

TAKING IN THE GREENERY Visitors browse the veggies at the first Youth Farmer's Market.

INAUGURAL YOUTH FARMER'S MARKET DELIVERS PRODUCE, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO DEANWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD

On the corner of Lee and 46th Street N.E., the Academy of Construction and Design (ACAD) kicked off its first Youth Farmer's Market and festival in a neighborhood steeped in historic African-America history.
By *Arnesa A. Howell*

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MAKING STRIDES: JOBS COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS



While raising awareness of workforce challenges and potential barriers to employment, the JOBS Coalition and its members have combined their resources and industry expertise to achieve the following results:

- Built the Bellevue Resource Center, a program facility serving the hard-to-reach, hard-to-employ, and returning ex-offender populations. The Center was completed on September 30, 2003.
- Guided the creation of the Construction & Design Academy at Cardozo, providing District students access, training, and preparation for careers in the construction industry and trades after graduation. The Academy officially opened in September 2005. □



A LEARNING EXPERIENCE Department of Labor's Gay Gilbert (far left) joins the Education Department's acting undersecretary, James Manning (center), and deputy assistant secretary, Kim Ford, on a site tour led by ACAD students Makiya Johnson and Kyeon Ford.

SUMMER 2017 IN REVIEW

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SENIOR OFFICIAL VISITS ACAD Calls Out Program for 'Best Practices'

Following a tour of the classrooms, training labs and tiny house project at the Academy of Construction and Design (ACAD), a U.S. Department of Education official gave a nod to the career and technical education program, which he praised for its potential to be a model program.

By *Arnesa A. Howell*

“We are looking for models in other parts of the country, and I think this is one,” said James Manning, acting undersecretary at the U.S. Department of Education, during a roundtable discussion held at IDEA Public Charter School in Northeast Washington, D.C.

It's a prospect welcomed by the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, which opened the Academy's doors in 2005 to provide District students with access to, and training in, technical specialties like carpentry and electrical. ACAD officially moved to a charter school environment in 2015. A key part of the program is businesses within the construction industry serving as training partners to teach leadership development and career and trades skills building, while mentoring students on

tiny house construction and other projects. Also part of the program are sponsors and donors, like the trade organization Associated Builders and Contractors, which participated in the roundtable.

Rod Woodson, adviser to the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, embraced the opportunity for the Foundation to be presented as a model on a national level, and encouraged those at the public policymaking level to promote these types of partnerships on a broader scale. “The lesson here is what it holds for the rest of the country,” said Woodson. “Take this example and encourage businesses around the country to be engaged in this – these are the ones that will make it really work.”

In response, Manning said he would “love
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TOMATOES, PEPPERS & MORE IDEA student Abiola Olugbuyi gives a garden tour and shows off his “salsa garden.”

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For this summer day, the students transformed the back lot of IDEA Public Charter School into a diverse farmer’s market with displays of fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers ready for purchase. At one corner is a greenhouse. Nearby, a garden nurtured by both ACAD and IDEA gardening class students. A tomato plant sprouts from a tire planter, and other fruits and vegetables make assorted reusable bags their home. There are rows of cucumbers, sweet potato plants, chili and bell peppers, strawberries and fresh herbs like basil and mint, which student Abiola Olugbuyi, 16, proudly shows off in a walking tour. Russian kale and garlic are also planted.

“We use coconut coir, a way to grow plants without using actual soil and it retains the nutrients in the water,” says Olugbuyi while standing in front of strawberry plants rooted in the fibrous exterior of coconut. “We all have an opportunity to watch what we eat so we don’t rely too much on processed foods.”

He is among the students taking what is learned at IDEA PCS and creating healthy pathways outside the classroom, which are now being shared with the community through this farmer’s market hosted June 10 by the Academy of Construction and Design.

“We’ve planted and grown everything in the garden from seed,” says Justin Rydstrom, head of school for IDEA PCS, who also teaches the learning lab giving students opportunities to work in the garden with local nonprofit, Cultivate the City. “We started in February and March in the greenhouse and brought everything to life. Now, we’re starting to harvest.”

A mix of greens, jalapeno peppers and edible flowers on sale came from the school’s garden. However, Ruppert Landscape donated annuals and perennials, live herbs and vegetable plants, according to branch manager Matthew Davidson. “Everything we brought today could be put into a pot. Whether [the person’s] in an apartment or a house, whether they want to plant a garden or do one pot – we brought an assortment of different types of vegetables: tomatoes, kale, eggplant, peppers,

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ONE-ON-ONE TIME Department of Education’s Kim Ford (right) shares a moment with ACAD student Kyeon Ford (not related) after touring the urban garden.

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to see what you have” and encouraged having that conversation.

A ‘Site’ to See

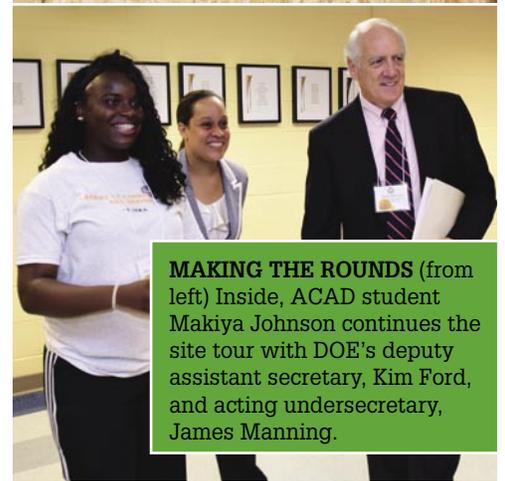
On May 26, senior officials with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education joined school administrators, ACAD leadership and students in a discussion of workforce development and apprenticeships, career and technical education, and alternative pathways for young people to enter the workforce or postsecondary education. But ahead of a detailed overview of the Academy program that included presentations by current and past students, agency officials participated in a site visit of the Academy of Construction and Design.

Academy students Kyeon Ford and Makiya Johnson led the tour, visiting classrooms and IDEA’s back lot, where there is a small garden of fruits and vegetables, and a greenhouse. Nearby, is the so-called Minim house, a small-scale house being built by students enrolled in ACAD construction classes. “Construction II is currently working on the Minim house, and we made cistern bases so we can water our plants for the greenhouse,” said Ford. Also on display: student-built planters and picnic tables.

The highlight for visitors, however, was the Minim house. Manning and other officials volunteered to don hard hats and get an up-close and personal look at the tiny structure. Kim Ford, deputy assistant secretary for management and planning with the Department of Education’s



HAM(MER) IT UP DOE’s Kim Ford gets a close-up look as a student tackles the tiny house project.



MAKING THE ROUNDS (from left) Inside, ACAD student Makiya Johnson continues the site tour with DOE’s deputy assistant secretary, Kim Ford, and acting undersecretary, James Manning.

Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education was so impressed by the project that when she finished the tour, she exclaimed: “Love it, love it!”

“The biggest takeaway is that this is one example of what the school is doing, the knowledge and skills the students are developing here and knowing they can come to high school, get a high school diploma and learn a trade, and then decide after that if a trade is what they want to continue or if

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SEAT AT THE TABLE ACAD grad Treymane Chatman discusses his carpentry pathway.



PRESENTING THE VISION DCSCTF adviser Rod Woodson offers the Academy as a model program.



AN OFFICIAL VISIT Federal agency and local CTE officials are among leadership attending the roundtable with ACAD students, Academy stakeholders and DCSCTF members.

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they want to go off to college,” added Manning.

Back inside, the roundtable continued with a dialogue about the program’s design, why such a program is important and should be supported, and a question-and-answer session. John Ladd, administrator of the Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship, acknowledged that the construction industry can be a hard sell. So, he asked how the program is marketed to parents.

“It’s a tough sell sometimes because this industry is still known to a lot of our parents as blue collar,” said Shelly Karriem, director of the Academy of Construction and Design. “It’s really

sitting down [with parents] and explaining this option and how beneficial it can be. It’s not just your son or daughter swinging a hammer. We’re giving them options.”

She continued, “Some government officials still are having a hard time seeing this. We’ve had doors closed in our face a million times ... it’s like, ‘Time up.’ And then they move on.”

It’s been a “long journey,” according to Woodson, but the program isn’t thwarted by challenges because both the Academy and the Foundation recognize that CTE is a “real opportunity” for the future of young people.

Stellar (Student) Examples

Treymane Chatman is a graduate of the Academy, and is employed by Foundation Board member GCS Inc. He is one of the Academy’s success stories. The recently certified carpenter had an op-

portunity to speak with Manning during the tour, sharing how ACAD prepared him for the transition from the Academy to working in the trades – three days after high school graduation. “I was really prepared,” Chatman said. “Starting off in a company, you’re not going to be driving nails right away. I jumped on-site ... digging a hole. Now I’m installing glass, framing walls – the whole 9 yards.”

Chatman urged currently enrolled students to take advantage of all the training they are receiving in the Academy. Makiya Johnson, for one, is doing just that. The 10th grader is looking forward to enrolling in college to become a pediatrician or veterinarian. She said the program is helping fuel those goals, especially when it comes to learning networking skills that she can take with her into the real world.

Meanwhile, sophomore Kyeon Ford aspires to attend MIT or University of California at Berkeley to pursue computer hardware engineering. He plans to bring his training full circle by becoming a construction company owner.

Ultimately, senior officials gained insights to help move the conversation forward about unique programs like the Academy of Construction and Design. For Manning, the visit proved a learning opportunity. “What we saw here was some best practices,” Manning told *JOBS Coalition Pathways* after the event, “and how the construction community has rallied around the school. That’s something that I’m sure can be replicated other places in the country, and I would love to be part of seeing that happen.” □

JOBS Coalition Pathways

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and a whole bunch of herbs," he says, breaking briefly to answer questions from potential customers.

The assortment of flowers – from geraniums and big leaf begonias to salvia and petunias – makes a colorful backdrop to the greenery.

Deanwood resident Phyllis Commodore was drawn to the market by the music, but stayed to buy a variety of geraniums for her flower bed. "I would come back, and next time I would get some greens," she says.

For the Community

A year in the making, the event is a positive for a neighborhood with limited places selling fresh fruits and vegetables. "They call this area a food desert. When you think about fresh produce and availability in this area, it is very slim to none. The very idea of getting an apple – where do you get that from when the closest grocery store is miles away and transportation is difficult for families?" asks Nicole McCrae, IDEA's new principal. "I'm really excited that we're teaching and training our kids about how to grow food and also how to connect with others and give back to the community."

She hopes the market will influence young people and their families to adopt healthy eating habits and continue community engagement. "Students are willing and they have the heart and desire. If you open the door for them, you'll find

there is an interest that hasn't yet been tapped and it's our responsibility to create those [opportunities]," McCrae adds.

While some visitors browsed the selection of produce, others sat at the student-built picnic tables – laughing, talking and sipping on the free lemonade handed out by a Boy Scout troop. Students rushed to "Cha Cha Slide" when the DJ spun the song. Tables lined the far end of the lot where students signed up for the summer reading program at the Deanwood Neighborhood Library, the Macedonia Community Church took charitable donations, and representatives from the Metro Transit Police chatted with passersby. Miller & Long Concrete Construction hosted a "You Nailed It" demo where kids decked out in hard hats hammered nails into wooden sawhorses. Also on display, the Academy's latest project: the still under construction micro house.

"We delivered about 200 flyers by hand, on foot," shares Shelly Karriem, director of the Academy of Construction and Design. "It made me feel really, really proud."

As the market winds down, students are still hanging out with friends or talking with lingering neighborhood residents. These young people could be anywhere on a Saturday afternoon, but they chose to come to something that ACAD student Kemah Weldon calls "fun and creative." But the best part, she shares after a pause: "Seeing the community come together." □



READY, SET, GO! Youth take hammer to nail at the Miller & Long demo.



MADE IN THE SHADE
ACAD students sell hand-built picnic tables, adult and kiddie size.



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