

## **Organization Description:**

In 2007 the City of Saint Paul conducted a revolutionary audit through the law firm of James Hall on its contract and purchasing departments. The Hall Audit recognized the City's efforts to comply with current inclusion legislation but also highlighted the lack of accountability and monitoring being done on the various programs. In response to the Hall Audit, the City's Attorney proposed consolidating current departments to better address the City's need for accountability in inclusion legislation. In November of 2008, Mayor Christopher Coleman unified civil rights enforcement; contract analysis and procurement; contract monitoring, investigation, and capacity building; the City's print services; and workforce development under one roof in the Department of Human Rights an Equal Economic Opportunity (HREEO).

HREEO is a department within Saint Paul's local government, and therefore does not have a board of directors. Jessi Kingston is the director of HREEO and the department is accountable to Mayor Christopher Coleman. HREEO has an advisory committee, the HREEO Commission, which consists of 21 members of the Saint Paul Community and serves to advise HREEO's Director Kingston, review departmental performance, and review cases of discrimination under the Saint Paul Human Rights Ordinance<sup>1</sup>.

HREEO promotes equity within the City through a variety of avenues. HREEO engages the community through outreach events that focus on registering minority and women owned businesses to be used as vendors for upcoming City Contracts, through Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. Public housing residents or low-income residents of Saint Paul can also be registered under Section 3 to ensure that when employment or contracting opportunities are generated, preference for employment is given to these workers and businesses. Small, minority, and women owned businesses also receive capacity building classes in order to remain competitive. HREEO participates in outreach events to inform residents of their legal rights and connect them with HREEO's multi-lingual and culturally diverse lawyers. HREEO investigates cases of discrimination within the City, and through its Workforce Development Initiatives, HREEO offers courses on skills development for the construction industry and hosts the nationally recognized Saint Paul EMS Academy.

To date the EMS Academy has had 263 total participants, and their demographics are as follows: 40% African American, 17% Asian, 14% Caucasian, 12% multi-racial, 10% Hispanic, 7% Native American, and 53% have been female.

The City of Saint Paul is an Equal Employment Affirmative Action Employer. Therefore, HREEO encourages applications from individuals with disabilities, persons of color, LGBT, and women.

## **Project Description:**

Saint Paul is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse areas in the state of Minnesota; however, the medical workforce serving the City does not represent the diverse communities within the city. The problem is not unique to Saint Paul. Emergency Medical Services providers across the country staff largely homogenous

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<sup>1</sup> For complete list of HREEO Commission members and demographics, see **Attachment 1**

workforces. According to the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians, 74% of paramedics and EMTs working the field are Caucasian and 76% are male<sup>2</sup>.

The Twin Cities have one of the largest achievement and employment gaps for low-income and minority youth, specifically among African American males. The unemployment rate for African Americans in the Twin Cities is 40%, resulting in an employment gap of 20.6% between Caucasian and African American adults, the highest in the country<sup>3</sup>. Minority and low-income schools in the Twin Cities also face dramatic segregation, which further perpetuates the racial educational achievement gap (University of Minnesota Institute on Race and Poverty).

In an effort to address the achievement gap, the Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation's Youth Job Corps (YJC) connects low-income and minority youth with meaningful training and helps them develop their professional skills. In 2009 YJC approached the Saint Paul Fire Department (SPFD) about staffing YJC positions in fire stations as custodial staff. Saint Paul Fire Chief, Tim Butler, suggested instead that students be paid from YJC dollars to receive EMT training. The envisioned project would create a pipeline of diverse candidates for SPFD and the emergency medical workforce within the Twin Cities. HREEO had existing infrastructure within its Workforce Development Initiative to manage the EMS Academy and assumed the role of organizational lead on the newly created program. The EMS Academy began as simply an EMT training course offered free of charge, but currently has three major components: Introduction to EMS Class (Intro Class), Phase 1 EMT Training Class (Phase 1), and employment with the Phase 2 Basic Life Support Ambulance.

The Introduction to EMS Class is offered to students who do not meet our reading score criteria, or need to develop their study skills before entering the Phase 1 EMT training class. The Intro Class is taught by instructors from the Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning. The class is offered free of charge and students are loaned textbooks for the duration of the class at no cost. The Intro Class helps students develop effective study habits, improve reading comprehension, and become familiar with basic medical terminology and physiology. Students often use the Intro Class to bolster their application for Phase 1 or as the foundation for other training programs such as Medical Support Staff or Certified Nursing Assistant. Students have also used the Intro Class as a capstone project for completion of a high school diploma. More than half of the students who complete the Introduction to EMS Course demonstrate increased reading comprehension and acquisition of BASIC Skills.

The Phase 1 EMT Training Class is the primary focus of the EMS Academy and consequently of the PACE Grant funds. In order to be eligible for Phase 1, students must meet federal low-income guidelines<sup>4</sup>, be a resident of Saint Paul, have a high school diploma or GED, and be between the ages of 18-24 for our summer class or 18-30 for our spring class. Phase 1 consists of 240+ hours of in-class instruction that is split evenly between didactic lecture and skills based training. The class does not charge any tuition and students are issued uniforms and textbooks free of charge. Students are paid an hourly wage for classroom time in order to offset the cost of living during their time at

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<sup>2</sup> 2008 National Registry of EMTs Longitudinal Emergency Medical Technician Attributes and Demographics Study.

<sup>3</sup> 2011 Helmstetter *Employment and Other Disparities in the Twin Cities*

<sup>4</sup> Applicants must make at or below 300% of the federal poverty line

the EMS Academy. The EMS Academy contracts Inver Hills Community College (IHCC) of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system to provide instructors for the Academy. Teachers' Assistants from IHCC and working paramedics tutor the students and coach them on skills development. Completion of Phase 1 authorizes students to sit for the National Registry of EMTs Certification Exam, the licensing agency for EMTs and Paramedics in the United States.

It became apparent that students were encountering issues outside of class that were hindering their success. Of the original 35 students in the first class of the EMS Academy, only 9 completed the training. EMS Academy students were facing homelessness, malnutrition, and some students with impaired vision did not even have prescription eyeglasses. In an effort to incorporate broader social support services, the EMS Academy incorporated career advising and social support services. The Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties (CAP) provides a social worker to assist students in overcoming obstacles that arise outside the classroom. Since the integration of the CAP social worker with the EMS Academy, our retention rate has increased by 40%, and to date The EMS Academy has graduated more than 100 students.

Although the EMS Academy was successfully training young adults as EMTs, EMS Academy graduates were still having difficulties securing jobs in the medical workforce. Many EMS agencies will only hire EMTs with volunteer experience or prior EMS employment. Unfortunately few of these volunteer opportunities exist within the Twin Cities. In the summer of 2012, under the guidance of SPFD, we began operating a Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance staffed by EMS Academy graduates. The BLS Ambulance transports nonemergent patients between homes, hospitals, and assisted care facilities. Working on the BLS Ambulance has been an invaluable experience for our graduates. Of the original 10 EMTs hired to work the BLS Ambulance 8 now work for local ambulance services such as Allina, HealthEast, and North Memorial.

### **Project Priorities:**

EMT training is a valuable technical skill that opens the door for future career opportunities within the medical and public safety field. The EMS Academy offers an in-demand<sup>5</sup> vocational training and support services that are not always available at tradition four-year colleges. Following completion of the EMS Academy, many students move on to seek Associate's or Bachelor's degrees, albeit with a more intentional focus in medicine or public safety. The majority of our summer sessions are filled with students who have graduated from high school within the last year. The vast majority of EMS programs are hosted at community colleges in the first-ring suburbs of the Twin Cities, making them difficult for urban youth to access. The EMS Academy is centrally located in downtown Saint Paul along major bus lines.

The EMS Academy provides a gateway to a meaningful vocation and greatly expands career opportunities for graduates. The EMT certification offered by our program is nationally recognized, and it helps EMS Academy students break into a traditionally homogenous field. Furthermore, our graduates seeking careers in the medical field leave

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<sup>5</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics expects EMT and paramedic jobs to increase by 33% from 2010 to 2020

the EMS Academy as competitive applicants to jobs in the medical field. The result is that our diverse applicants are starting to bridge the achievement gap in the Twin Cities. The EMT license also allows our participants the opportunity to gain patient contact hours in a medical context, which is absolutely essential for those interested in seeking further training as nurses, physician assistants, and even physicians. Ninety-four percent of our alumni report being currently employed and of these 63% are working in a medically related field.

Our affiliation with IHCC allows our students access to additional academic support and introduces many of our students to the college system. EMTs graduating from our program receive nine college credits that are transferable among MnSCU schools and our graduates are also able to transition directly into classes on the IHCC campus. Fifty-three percent of our alumni are pursuing further medical education and another 10% used the EMS Academy as a stepping-stone to pursue other educational interests.

EMT certification is required for all Saint Paul Firefighters. Participating in the EMS Academy offers our graduates exposure to the firefighting field and the chance to interact with Saint Paul Firefighters. Firefighters United (FFU) is an assembly of African American firefighters who seek to foster unity and promote diversity within the Saint Paul Fire Department. The EMS Academy works with members of Fire Fighters United (FFU) to recruit and retain African American students for the Academy and eventually the fire department. Members of FFU mentor and coach the students during and after the program.

### **Contribution to the Pan African Community:**

The EMS Academy not only promotes personal growth and professional development for the young adults participating in the program, but is ultimately seeking to create a medical workforce that reflects the diverse communities of Twin Cities.

The training provided by the EMS Academy offers students a chance to work towards a meaningful career in the medical field. All EMS Academy participants meet federal low-income guidelines, so even an entry-level EMT salary can mean a 250% increase of income<sup>6</sup>. The EMS Academy assists students in breaking the cycle of poverty while also providing avenues for them to serve their communities.

Pan African Communities are drastically underrepresented in emergency medicine, and the large immigrant populations within the Twin Cities are not reflected within the medical workforce that serves them. By training multilingual and culturally experienced EMTs, we are creating a workforce that can better serve all the communities of the city, but especially the Pan African Community who has not yet benefitted from having first responders that are intimately acquainted with their subculture.

The EMS Academy seeks to give back to the community through free CPR training. CPR is used to respond to sudden cardiac arrest and is a simple, but lifesaving procedure. Persons of African descent are far more likely to develop cardiovascular

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<sup>6</sup> 2013 Federal Poverty limit for one person household is \$11,490 and according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the median starting salary of an EMT is \$30,360.

disease, and the vast majority of incidences of sudden arrest occur in the home.<sup>7</sup> By training community members in bystander CPR, we hope to decrease morbidity and mortality associated with cardiac emergencies within Saint Paul.

Through our outreach events we encourage members of the Pan African Community to consider EMS as a career option. Although many youth within the Pan African Community consider becoming firefighters or physicians, few consider careers in EMS. We seek to expose youth to EMS at a young age so they consider it as a career option when they are older.

**Your vision:**

The EMS Academy's goal, since its inception, has been to diversify the Emergency Medical workforce of the Twin Cities. We hope to not only create an emergency medical workforce that reflects Saint Paul's diverse communities, but also promote Emergency Medical Services as a viable career option. By engaging the community, especially the youth, in outreach events, we hope to create a healthy image of EMTs and Paramedics within the community.

Engaging with youth for community outreach events and bystander CPR training will demystify the career path for EMTs and Paramedics within the Pan African community. As a result, the EMS field, which is a predominantly Caucasian sector, will diversify and choosing a career as an EMT, firefighter, paramedic, nurse, or physician will be viewed as a tangible reality. Youth in these communities will seek out the EMS Academy or other EMT training programs and in the process create a more effective and diverse medical workforce serving the Twin Cities. As the late Senator Paul Wellstone said, "We all do better when we all do better."

Increasing the number of medical professionals from Pan African Communities will result in higher quality patient care for the individuals within those communities. The presence of EMS providers in Pan African communities will also encourage more individuals to pursue careers on ambulances within hospitals. The EMS Academy will continue to engage Pan African communities until the medical workforce within the city is an accurate reflection of its population.

**Evaluation:**

The EMS Academy engages all of our alumni in a medically related field and assists them in pursuing further education. However, many of our students still face obstacles in the hiring process at hospitals or ambulance companies or obtaining financial aid for further training. Through semi-annual surveys the EMS Academy tracks activities of alumni and requests feedback regarding obstacles students face. These responses help guide the EMS Academy's future activities and inform what steps need to be taken for future classes. The BLS Ambulance service offers an opportunity for students to stay engaged with the EMS Academy while gaining first hand experience working in the medical field. We track the hire rates of students who began working with the BLS service and use this as a measure of success. We aim to shift the numbers presented above from the LEAD Study shift, and to see more diverse medical providers within the Twin Cities.

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<sup>7</sup> According to the Center for Disease Control 24.5% of African-Americans die from heart disease.