

Recipe for Success: Employment and Training Program at Goodman Community Center Serves Bright Future for High Schoolers

A junior at La Follette High School will be graduating a year early thanks to Goodman Community Center's TEENworks program.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- As high school seniors start counting down to the moment they can march across the stage to the strains of Pomp and Circumstance, move that tassel to the left, and get on with life, one junior at La Follette High School is looking forward to joining their ranks. He'll be graduating a year early, thanks in part to an innovative youth employment and training program at the [Goodman Community Center](#) called [TEENworks](#).

Through TEENworks, youth in grades 9-12 learn basic job skills and train in specific career paths, including culinary arts, food preservation, and youth sports coaching. Teens not only receive a wage while in the program, but they also earn high school credits and professional certifications that serve as a springboard to future academic and employment opportunities. During the 2022-23 school year, 75 teens participated in TEENworks, with 55 expected to earn high school credits and 60 expected to earn professional certifications.

One of those teens is graduating junior Julian Sanchez. By participating in TEENworks, he earned five of the 22 credits needed for his high school diploma. Interested in food from a young age, Sanchez started in the culinary arts track of TEENworks as a high school freshman, and from there, a passion for cooking quickly ignited. With support from Goodman staff, he now leads a middle school cooking class, helps drive the menu for Goodman's Good Works Community Catering, and is challenging himself to learn new cooking techniques. His current focus is French cuisine, which was prompted by a



Julian Sanchez, La Follette junior graduating early thanks to the support of the TEENWorks Program at Goodman Community Center. With support from Goodman staff, he now leads a middle school cooking class and helps drive the menu for Goodman's Good Works C

French cookbook Goodman's catering chef gave him.

"TEENworks has helped me grow a lot and become more confident in my skills and in myself," Sanchez said. "Being able to talk about food with others who care about it is something unique and nothing I've really been able to do before. Through the program, I have become a better leader, cook, team member, communicator, and person."

"It has been incredible to watch Julian grow over the last three years," said Catie Tollefson, assistant director of youth & career development at Goodman. "And the extra incredible thing is that I've watched a similar transformation with so many of our youth participating in this program. Julian's story is exceptional for sure, and the beautiful thing is we have so many kids who have benefited from the growth offered by our TEENworks program."



Goodman Community Center

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Ascendium Education Group Logo

TEENworks is made possible through the support of several Madison-area organizations, including Ascendium Education Group, a nonprofit that works to make education and workforce training accessible to more people. Last year, Ascendium awarded Goodman a \$100,000 Good Neighbor Grant, which it used to fund TEENworks. Good Neighbor Grants help local organizations increase education and workforce training opportunities in the community and are unique in that Ascendium employees determine the recipients.

"With our Good Neighbor Grants program, Ascendium is able to support the nonprofits our employees deeply care about," said Brett Lindquist, Ascendium's vice president of strategic communications. "Seeing Goodman use the grant dollars to change the lives of youth like Julian is incredibly inspiring."

As Sanchez marches across the graduation stage this June, he is taking the first of many steps in his culinary journey. In the fall, he begins studying at the Culinary Institute of America, one of the most prestigious culinary schools in the world, boasting alumni like Duff Goldman, Anthony

Bourdain, and Grant Achatz. And after that? Sanchez wants to visit other countries, explore different cuisines, and ultimately open a restaurant that blends the knowledge and techniques he acquires during his travels.

Learn more about Sanchez, including community efforts to help him with tuition and living expenses, at <https://gofund.me/cc811b50>.

The Goodman Community Center strengthens lives and secures futures throughout the greater Madison area. Located in the heart of Madison's Atwood neighborhood, GCC offers programs for preschoolers through teens, families, individuals, and older adults. The Goodman Center has on-site childcare services, including fully licensed and accredited preschool, 4K, and elementary after-school programs, as well as a teen center that offers after-school activities and employment opportunities for teens. The center's food pantry serves more than 200 households a week and is open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and they also offer meals, social activities, and health and wellness opportunities for seniors. Accessibility is a top priority of the Goodman Center, and as such most of the center's programs are free or priced to be very affordable, including access to its fitness center, catering services, and community spaces.

You can stay up to date on what's happening at Goodman by following them on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Ascendium Education Group is committed to making education and training beyond high school a reality for more people. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we fund initiatives across the U.S. that help learners from low-income backgrounds achieve upward mobility; provide student and employee success solutions to colleges and businesses; invest in education-focused innovations to improve learner outcomes; and provide information, tools, and counseling to help millions of borrowers successfully repay their federal student loans. While we have many roles, we have one goal — elevating opportunity by creating a world where everyone can rise to their highest potential. To learn more, visit ascendiumeducation.org.

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