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Arthur Ashe Institute Partners with Brooklyn Orgs to Offer Youth Summer Jobs

BROOKLYN, NY, June 25, 2010 - “To achieve greatness, start where you are, use what you have, do what you can.” If teens grab hold to these words, spoken by the late tennis great, Arthur Ashe, they might just press beyond the staggering statistics of summer unemployment. The outlook for jobs this summer is dismal and is expected to worsen. However, there are some golden opportunities that shed light on the importance of partnering with community-based organizations year round.

The Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health, a Brooklyn-based non-profit organization, is a beacon of hope for high school students. Through its Health Science Academy at SUNY Downstate Medical Center, 50 students will receive stipends as part of a health disparities internship program in July. The internship program is part of a grant awarded to the Brooklyn Health Disparities Center, a partnership between Arthur Ashe, SUNY Downstate, and the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President, by the National Institutes of Health. Open only to current scholars or to freshman applying for admission to the Academy in the fall, the internship program promises to increase youth understanding of complex health issues impacted by social inequality. For those selected, they will learn common principles of health inequity, such as the impact of language barriers when receiving medical care and the variations in access to treatment based on income. Students will put this knowledge to use while working with supportive community-based organizations throughout the borough.

Community partnerships simply make sense for organizations grappling with survival in this environment of funding cuts and service retraction. Leveraging resources and pursuing common objectives together can strengthen the positions of all groups involved over time. As a 3-year, after-school science enrichment program for college bound students, the Health Science Academy partners with participating high schools to address the under-representation of minorities in college, medical school, and the health professions. Medical school students and faculty at SUNY Downstate Medical Center teach courses on science and math to stimulate
interest and offer mentorship among minority participants. These relationships not only influence
the students’ perspective on education but also broaden their chances of employment.

Since the competition is in favor of those with more education and experience, and summer
hiring is down in general, school-based work experiences year round can set a high school
student apart from the rest. If the experience gained supports a just cause such as improving
health for all communities, this is all the better in the long run. In the end, community-based
organizations and students should heed the words of the historic tennis all-star and do whatever
they can.

The Brooklyn Health Disparities Center, a partnership between SUNY Downstate Medical
Center, the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health and the Brooklyn Borough President's Office,
was established in 2004. It is envisioned as a nationally recognized leader in the elimination of
health disparities focused on minorities and immigrant populations. For more information about
the Brooklyn Health Disparities Center, the Arthur Ashe Health Science Academy, or the Health
Disparities Summer Internship Program, please contact Marilyn White, MD at 718 270 1752 or
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