

COMMUNITY

Entrepreneur Inspires Youth with Community Projects

NewsUSA

(NU) - Young people in underserved communities in the United States have been especially hard-hit by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, with many support systems and activities unavailable.

However, as the situation begins to improve, an up-and-coming organization seeks to support youth with a combination of skill-building and support.

Jump Ahead L3C, a hybrid for-profit/nonprofit organization, is the brainchild of Deandre Jones, an entrepreneur in Grand Rapids, Michigan who is committed to keeping young people off the streets and helping them develop valuable skills.

Jones founded Jump Ahead L3C in 2018, and won a \$10,000 grant from the city of Grand Rapids SAFE Task Force Pitch Night to create a pilot program that would engage at-risk youth in the community.

This pilot project involved giving each member of a group of 10 youth participants a \$450 stipend to complete service-learning projects and attend a variety of skill-building workshops, events, and activity days.

After the completion of the pilot project in August 2018, Jones began developing plans for a community center that will offer programs including arts and crafts, screen printing, e-sports, workshops, construction classes, yoga, music, basketball, and other activities.

“One of my goals in this is to inspire young entrepreneurs and people from all walks of life that if you work extremely hard and you believe in yourself, you can achieve anything and do it in a pos-



itive way,” he says.

Jones further describes his ultimate goal of establishing a community center to help improve local infrastructure, especially for underserved populations. The center is in progress, and once completed, will be open 7 days a week to provide a place for members of the community to gather.

In addition, “We will also hire youth and pay them for service learning or community-based work as we did previously with the \$10,000 grant,” he says.

Of course, raising money remains a challenge.

Jump Ahead L3C is currently selling baseball hats and seeking interested investors.

“Covid-19 has made it tougher for us to receive merchandise and to raise capital to purchase a building to operate our organization structure. We did apply for a PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loan, but we were not approved,” he says in a recent interview in Forbes magazine.

Visit jumpedahead.com to learn more about Jump Ahead and for details about supporting the organization through donations or volunteering.