



Community Planning and Economic Development Department

# News Release

Contacts: Rose Lindsay, CPED Communications (W) 612.673.5015 (C) 612.250.8661

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## **STEP-UP Annual Celebration August 14 to Recognize Outstanding Interns and Employers**

**Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges and STEP-UP Co-Chair R.T. Rybak  
to Participate in Official Program**

**Tuesday, August 12, 2014 (Minneapolis, MN)** - On Thursday, August 14, Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges and STEP-UP Co-Chair R.T. Rybak will join together with hundreds of STEP-UP interns, employers, mentors, parents, and program partners at the Guthrie Theatre to celebrate the accomplishments of this year's interns and employers. Starting at 2:30 p.m., the celebration will feature STEP-UP youth sharing stories about their summer experiences, awards recognizing outstanding interns and employers, and a variety of youth entertainment performances.

This year, STEP-UP has selected the State of Minnesota and The Little Earth Youth Center to receive Employer of the Year awards. "The Little Earth Youth Center is thrilled to be selected for the employer of the year award," said Frank Downwind, Youth Services Director of the Little Earth of United Tribes. "The STEP-UP interns have made huge personal and professional gains during their internship and we are happy to be there during this transformation. Little Earth has benefited both as an organization and as a community during this time. We are able to serve more youth, get more done and as a result of the STEP-UP interns' contributions the Little Earth Youth Center is able to effect greater social change within the community."

In its 11<sup>th</sup> year, the City of Minneapolis summer jobs program STEP-UP, provided nearly 1,650 internships to Minneapolis youth ages 14-16 at over 230 employers located throughout the metro area.

Felicia Johnson, a STEP-UP alumnus remembers her internship experience fondly and is looking forward to participating in this year's celebration as emcee, "As a grateful alum of the STEP-UP program and recent graduate of Macalester College, I am thrilled to emcee the End of the

Summer Celebration. My STEP-UP internships may be in the past, but because of the program I bring with me the wealth of knowledge, support, and opportunity to each professional life encounter. STEP-UP is a tremendous asset to the social and economic development of Minneapolis."

Created in 2004, City of Minneapolis STEP-UP serves Minneapolis youth and young adults who face some of the greatest barriers to employment, including youth from lower economic backgrounds, minority youth, and youth with disabilities. In 2013, 92% of STEP-UP youth were minority, 50% were from the North Side of Minneapolis, and about 30% were recent immigrants. Since the program was launched, it has provided over 20,000 internship opportunities. STEP-UP interns explore diverse career interests, gain valuable on-the-job skills, make strong professional connections, and prepare for meaningful careers. They also receive work-readiness training certified by the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce that prepares them for their internship roles.

The City of Minneapolis STEP-UP is a program in partnership with AchieveMpls, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and Project for Pride in Living.

The STEP-UP Annual Celebration is a community event and everyone is welcome to attend. The event is sponsored in part by Thrivent Financial and Allianz Life Insurance Company of North America.

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