



Staff Report

File #: 21-235

Version: 1

Date: 5/24/2021

Item #: 6.c.

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Steve Powers, City Manager

FROM: Norman Wright, Community Development Director

SUBJECT:

Youth Development CAREcorps Program

Ward(s): All Wards

Councilor(s): All Councilors

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Result Area(s): Good Governance; Safe Community; Welcoming and Livable Community.

ISSUE:

Council request for how the City can better support and expand the impact of the City's CAREcorps.

RECOMMENDATION:

Information Only

SUMMARY:

To better support CAREcorps, increase program funding by an estimated \$35,000 and provide to Issacs's Room for program coordination. To expand the impact, staff will develop strategies to broaden CAREcorps' scope.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

CAREcorps has accomplished significant results but is an intensive program. On a good year (pre-pandemic), it reaches 50 youth and requires immense effort from staff and partners. Adding youth is not feasible with the current partnerships. New partnerships (and more funding) will require a new approach in order to be sustainable and the Youth Development Coordinator needs time to develop strategies. Assistance with day-to-day, current program coordination, would allow the Coordinator to build the program basics. Up to eight months would be needed.

CAREcorps' ultimate impact is creating community-centric young leaders who are better equipped and empowered for life ahead, including the workplace. It appeals to an important part of the City's youth population. Because of its rigor, participation is historically limited to 50 students or less. The best way to scale up the program's ultimate outcomes (connecting youth to opportunity on a wider scale involves three critical steps that require additional support from the City, local youth-serving organizations, and the business sector.

The first step involves improvements to the existing CAREcorps program. Current funding for the 2-year intensive summer CAREcorps program should continue as planned and a new part-time position (0.5 FTE) should be added to administer the program in new and improved ways with our primary partner, Isaac's Room, Inc.

The second step involves our current partners efforts to expand their internship and entry-level job offerings for program participants. Efforts are already underway and will provide a model for step 3.

The third step allows the Youth Development Coordinator to research, develop, and eventually present a new youth and young adult (YYA) jobs placement program for Council review. The program will be built from the core principles of CAREcorps program and will be tailored to the needs and interests of the broader youth population in order to create a larger market potential. The objectives and desired outcomes of the new program are expanded below. If approved, staff will develop the initial partnerships, strategies, and funding sources necessary for a final proposal within eight months.

Since 2011, CAREcorps has connected rising 9th, 10th, and 11th graders with peers and older students representing Salem-Keizer area high schools. Together, they form service teams mentored by college-aged staff and receive training from key collaborative partners and guest speakers during an intensive summer program that runs from June and July.

This unique approach helps CAREcorps break down negative teen stereotypes by providing a space for cultural, educational, and leadership growth. Participants are empowered to make positive changes individually and together in the community. Many alumni remain connected to the program years after their initial experience.

CAREcorps Philosophy and Goals

The program is based on Youth.gov's Civic Engagement and, Soft and Technical Skills Development best practices, the Search Institute's 40 Development Assets for youth, and the Advancement Via Individual Determination ([AVID <http://www.avid.org/>](http://www.avid.org/)) national school program's philosophy. These best practices prepare students for academic success and personal success in life. Participants are often the first in their family to attend college. Many participants also come from groups that are traditionally underrepresented.

The program is open to all high school-aged youth living in the Salem-Keizer area.

CAREcorps goals include:

- Network teens across school campuses and foster friendships across socio-economic, ethnic/racial, school boundaries, and other lines.
- Create a bridge for incoming 9th graders to positively connect with upper-level students from shared high schools.
- Provide “real world” skill development activities to improve college, trade, and workforce readiness.
- Develop service leadership attributes in participants.
- Link members to year-round resources and programs for on-going engagement.
- Provide a Mayoral congratulatory letter and cap/gown Service Honors pin at graduation.
- After two years, and at least 120 hours of service and training, participants receive the following:
 - A one-half (0.5) community service elective credit on their high school transcript (equivalent of one semester of class).
 - A City of Salem Letter of Recommendation for college portfolios and resumes provided upon request.

BACKGROUND:

CAREcorps’ History and Collaborative Partnership:

The City’s Youth Development Coordinator designed the program to close the transitional gaps that merge when students shift from middle school to high school. Research suggests that these periods are critical points for positive intervention in order to reduce school dropout rates. The summer months are times of highest need. The program has evolved significantly since that time, as detailed below, while maintaining the same objectives and rates of success

2011 - Initial partners included the now-dissolved Salem-Keizer Education Foundation (SKEF), Isaac’s Room, Inc., Salem-Keizer Public School District (SKPS), the District’s AVID program. The Salem Leadership Foundation (SLF) joined soon after.

2011-2015 - Program funding included a 5-year SKPS High School Graduation Initiative grant totaling \$90,000 along with an average annual grant of \$7,000 provided by the City’s general fund. Additional mini-grants, sponsorships, donations and/or in-kind staff and resources supplemented the program when possible.

2016-2020 - The initial grant expired, and the City continued to fund the program with, on average, \$12,000 of annual general fund money (a 40-60% reduction in operating budget). Additional sources of funding and resources from collaborative partners and businesses were also secured when possible.

Program management and day-to-day coordination has been provided by the City’s Youth Development Coordinator throughout the program’s history.

All hiring and payroll administration of seasonal staff is conducted by program collaborative partners. The City provides mini-grants from the general fund to these partners for administrative services, payroll and/or stipends, various purchasing during the actual program, facility use and/or transportation costs.

CAREcorps Results:

- 2011 City of Salem's Dorothy Patch Community and Educational Achievement Award
- 2012 HASBRO Global Community Action Grant and Honors (Top 10 of 14,000 entries.
- More than 340 local teams completed one program year. Seventy-five went on to complete the second year receiving program incentives.
- On average, CAREcorps membership includes 70-80% persons of color, 50-75% eligible for free and reduced meal programs
- All SKPS High Schools including Early College and Roberts, have been represented with higher annual registration numbers from South Salem and McKay High Schools.
- One hundred paid jobs have been provided to high school and college-aged youth.
- Teens have garnered more than \$29,000 in donated goods, services, and cash for projects.
- Service teams have served 12 key nonprofit organizations and agencies including:
 - Marion-Polk Food Share
 - SKPS School Gardens
 - SKPS Agriculture Program
 - St. Francis Shelter
 - Salem Dream Center
 - Willamette Humane Society
 - Brown Road Park
 - Boys & Girls Club of Salem, Marion and Polk Counties

Laurie Shaw Casarez
Youth Development Program Coordinator

Attachments:
None.