

YouthWORKS Just Fine IN THE WEST WARD

They say that youth is wasted on the young. Well, don't count West Ward Councilman Ronald C. Rice among the nebulous "they." If anything, the young people in his ward, particularly those in the eighth and ninth grade, have an opportunity to ensure their time is very well spent. YouthWORKS (www.cisnj.org), a job readiness and internship program at West Side High School, will make sure of that.

"We live in a global economy. Technology, the World Wide Web, and our instantaneous access to information has made the world a much smaller and more competitive place. The students from the West Ward are not just being measured against other students from Newark. They are competing against students from Livingston, New Jersey or even Kansas City, Missouri, and ultimately, Tokyo, Oslo and Johannesburg. Nothing is given to us. We have to stake our own intellectual claim. YouthWORKS goes a long way towards preparing our children to do just that," Councilman Rice said.

YouthWORKS is a three-year old program that takes qualified eighth and ninth graders from West Side High School and enrolls them in the Work, Achievement, Values and Education

(W.A.V.E.) program. The application process includes an essay and requires participation in two extracurricular activities along with two letters of recommendation. Beginning this school year,



Photo by Tony Graves

Councilman Rice pictured with YouthWORKS students.

the program will run from September through summer 2008.

Like the acronym suggests, the W.A.V.E. program starts with a ripple and then picks up momentum as it progresses. "We first teach them to be confident, capable and to trust in their abilities. Then we focus on grades. We also assist them with learning proper business etiquette. From there, we assign them to internships," explained LaKeisha Brooks, YouthWORKS Program Director.

During the summer, internships are offered at places such as the New Jersey Superior Court, various law firms, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and local businesses.

Brooks says that YouthWORKS students do not lack ambition.

"We have students gunning for Mayor Booker's position. They want to be movie directors, lawyers, and a wide variety of professions."

With programs like YouthWORKS the future looks bright for Newark and, indeed, the world at large. For more information contact: Janice Ledley, YouthWORKS Project Manager, Guidance Office, West Side High School, (973) 286-2058, Fax: (973) 242-2928; or Email: jledley@cisnj.org

Within his first 100 days in office, Councilman Rice opened his Little City Hall/Community Resource Center, where he conducts open office hours.

Councilman Rice sends out weekly online newsletters that detail job opportunities, community events, and legislation he votes on. In addition, Councilman Rice maintains an informative website for West Ward residents at www.ron-rice.com.



Photo by Tony Graves

Councilman Rice with YouthWORKS participant and LaKeisha Brooks, Program Director.

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