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Award-winning program inspired CHA student to pursue filmmaking - and come out of her shell

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DePaul's "Become a Filmmaker" is one of 11 programs that have helped some 2,300 CHA youth explore career pathways this summer

CHICAGO (July 30, 2025) - LaTreva Owodele was a pre-med student a few years ago when she took a film class and promptly switched her major to filmmaking. She then signed up for the CHA's "Become a Filmmaker" program that bolstered her interest - and her life.

"The Become a Filmmaker program has helped me with becoming more confident and outspoken and now, being a mentor, it's even more important because I'm trying to impart what I've learned to other people," she said.

The award-winning Become a Filmmaker program, in collaboration with DePaul University's School of Cinematic Arts, is for female-identifying youth ages 15-20 and teaches every step of filmmaking. It is one of several paid summer opportunities that have helped 2,307 CHA residents ages 13-24 this year, providing early exposure to career and education pathways and opportunities that stem potential summer learning loss. **Friday, Aug. 1 is the last day for most of the programs.**

Owodele, 24, graduated from St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN., in 2023 and has applied for film school. She has participated in a host of other CHA summer programming opportunities over the last 11 years. Among her favorites were the inaugural Future Founders Apprenticeship program last year and Learn and Earn, where students explore career fields. One of her best memories was learning how to garden and fix bikes - a skill she uses to this day with kids in her neighborhood.

"For some reason, I hadn't considered film before, even though I am an avid movie-watcher," Owodele said. "I'd always get access to pre-screenings and thought about being a movie reviewer. I didn't have the confidence then. I took the film class and it just felt right. Then I took the Become a Filmmaker class and it felt even more right."

Owodele is writing a sitcom comedy as part of her film school application. Her dream is to be a writer/director. It is also her third and final year with Become a Filmmaker, where she now serves as a mentor to the younger students.

“It’s like being a teacher,” she said. “The program has definitely helped me a lot.”

The 2025 CHA summer programming slate includes:

Future Founders Be Your Own Boss: Guided by real entrepreneurs, this program leads youth grades 9-12 through the entrepreneurial process via virtual sessions, team meetings and site visits.

CHA Student Internship Program: Provides opportunities for college students to participate in a professional environment, building workplace skills and gaining experience. Program ends Aug. 22.

Movie and TV Scripts 101: Teaches students how to write an original screenplay from award-winning screenwriters at DePaul University.

Next Level Photography: A collaboration with the DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts, students master the technical foundation of photography.

Summer Youth Employment Program: Offers youth meaningful, paid, work-based opportunities with a variety of industries throughout the city

Day Camp Counselor in Training: Provides youth with the opportunity to gain leadership and financial literacy skills.

Hyde Park Art Center Program: Students work alongside mural artist Dorian Sylvain to design and render an exterior large-scale painted mural on the Hyde Park Art Center.

PeacePlayers Chicago: Offers boys a blend of basketball, leadership development, career readiness and peace building.

Summer of Code: Allows youth to build a foundation in programming fundamentals, as youth gain practical experience in building a basic iOS app from scratch.

Teen League Counselor in Training, Teen League: Teens manage a citywide basketball sports league, assisting with organizing games, scorekeeping and equipment.