are on the Avenue Scholars career exploration journey and, in addition, have launched micro-businesses that not only serve as a testament to their entrepreneurial drive but also as stepping stones toward larger aspirations.

Angie’s venture, Angel’s Beauty, showcases her creativity through handmade bracelets and lip gloss products, originating from Westside’s entrepreneurial Hatch program. With ambitions of expanding into a full-service beauty and salon business, Angie’s journey is one of perseverance and strategic planning.

“I have a plan for almost everything I want to do,” Angie said, highlighting her resilience and forward-thinking mindset. Beth Leach, her High School Career Coach, praises Angie’s transformation and dedication: “She really turned her life around... She’s disciplined, puts in the work, believes in herself, and trusts her ability, and that’s what it’s all about.”

Angie attributes a significant part of her growth to the Avenue Scholars program. “Avenue Scholars means a lot to me. It’s helped me grow as an entrepreneur by supporting me in every step I take. My coaches let me know nothing comes easy, and I must set myself up for success. I love how Avenue Scholars always supports me whenever there’s a business opportunity.”

Noemie Olmedo, through her business Mimis Flores, creates handcrafted decorative floral arrangements with roses from Ecuador, drawing inspiration from her great-great-grandfather’s passion for flowers. Since the age of 15, Noemie has envisioned opening her own South Omaha storefront by age 20. Her business acumen and academic discipline are commendable, as she balances her growing enterprise with schoolwork, ensuring excellence in both. Kamina Lemons, Noemie’s High School Career Coach, notes her transformation into a confident leader: “Where before she was very quiet, she’s grown into this leader. She’s very vocal and confident.”

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First Scholar Completes Metro's Commercial Driver's License Program cont.

Really all anyone needs to be successful is that desire to push forward and advocate for yourself – and he's really good at it."

Driven by his family's journey and his own aspirations, Beh is relentless in pursuing his goals, emphasizing the importance of determination and self-advocacy. His commitment was evident in his approach to the CDL program, where he received significant support from his instructor, Reggie Patrick, and his classmates. Michael Kuebler, MCC's Professional Truck Driver Training Program Director, commends Beh's performance and motivation throughout the program, underscoring his potential in the trucking industry.

Beh's achievement as the inaugural Scholar to complete the program not only fills him with pride but also sets an example for his siblings and other Scholars. He credits MCC's efforts to remove barriers to entry for the program's accessibility and anticipates more Scholars will follow his path.

With a clear vision for his future, Beh is drawn to trucking for the freedom and independence it offers, along with the potential for a substantial entry-level salary with minimal debt.

Meanwhile, Beh's given Avenue Scholars another success story to share with students.

According to his High School Career Coach, "Beh's in a position to get paid all this money to see the country because he followed the path we lined up. I have a couple juniors interested in getting their CDL to be able to drive the big truck, so this is a story I can give them. I can tell them this can be you a year-and-a-half from now. Better yet, Beh can tell them himself. It will be more powerful coming from him anyway. I will be asking him to talk to my class."

Looking ahead, Beh aims for a simple life, including traveling, possibly visiting Thailand, and eventually starting his own business. His story, now a part of Avenue Scholars' success narratives, serves as inspiration for future Scholars interested in pursuing a CDL and a career in trucking.

"I recommend Avenue Scholars. It's a very good program," Beh said. "You don't have anything to lose participating in it. They offer you a lot of good opportunities and resources for your future career."

Scholars Pursue Career Dreams and Foster Business Skills, cont.

Both Scholars utilize social media to expand their clientele, demonstrating an expertise in marketing strategies. Their businesses are not just commercial endeavors but reflections of their personal histories and aspirations.

Angie plans to pursue an associate degree in business at MCC.

Noemie's dedication to her craft and her academic pursuits illustrates a profound commitment to excellence and self-improvement. She dreams of furthering her education in accounting, setting an example as a first-generation college

student. Her resolve is a source of inspiration: "It's important to me to say I did that. It will be a blessing to my parents."

Angie and Noemie's stories underscore the crucial role of Avenue Scholars in empowering young individuals to navigate their paths to success, blending entrepreneurial ventures with educational advancement. Their journeys from aspirations to achievements encapsulate the essence of hard work, vision, and the invaluable support of mentors and educators, painting an inspiring picture for future generations of entrepreneurs.

Avenue Scholars Announces New Leadership Structure, cont.

Bird, a visionary leader in the field of education, formed and launched Avenue Scholars, recently celebrating its 15th anniversary. Under Bird's leadership, Avenue Scholars has experienced remarkable growth and success, impacting the lives of hundreds of Scholars.

Lindsay Decker, a member of Avenue Scholars' leadership team, has demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment throughout her tenure with the organization. As Senior Director of Communications & Development, she has played a pivotal role in spearheading increased fundraising efforts, implementing streamlined processes to enhance operational efficiency, and conducting an organizational strategic communications and marketing audit resulting in a refreshed brand, creation of an origin story, and a redesign of the website to better tell the Avenue Scholars story of service and impact. Decker has also contributed to Avenue Scholars programming. She was the architect of the summer Boot Camp programming, connecting Scholars to local businesses.

"Lindsay's dedication and leadership have been instrumental in Avenue Scholars' recent success," Bird said. "I am thrilled to see her step into this new position, and I have no doubt that she will continue to lead with excellence."

In her new role as President & COO, Decker will continue to leverage her expertise and passion to drive Avenue Scholars forward. Her strategic vision, coupled with her deep understanding of the organization's mission and values, will contribute to Avenue Scholars' continued growth and impact.

"I am honored to take on this new role and excited to continue working alongside Dr. Bird, the entire Avenue Scholars team, and our Scholars," Decker said. "Together, with our Board of Directors and community partners, we will build upon our successes and further our mission of empowering Scholars to achieve their full potential."

Scholars Excel in Summit Dental Health Partnership, cont.

Layla's story is a testament to the satisfaction that comes from helping others, as she expresses joy in seeing patients leave with a smile. Her commitment and aspirations were quickly recognized by Summit, with Hannah Kearney, the Summit Regional Clinical Specialist, praising her exceptional skills and attitude.

The onboarding process at Summit involves a detailed 12-week training with experienced Dental Assistants, ensuring new recruits are well-prepared for their roles. This attention to thorough training is echoed by Audrey Gustin, Avenue Scholars Business Relations Manager, who highlights the importance of engaging corporate partners in providing more than just employment opportunities but also mentorship and developmental support.

Layla is driven, envisioning significant achievements in her future, including home ownership and advancing her career.

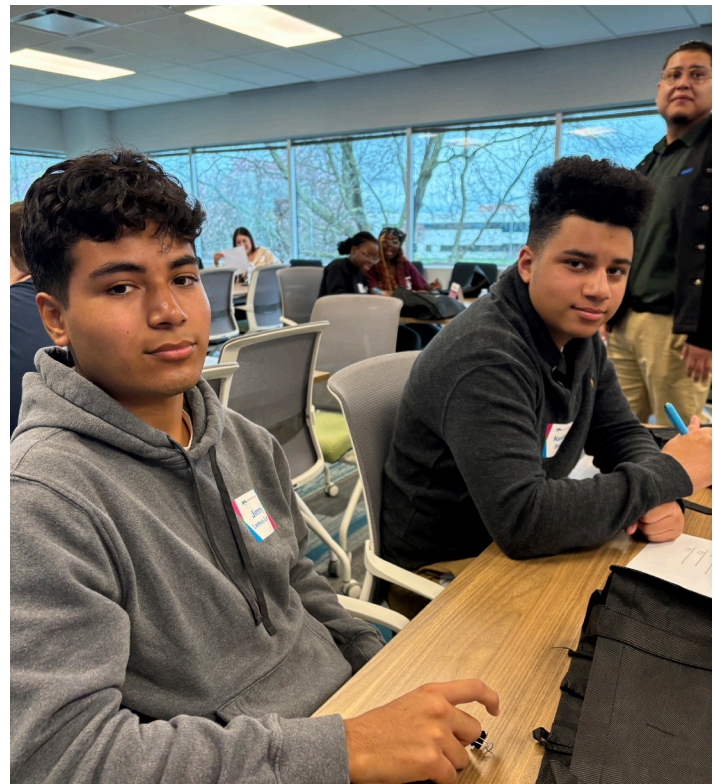
The partnership between Avenue Scholars and Summit serves as a model for bridging education and workforce readiness, emphasizing the value of mentorship, hands-on training, and supportive communities in nurturing young talent. It showcases the potential of such collaborations to not only meet industry demands but also empower young people to achieve their career goals, with Summit offering a conducive work environment with professional development without the demand of working holidays or nights.

As discussions for new internship opportunities between Avenue Scholars and Summit are underway, Layla continues to save and plan for her future, confident in the skills and experience she has gained. This partnership not only fills the gap in the Dental Assistant demand but also instills in young professionals the values of hard work, care, and the pursuit of personal and professional growth.

Welcome New Scholars!

To give our Scholars the personalized attention they deserve, we organized a series of smaller, individualized welcome events at our new Avenue Scholars office, followed by a lunch. These mini-events replaced the large spring luncheon we've hosted in years past. The New Scholar Celebrations began on April 8th with our welcome to our newest Scholars from Blair High School.

Mayor Jean Stothert issued a proclamation that April 15th is "Avenue Scholars Day". The photos capture our Avenue Scholars Day Celebration and a few of our New Scholar Celebrations. Our new cohort of Scholars are comprised of students enrolled at ten greater Omaha area high schools. Each celebration offered a lunch, panel discussion, and program orientation. Avenue Scholars Leadership, Program Directors, Career Coaches, Student Support Teams, and Post Secondary Teams helped to provide an introduction to the course curriculum, internship opportunities, personalized support, and our commitment to accompanying Scholars through the process. We are grateful to the many parents and high school administrators who joined us and offered support for the Avenue Scholars Program.





Visit our new website!

Stop by our new website which makes it easier than ever to learn about our mission and access valuable resources. Featuring new content, a streamlined design, and intuitive navigation, our new site is your one-stop spot to understand how Avenue Scholars is making an impact in the greater Omaha area. Visit www.avescholars.org today and explore the many ways your commitment to Avenue Scholars provides meaningful opportunities in the lives of our youth.



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