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CHA Summer Youth programs are on track to reach 10 percent participation increase in 2024

Published on July 29, 2024





Davora Buchanan was shy while growing up in Trumbull Park Homes. She kept to herself and read. Then she attended CHA's Learn and Earn program, where teenage students explore career fields like entrepreneurship, arts and technology while earning a paycheck.

"It was the first program I did outside of Trumbull, the first program where I interacted with other kids and took the bus all the way to South Suburban College," she said. "It was a turning point, not just because of what I was learning but because of the people I met. It was a life-changing experience for me."

Ten years later, Learn and Earn – six weeks of career exploration for CHA residents ages 13-15 that includes a \$600 stipend – continues to inspire. It and other summer programs are on track to reach CHA's performance goal of a 10 percent increase in participation (2,429) over last year (2,215) with summer earnings that are expected to reach \$3 million.

The Learn and Earn experience certainly helped Buchanan, who got involved in other CHA programs like Summer Youth Employment Program. She eventually graduated from DeVry University Advantage Academy, earned a bachelors and masters in sociology and now works for Metropolitan Family Services as a Domestic Violence Advocate and Housing Coordinator doing what she loves: housing people.

"If I'm able to house one person I feel successful," she said. "I put my all into it because someone put their all into it for me and my mother when it was time to get housed."

Learn and Earn is one of several paid summer opportunities for CHA residents ages 13-24 that CHA is offering this summer, providing early exposure to career and education pathways and opportunities that stem potential summer learning loss. It concludes Aug. 1.

Other CHA summer programs include:

Become a Filmmaker: Participants in this award-winning program collaborate with DePaul University's School of Cinematic Arts to learn all aspects of filmmaking, from story development to editing. Guided by graduate students, they create short films for global festivals, with industry expert visits and field trips. Participants earn \$15.80/hour.

Be Your Own Boss: High school age participants develop a startup addressing a passion-driven problem, guided by entrepreneurs and business professionals through virtual sessions, meetings, and field trips. Youth gain skills in identifying opportunities, acquiring customers, building prototypes, and pitching to investors for lifelong success! Participants earn \$15.80/hour.

Counselor in Training (CIT), a collaboration between the Chicago Housing Authority and the Chicago Park District, provides 40 teens 15 years old a summer opportunity as a counselor. Youth gain life skills and the opportunity to grow, learn and gain skills in leadership and financial capability while earning a \$1,320 stipend.

CHA Student Internship Program: This program provides opportunities for college students to participate in a professional environment, building workplace skills and gaining experience for future careers. Participants earn \$17.00/hour.

Movie and TV Scripts 101: Participants in this screenwriting program with DePaul University's award-winning screenwriters learn to write original screenplays through film analysis, format, style, scene craft, story structure, character development, and dialogue. The program includes writing a short movie or TV script, followed by a table read with actors from DePaul's Theatre School, alongside industry expert visits and field trips. Participants, ages 15-20, earn \$15.80/hour.

Next Level Photography: In collaboration with the DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts, participants master technical foundations, explore genres like nature and portraiture, develop personal styles, and build portfolios for freelance opportunities. Participants, ages 15-20, earn \$15.80/hour.

PeacePlayers: PeacePlayers Chicago provides participants a transformative summer experience centered around fostering healthy relationships and unlocking the leader in youth. This program offers a unique blend of basketball, leadership development, career readiness, and peace building. Participants earn a \$600 stipend.

Summer of Code: This program teaches programming basics using Swift, helping build a fundamental understanding and practical skills to develop a basic iOS app from start to finish, including essential user interface design principles. Participants earn \$15.80/hour.

Summer Youth Employment Program: This program offers youth ages 16-24, meaningful, paid work-based opportunities with a variety of industries throughout the city. Participants earn \$15.80/hour.