

## **Leadership Cincinnati Class XXIX Youth Service Project Summary**

**Project:** To connect corporate professionals to select local youth preparing to enter the workforce by distributing gently used donated business attire/accessories and educating the youth on ways to maximize the interviewing process.

**Project Team:** Ed Acheson, Member, Frost Brown Todd LLC; Jim Comodeca, Partner Dinsmore & Shohl LLP; Ellen Johnson Executive Director & CEO, The Children's Home of Cincinnati, Ohio; Chris Martin, Vice President, United Way of Greater Cincinnati, Jon Quatman, Vice President of Performance and Outcomes, Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development; Marsha Thornton, Manager, Diversity & Inclusion, Cintas Corporation; Terrie Wiedenheft, Senior Vice President/CFO, IFS Financial Services.

### **Project Summary:**

The project team identified students from Hope Academy and Scarlet Oaks to benefit from this project. In addition to providing great academics, both schools desired to focus on developing a process so their students would be better prepared to obtain the job of their choice. We assisted by planning, coordinating and executing Success after Hope and Success after Scarlet programs. The training days helped the students understand the importance of dressing for success, taught them interview skills and provided them with gently used business attire.

### *Soliciting and collecting suits*

The goal was to collect 100 men's and women's suits and 100 portfolios. The team developed a flyer to request donated male and female business suits and accessories. The flyer was distributed to each of the project team members' places of employment. In addition, a cover letter and flyer was sent to each member of the Leadership Cincinnati Class XXIX and alumni members. We received donated racks to store the suits and used the Children's Home as the drop off and recipient of the donations. We also met with Dress for Success local President, Mary Ivers, individuals from the Free Store and Our Mercy Franciscan St. Johns to learn more about their organizations and how to potentially leverage them as resources.

We received 68 women's suits, nine dress jackets, seven separate pants or skirts, and six blouses. We additionally received 31 men's suits, 15 men's jackets, 16 men's pants, and 20 dress shirts. We also collected 60 portfolios that can accompany students on an interview.

### *Distributing the suits & educating the students*

The project team agreed the overall confidence needed to successfully land a job is, although very important, more than just looking good during the interview. We wanted to increase their chances of successfully landing their job of choice by ensuring the students were taught how to: prepare for a job interview, successfully interview and properly follow-up after interviewing for a position.

Over seventy students from Hope Academy and Scarlet Oaks received the donated items. The remaining women's clothes were given to Dress for Success and the remaining men's clothes were given to Mt. Airy Men's Homeless Shelter, a facility toured during Human Services Day.

At Scarlet Oaks the project targeted 180 students over two days. On December 21<sup>st</sup> the project team was one of seventeen round table presenters at the Success after Scarlet event. We presented a workshop entitled, "How to Dress to Get the Job of Your Choice." Twenty-seven students chose to attend this presentation and were identified to receive a donated suit. The purpose of the session was to explain and demonstrate how to dress for a job interview.

At Hope Academy, severely at-risk students were paired with a project team member for two events focused on preparing them to become employed after High School. On March 22<sup>nd</sup> the team served as Job Coaches by assisting the students with their resumes, discussing career interests and asking them mock interview questions. The Hope Academy staff had the students complete "pre-work" which maximized the time spent with the students. After the one-on-one sessions, the project team members provided group feedback to the students and the instructors.

Finally, the students were able to spend time picking out and trying on a gently used donated suit. The Leadership Cincinnati team and Hope Academy staff were pleasantly surprised at how well the suits fit the students, and how happy the students were when they realized they could go home with a gently used business outfit, free of charge. As a follow up to the March 22<sup>nd</sup> session, the Leadership Cincinnati Project team members attended another session at Hope Academy. This time the students participated in a mock interview session with their original project team member. The students were well prepared and the team provided the class with their reactions and feedback on the growth shown by the students.

As a follow up to the December 21<sup>st</sup> session, the project team partnered with the Scarlet Oaks Business Council on May 12<sup>th</sup> to present: Success after Scarlet, The Final Chapter. On this day 189 seniors rotated through three activities designed to give them a visual of appropriate business attire for different jobs, test their knowledge of job preparation and ask them questions many recruiters ask during interviews. Acknowledging that the event was 1-week before the seniors graduated from high school, we knew the activities had to be engaging and fun. We accomplished our goal by putting on a dress for success Fashion Show, testing their knowledge with a game of Student Feud, and mock interviewing them using the Apprentice format. The student evaluations on the day indicated 72% of the students rated the activities as very effective.

**Lessons Learned:** Students and school staff appreciate the involvement of corporate professionals. Unless schools make a special effort, many students are not taught Professional Etiquette in the classroom. Students want to impress their employers but lack the resources to fully understand some written and un-written rules. In addition, there is also a great deal of gratification attached to assisting young people increase their chances of success in their job of choice. Even though Dress for Success is a great resource to women re-entering the workforce, there lacks an equivalent resource for men.