

SIU-CARBONDALE YOUTH LEADERSHIP THIS WEEKEND

Youth from the Metro East mentoring programs are being hosted by Southern Illinois University Carbondale to help develop their leadership skills, build character and to cultivate and develop lifelong learning and leadership lessons at the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute's "Youth Leadership Weekend". This award-winning program started over a decade ago under the guidance of Dr. Linda Renee-Baker with the support of SIU Carbondale and Organizations across the metropolitan area joined forces with this team to recruit young men from various organizations to participate. COVID slowed us down, but we are back in full force resuming career building mental strength for these young men.

This year's leadership weekend, November 4-5, will feature Mayor Jaylen Smith, the nation's youngest African American mayor, hosting from Earle Arkansas. This youngest black mayor in the history of the United States has demonstrated commitment leadership and determination. The youth will also participate in workshops and panel discussions exercises designed to enhance the leadership qualities of African American young men reinforcing positive qualities, improving team building skills with an introduction to collegiate academics. They will receive tips on how to prepare for college, as well as vocational programs. They will network and see the value of mentorship. This year's theme: Emerging Leadership: "Young Men: Be Extra Ordinary, Be Tomorrow's Leaders, Begin Today, Starting Now!"

Many of the students attended previous conferences have gone on to enroll in colleges and universities and returned to leadership roles in their communities. Oliver Keys, an East St. Louis native, participated for four years and attend SIU on a full scholarship and earned his degree in automotive technology from SIU Carbondale. Keys was formerly service and parts area manager with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles

(FCA) and helps plan and participate in the annual event, inspired by institute founder, the late U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, D-Illinois. Keys currently serves as Assistant Professor Automotive Technology SIU Carbondale. "The youth leadership weekend was foundational for me. It helped me to cultivate leadership skills beyond my imagination said Keys. As a shy kid from East St. Louis, I never dreamed that I would accomplish my current academic and professional achievements. During my years of participating in the program, I was encouraged to be great! This is why I give back to this program today to help the next generation on their path to achieve greatness."

The institute used a 1994 report by the Illinois Commission on African American Males as an inspiration for the leadership weekend. Former Illinois Attorney General and SIU Carbondale alumnus Roland W. Burris chaired the commission. "When we first sat down with Paul Simon, his goal at the time was to find a way of building African American male leadership in the Metro East area," Linda Renee Baker, institute/university professor and project director, said. "We certainly believe we have met and exceeded those expectations because we have been tracking these students for years and we can see the impact this program has had in helping them chart successful careers and meaningful lives."

The event planning team consisted of local educational institutions, fraternal organizations and other community-based agencies, Baker said. Those groups include Alpha Pi Alpha, Top Ladies of Distinction, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, SIU Edwardsville Charter School and the East St. Louis Community College Center.

Cedric Mitchell, Caseyville, has helped plan and chaperone the event since its beginning in 2003.

"I can't think of a better gift than helping to develop youth, exposing

them to opportunities, and shaping their thoughts of self, community, and humanity," Mitchell said. "Today's young males are bombarded with negativity, unfavorable temptations and disillusionment while Youth Leadership Weekend spurs dreams, plants the seeds of possibility, and helps secure the promise of a better future." With gratitude we salute those who helped in our early beginnings and continue to help in our future success. Institute directed past and present -Mike Lawrence, David Yepsen, John Shaw and a local women's organization Top Ladies of Distinction assisted by Peggy Lewis LeCompte, Jackie Settles, Bernice Howze, Shirley Vaughn and Nicole Sailor.

Past students participants have been given the opportunity to hear from a range of accomplished African American male professors and administrators from SIU as well as a variety of individuals from a multitude of sectors including but not limited to: Martin Luther King III- American human rights activist, philanthropist and advocate, Bill Norwood, a retired United Airlines captain, veteran, and former SIU Board of Trustees, Secretary of State Jesse White, Attorney General Roland Burris, Howard Peters III-President of the Illinois Hospital Association and member of the Simon Institutes Board of Counselors, Senator Christopher Belt, Arthur Turner- State Representative, Michael Rashid -CEO of Illini Care/Centene Health Care, Daniel L. Booth Superintendent Carbondale School District, Johnathan Buck, MD MPH, Amahad Hicks News Reporter, Jaylen Bledsoe, Chairman of The Bledsoe Collective, Daniel Booth, Superintendent of Carbondale School District and a host of others. "We continue grow our partnerships with this community and we are excited to host these students on campus!" SIU Carbondale Chancellor-Austin Lane.



MENTORS AND STUDENTS FROM ACROSS THE METRO EAST AREA.



A SEGMENT OF THE WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES AT SIUC INCLUDES VOLUNTEERS SHIRLEY VAUGHN OF TLOD; CEDRIC MITCHELL, OMEGA PSI PHI; AND JASON RAY, KAPPA ALPHA PSI; AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS.



VOLUNTEERS AT THE AWARDS LUNCHEON FOLLOWING YOUTH LEADERSHIP WEEKEND INCLUDES JACKIE SETTLES, BERNICE HOWZE, DR. LINDA BAKER, SHIRLEY VAUGHN AND KAREN WINCE. FULL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT, REGINALD WINCE II (SECOND LEFT BACK ROW).



SENATOR DICK DURBIN SHARES THE VISION WITH YOUTH.



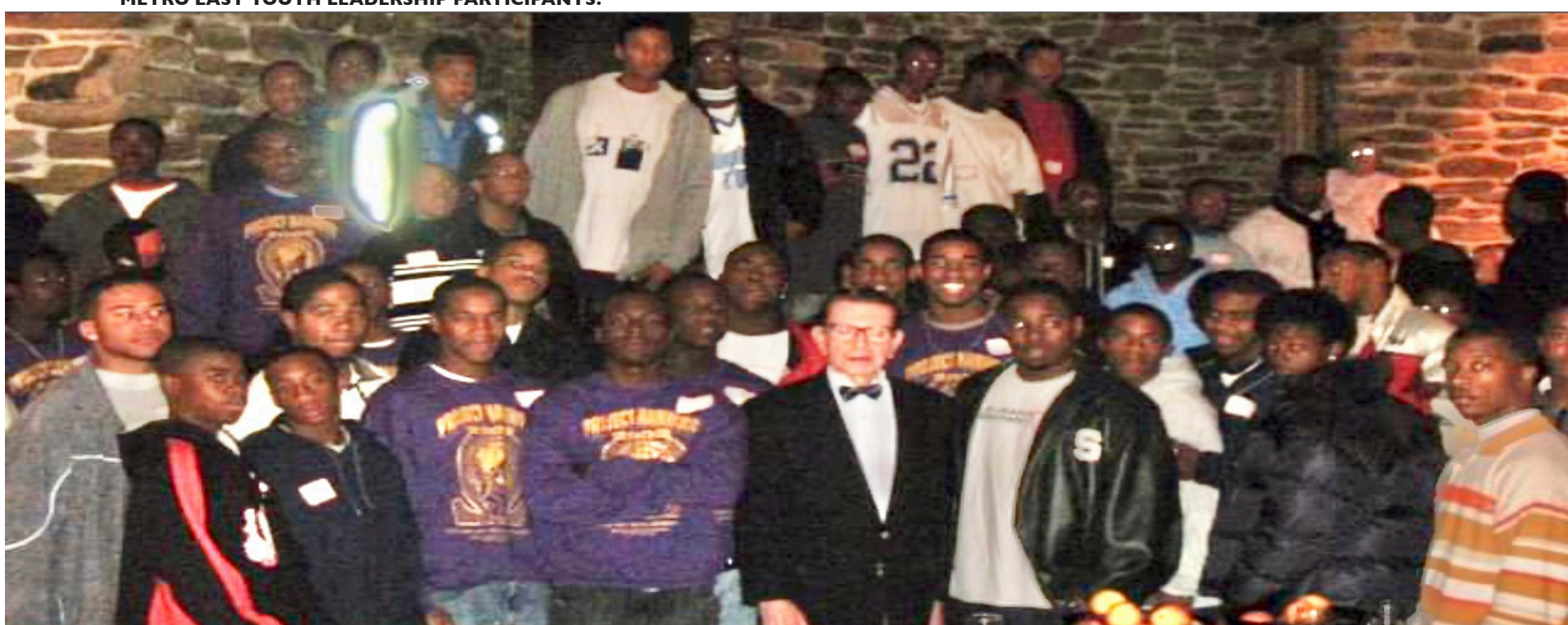
YOUTH TRAINING WORKSHOP: ON TEAM BUILDING



RETIRED CAPTAIN WILLIAM "BILL" NORWOOD, UNITED AIRLINES WITH METRO EAST YOUTH LEADERSHIP PARTICIPANTS.



DURING THIS WEEKEND RETREAT, METRO EAST YOUTH WERE HONORED TO HEAR FROM MARTIN LUTHER KING, III, (FRONT ROW CENTER), HE IS FLANKED BY SOME OF THE LOCAL VOLUNTEER LEADERS FEATURED IN THIS PICTURE: STAN FRANKLIN, REGINALD RIDDLE, THE LATE HANNAH BROWN, BERNICE HOWZE, JASON RAY, GLENN POSHARD, FORMER CHANCELLOR SIUC, DR. LINDA BAKER SIUC PPSPI, AND OTHERS.



INAUGURAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP WEEKEND NOVEMBER 2003 -FOUNDING INSTITUTE DIRECTOR THE LATE SENATOR PAUL SIMON WITH THE FIRST CLASS OF STUDENTS FROM ACROSS THE METRO EAST AREA.