



You Don't Need to Worry about North Minneapolis

Demetrius Larkins simply wanted a job that would pay enough to support his family. Summit Academy OIC provided construction skills training and support that qualified him for higher paying employment.



Student Profiles

SUMMIT ACADEMY OIC TRAINING FOR LIFE!

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The Best Social Service Program in the World is a Job!



If you watch the local news, it's hard not to worry about North Minneapolis. The top stories report drug activity, shootings and other crimes. Yet even in the face of long odds, people with persistence and determination do prevail. Demetrius Larkins is one example.

Demetrius, his wife and nine children live in North Minneapolis. What Demetrius wanted most was a job that paid enough for him to support his family.

"In Just 20 Weeks..."

Demetrius Larkins received a postcard advertising Summit Academy OIC's construction training programs: "Train for a rewarding career in just 20 weeks!" Demetrius and his wife Tare-Sheika were both working, Demetrius as a bill collector making \$12.00 an hour. With children to support and \$1,400 going to rent, they did not have enough left over to cover

basic essentials such as car insurance. While it would mean living on one salary for the length of the training, Demetrius and Tare-Sheika believed the sacrifice would be worth it in the end.

Demetrius went to Summit to apply. He met all the entrance requirements, but did not qualify for financial aid – nor could he pay the \$4,500 cost of tuition. Fortunately, Demetrius was selected for a needs-based scholarship, available thanks to the generosity of Summit Academy's donors.

In April 2006, Demetrius began his 20 weeks of pre-apprentice carpentry training, which included 600 hours of classroom and hands-on work. Students in the carpentry track take the following courses: carpentry mathematics; personal safety; hand and power tools; blue print reading and site preparation; building materials; framing; painting; and concrete, footing, foundation and flat work. For their hands-on project, Demetrius and his fellow students built a complete garage – laying concrete, framing, siding, shingling and installing the garage door.

"Mr. Larkins had a strong desire to obtain skills that would qualify him for better paying employment. By the end, Mr. Larkins was one of the top two students in his class, based on academic performance, hands-on work and personal leadership qualities," said Gary Courtney, the carpentry department coordinator.

A NORTHSIDE AGENDA

The issues of poverty, crime and lack of education and job skills in North Minneapolis demand our attention. Summit Academy is partnering with other organizations in North Minneapolis on a "Northside Agenda" to create a community where adults work, children learn and life is valued. Moving 500 families out of poverty in five years is one of the Northside Agenda's goals.

For 40 years, Summit Academy has offered job skills training to low-income adults who want to leave poverty behind. The training offered at Summit is focused on high-growth, high-demand industries such as construction trades and health care.

Since 2002, Summit has placed 212 men and women in construction trade jobs. Prior to entering the program, students' average annual income was \$6,200. After graduating, the average starting wage is \$12.10 an hour, or \$25,000 annually. As they advance in their trade, their wages grow incrementally. Graduates can attain journeyman-level in four years, which earns up to \$65,000 a year.

Imagine the economic impact of 500 successful graduates. The combined annual income of 500 graduates at the pre-apprentice level is \$12.5 million and at the journeyman-level, it is more than \$32 million! Transform 500 families' lives and you will transform a community. **Help us take this work to a larger scale!**

In addition to the construction skills training, all students take a five-week class entitled, "Working for Business Success," which teaches interpersonal communication skills, work etiquette, goal-setting, career research and interviewing skills. Instructor Sonja Simpson tells students that employers are not only looking for hard skills. They also look for indications of a strong work ethic, confidence and a can-do attitude.

"I'm Going to Get a Job Today"

On June 14, Summit Academy hosted the Construction Diversity Job Fair in partnership with the Coalition for Diversity in the Construction Trades. Forty-seven contractors and sub-contractors were on hand to accept applications from job fair attendees. Demetrius was motivated to find a job. He told Ms. Simpson, "I'm going to get a job today."

Demetrius completed an application for every employer at the job fair. He returned one of them to Dan Rouser, an owner of Glacial Ridge, Inc. With several metro area projects, Glacial Ridge was interested in expanding and diversifying their workforce. Demetrius was one of two applicants Rouser interviewed that day. Rouser said it was Demetrius' firm hand shake, direct eye contact and confidence that made the right impression. Soon afterwards, Rouser called Demetrius with a job offer: \$23.80 per hour with benefits. Demetrius complete his training, then started at Glacial Ridge.

Now on the job, Demetrius feels his construction work is an honest day's pay. "At the end of the day, you feel good about what you've done, you can see what you've accomplished and you know you'll see it for years afterwards. You can drive by and say, 'I built that.'" When Demetrius looks into the future, he knows his new career will provide the long-term stability he sought for himself and his family.

A Family Support System

Demetrius describes Summit Academy as a family. Summit Academy's CEO Louis King II welcomes every new class, sharing Summit's belief that the best social service program in the world is a job. When Demetrius introduced himself as having nine children, Mr. King invited Demetrius to his office. "I knew this man needed to make it. He had 11 mouths to feed and nine children watching him. I had to help."

Demetrius told Mr. King about all of his children, including LaMel, a high school-aged son, who was expelled from school. Mr. King enrolled LaMel in Summit's Pathways to Independence (PTI), a program helping youth positively redirect their lives through academics and personal development activities. The PTI program helped LaMel get back on track. When the program closed out in August, Summit's staff helped transition LaMel to Wayzata High School, where he is currently a "B" student.

In return for what he gained at Summit Academy, Demetrius is also giving back. He recently spoke to an assembly of new students, encouraging them by saying Summit Academy offers excellent training and support. He challenged them by adding, "It's up to the individual to be successful. You can do it if you put your mind to it."

"Construction work is an honest day's pay. You can see what you've accomplished and you'll see it for years afterwards."



Demetrius is pictured here along with his Glacial Ridge co-workers and project foreman. Glacial Ridge is the largest installer of pavers in the state. Glacial Ridge is based in Willmar, Minnesota and has between 18-24 employees.

