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**Juice Plus+ Technical Training Center of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Memphis**

The Juice Plus+ Technical Training Center (TTC) is a 24,000 square foot facility that offers training in some of the fastest growing career fields in Memphis. The overall budget for the TTC is approximately $777,518.

Our organization has pioneered a program to help train and place hardworking teens in part-time jobs and graduates in productive careers. Our Juice Plus+ Technical Training Center was the first of its kind in the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Here, students choose a career track from logistics, automotive, culinary arts, welding, or IT. They learn the skills they will need to enter the workforce while receiving training in the areas of customer service, money management, computer soft-skills and personal goal setting that will make them employees of choice. The program enrolls 350-400 students each year, with a 100% of graduates going directly into jobs. College or the military. In order to join the program, students must be enrolled as a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs.

The Job Seekers program is a premier job training and career development program for students ages 16-18 at the Juice Plus+ Technical Training Center of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Memphis. The purpose of the program is to ensure that students are ready to launch successful careers upon graduating high school. For the past 4 years the placement rate for all graduates whom completed the program has been 100%. Placement is defined as: Job, College, and/or Military. To prepare students for the workforce hard skills *and* soft skills classes are required. According to hiring personnel from industry partners, soft skills are the main factor considered when making hiring decisions. Soft skills strongly enhance employability in areas of: Resume’ and cover letter writing, college prep, money management, mock interviewing, job shadowing, professional dress, entrepreneurship, customer service, Microsoft Office, and personality typing for career development. Students also select a hard skills class. The hard skills options are: Culinary Arts, Logistics, Welding, and Information Technology (IT). Industry certifications are provided in hard skills, making students more marketable to employers. Specifically, in logistics, students obtain forklift certifications. In IT, students acquire A+ certification. We partnered with Tech901 to offer the most up-to-date training to fully prepare students for careers in the IT field. In welding, students receive AWS Certified Welder certification. Culinary students have the option to participate in a more advanced culinary training program called “Garden to Groceries” where they are exposed to the full process of food production by growing produce in Tower Gardens in a state-of-the-art commercial greenhouse. They gain on-the-job hospitality training by executing catering events and preparing products for sale at local farmers markets. Because of the success of our Garden to Groceries program, Juice Plus+ partnered with BGCA to donate a Tower Garden to every club in the new “Growing Up Program.” All students can take a supplemental automotive class. The automotive class teaches students general vehicle maintenance and helps them purchase a safe, budget friendly, reliable first car. It is important to note that Boys & Girls Clubs, in other cities, have begun to replicate the Job Seekers program. One such club is the Boys & Girls Club of Bluffton in SC which now allows students to grow and sell produce at area farmers’ markets.

In 2015 the Department of Labor reported that at 6.4% Memphis has the 2nd highest unemployment rate for a large metropolitan area in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2013 Memphis was #1 in both overall and child poverty rates amongst Metropolitan Statistical Areas with populations greater than 1,000,000. (Refer to the table below). Approximately 98% of students live below the poverty line. Workforce Development fights to eliminate poverty.

***Table 1 – Diverse Poverty Rates in Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee, & U.S.***

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| **2013 Poverty Rate** | **Overall** | **Under 18** | **18-64** | **Over 65** | **Non-Hispanic White** | **Black** | **Latino** | **Asian** |
| **Memphis** | **27.7%** | **45.7%** | **23.2%** | **11.6%** | **9.8%** | **33.5%** | **47.0%** | **14.6%** |
| **Shelby County** | **21.8%** | **35.8%** | **18.3%** | **9.1%** | **7.6%** | **30.0%** | **42.6%** | **7.9%** |
| **Tennessee** | **17.8%** | **26.5%** | **16.4%** | **9.7%** | **14.2%** | **28.9%** | **33.9%** | **9.1%** |
| **United States** | **15.8%** | **22.2%** | **14.8%** | **9.6%** | **11.1%** | **27.6%** | **24.8%** | **12.7%** |

When asking students why they cannot make it to job interviews, why they lost a job, and/or why they are not applying for jobs, their main answer is lack of transportation. We addressed this problem with our automotive class. This program was not enough, so we started the UPS Road Code Program to teach trainees how to handle distracted driving. We then realized how many of our teens did not have access to a vehicle to take their driver’s license test. We started a driver’s education component for those that did not have their driver’s license or learner’s permit. Shelby County Schools (SCS) eliminated Driver’s Education at the time we started our program. According to the 2015 BGCA Keystone survey, the top 2 programs that teens would like to see more of within the clubs are: job development and driver’s education. TTC’s job placement and driver’s education fulfill both of those requests. We reach beyond the South Memphis community offering our services to other areas in the Greater Memphis community. We partner with Martin Luther King College Prep High School (MLK) in North Memphis. MLK arranges transportation for their high school seniors to attend the training classes. We also collaborate with Streets Ministries, a nonprofit that serves Northeast Memphis. Streets Ministries provides a bus to transport teens to the TTC. TTC participates in the Adopt-A-School Campaign with SCS and adopted Hollis F. Price Middle College High. In the summer, we worked with the City of Memphis’ MPLOY program that provided work experience for teens. Following suit with BGCA’s More Teens, More Often Campaign, we increased our teen enrollment by 39.4%.

**Safe and Positive Environment:** Our trainees come from high-poverty neighborhoods. The TTC provides a safe, positive place for them to come and feel wanted and needed. We have gang prevention and intervention guest speakers from Young Man’s University and Heal the Hood Foundation to talk to the students about ways to avoid, and/or get out of gangs, and other bad situations.

**Fun:** We have theatre outreach groups teach important life lessons through various types of performing arts. Students perform skits to impress employers with their customer service and conflict resolution skills. Our culinary students use their creativity to make new recipes to share with classmates and instructors.

**Supportive Relationships:** Students build relationships and network with industry volunteers who often help them with future education and career opportunities. We host monthly Career Days so our students can find mentors outside of TTC staff and create positive working relationships in different career fields. We support our alumni through social media, offering the facility when they need it, and by providing recommendation letters for advanced career and educational opportunities.

**Opportunities and Expectations:** The number one thing trainees said they liked most about coming to the TTC is the high expectations that staff members have for them. We conduct high yield learning activities that develop multiple skills that focus on their current *and* future goals. We have business professionals share their stories about how they got into their respective fields. This has really helped trainees realize their full potential and know that we expect them to excel in life.

**Recognition:** Whenever a student receives their first job, we take their picture to showcase and congratulate them on a job well done. We celebrate success in our UPS Road Code class through our graduation program where we recognize students for milestones such as: highest simulator score, most improved, etc. Mr. Isom, a UPS Manager and Road Code volunteer facilitator elaborated:

I REALLY enjoyed the opportunity to work with the group of teenagers at the Boys & Girls Club and providing them with safety driving techniques that will help them become safer drivers in the future. This is one challenge that we have as a society among younger drivers that have more distractions on the roadway now more than ever. Feeling that I have a chance to impact a group of teenagers really motivates me to help where I can.

In 2013, Memphis had the highest overall *and* child poverty rate in the country amongst Metropolitan Statistical Areas. Approximately 98% of students in the Job Seekers program live below the poverty line. One of the best blueprints for prosperity is workforce development, and the Job Seekers program empowers young people to work in living wage occupations and complete college. To measure success, we track employment, college, and/or military placement, which are monitored by the Career Placement Director. In 2015, 100% of graduates who completed the program were placed in jobs, college, military, or a combination of those career paths. Specifically, 52.1% got a job and attend college; 34.2% attend college only; 11% work full-time only; and 2.7% are in the military. As students gain living wage employment and graduate college, they climb out of poverty.

Industry partners have given very positive feedback. For instance, Mr. Jones, the District Manager for O’Reilly Auto Parts shared:

To say that it has been a pleasure to interview as well as hire students from the Boys & Girls Club would be an understatement. These kids are so well trained in the areas of customer service, specialized job skills training as well as knowing how to come prepared for an interview. Each kid that we have had the pleasure of interviewing came to the interviews dressed for success and had resumes and references in hand. They are all well-spoken, energetic and all seem to understand that they have to work hard in order to get ahead in life. It seems that each kid that I have spoken with thus far, all come from some pretty rough areas and have all had tough lives growing up in inner city Memphis, but they all seem to have the mindset that they will not let the circumstances of their environment control their destinies.

Every year 50 members complete a pre and post-test evaluation for United Way funding. The 2013-2014 Report findings compiled by Philliber Research and Evaluation found:

 “At follow up, a higher percentage of participants reported achieving 6 of the 7 job readiness behaviors compared to baseline. The increases in participants who have completed a job application, been on an interview, and/or have their driver’s license were statistically significant…the total job readiness behavior score significantly increased from 4.3 at baseline to 5.16 at follow-up (with 6.0 being the highest score).”

These key findings demonstrate that the work we are doing is truly impacting lives.

**Academic Success –** Ensuring that students graduate high school is definitely a top priority for the TTC. In fact, in 2015, we graduated 100% of our seniors, compared to Shelby County School’s average of 75%. College prep is also a big portion of our soft skills instruction. ACT prep, college selection classes, college tours and an annual college fair work collectively to encourage college education as the next step for maximum career growth. The outcomes are promising in that in 2015, 86.3% of Job Seekers went on to pursue higher education opportunities.

**Good Character and Citizenship –** The importance of giving back and serving others is highlighted in the Job Seekers program. In fact, community service is built into the job training program curriculum. Different community service projects are completed throughout the year as part of the program. For instance, once the fall season arrives and the temperatures drop, students work together as a team to assemble homeless baggies to combat homelessness. There is also a strong “kids teaching kids” component built into the Job Seekers program. Students with more training often help other less experienced students develop their employability skills. The emphasis on team work and helping others fosters good character and citizenship.

**Healthy Lifestyles –** One of the core principles of the Job Seekers’ Garden to Groceries culinary program is to promote healthy eating habits. Students increase their fresh fruit and veggie intake and adopt healthier cooking styles and options. Moreover, students learn how to actually grow some of their own healthy food utilizing the Tower Gardens while participating in greenhouse science training in culinary. They begin to truly appreciate “real” food by being engaged in the full process of food production: from “garden” to “grocery.” Garden to Groceries students shared some healthy habits they have learned.

Detarius Benson, 18, stated “[through culinary], I have learned that a healthy meal is one with a variety of foods in it. They explained to me this as having a rainbow on your plate; when you look at your plate you should see a rainbow, this is a sign of a healthy meal”.

Tyelon Jenkins, 16, said “food may be a way of life but it is also about what you choose to eat. Based off of what you eat, it can improve or hurt your body…Many people do not know the effects of food. Food is a way of culture and living.”

**Videos:**

Gardens to Groceries: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7mUpULlQzo>

News story about the TTC: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkveVLjn6ws>

 

 

 

