

Young Men Rising Program, Funded by Ausherman Family Foundation, Invests in Thriving Futures

Frederick, MD, Nov. 7, 2018 – “In order to keep what you’ve got, you’ve got to give it away.”

That’s a mantra that Branden McCallister lives by as the Young Men Rising Coordinator for the Housing Authority of the City of Frederick (HACF). And it’s one he shares with about 20 young men who take part in this new program. Young Men Rising exists to invite young men to succeed in work and school, and to build a vision of a thriving future.

It teaches values like giving back to your community through service, developing a strong work ethic, and building a successful and healthy life. The program does this by bridging barriers to success for 14 to 24 year old teens and young men.

“I’m big on service work. We go to a nursing home and we volunteer in a nursing home and our young men serve food. They do dishes. They clean up. And then we go out and have some fun,” McCallister said, adding that fun could take the form of pizza, a night at Sky Zone, bowling or any number of other group activities where team building is a priority.

McCallister, who himself grew up in low income housing, includes Young Men Rising program participants from Lucas Village and Carver – two housing projects where historically some young men have built neighborhood rivalries.

“I try to incorporate Carver and Lucas Village residents together at a young age so I might be able to change some of this old Carver and Sagner stuff. I’m trying to break those barriers down and show them a different way,” explained McCallister.

Slowly, McCallister said he is witnessing how the program is changing minds and hearts.

Five of McCallister’s older participants in Young Men Rising also take part in the Year Up program, a one-year initiative for urban and disadvantaged young adults designed to close the “opportunity gap” and give them the skill set and opportunity to earn a livable wage. Participants in Year Up, ages 18 to 24, choose an area of study – ranging from cyber security and IT to business fundamentals and business construction – and attend Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) for six months where they can earn 26 credit hours of college credit by the completion of the program. Participants are paired with a corporate partner and then complete a six-month paid internship at a company that matches their area of focus. The average salary upon graduation and employment is \$36,000.

Young Men Rising is funded for two years through a \$30,000 grant by the Ausherman Family Foundation (AFF). The grant pays for a portion of McCallister’s salary and some supports for participants.

“We wanted to help support them in getting the Young Men Rising program off the ground,” said Leigh Adams, Executive Director of the Ausherman Family Foundation (AFF). “We have been impressed with what has been accomplished so far. We were particularly pleased with their dedication to drive these young men to Baltimore daily to participate in Year Up, providing a fantastic opportunity to springboard these young men and open doors for them.”

Also, AFF Board Members Kari Ausherman and Nick Branic have generously supported these students with additional grants that helped connect them with computer access, transportation, and other vital supports.

McCallister said he couldn’t be more thankful that the Ausherman Family Foundation believed in the Young Men Rising program and was willing to invest in his dream and take a chance on guys growing up in low-income housing in Frederick.

“The Ausherman Foundation has been a gift,” McCallister said. “Ultimately, the contribution is allowing me to be a part of these young men’s lives – not just financially but being able to open up some doors for some of the guys in the group. For me, when the Foundation did that, it gave me that inspiration that someone believes in you, Branden. They are willing to put money in your group. It gave me that sense of responsibility that I owe this to pay forward to these young men. Someone believed in me so I need to believe in someone else. It helped me to build relationships and to break barriers down.”