TOGETHER, WE’RE REDEFINING POSSIBLE

COMER EDUCATION CAMPUS 8TH ANNUAL BENEFIT | OCTOBER 15, 2020 12PM
Welcome to the 2020 Comer Education Campus Virtual Benefit where Together, we’re Redefining Possible!

Since the campus’ beginning in 2006, our mission has been to prepare our young people to be well-rounded global citizens ready for college and careers.

The Comer Education Campus’ mission became even more important with the onset of Covid-19 and the resulting exposure of massive systemic inequities faced by our youth and their families.

We expanded into a robust virtual experience, featuring academic courses and coaching, visual and performing art classes, STEAM and robotics programs, youth employment opportunities, urban agriculture and culinary arts apprenticeships, and behavioral health support, enabling us to continue carrying out our mission within the recommended health and safety guidelines.

The resiliency and creativity of our young people not only makes me proud, but also gives me great hope for the future. Our youth never gave up during these trying times. Instead, they worked to navigate this new environment, leaned on the trusted adults in their lives, and kept their dreams in front of them – including graduating as the valedictorian of their senior class!

Thank you to our existing partners who continuously support our efforts to positively impact the lives of our young people. To those new to the Comer Education Campus, I say thank you for joining us today and welcome to the Comer family! We are inspired by our young people who are redefining possible and I am certain you all will be inspired as well!

With gratitude,

RHONDA HOPPS
COMER EDUCATION CAMPUS

Comer Education Campus has been recognized as one of the most unique youth-serving organizations in the nation. Located in the Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood on Chicago’s South Side, the Campus is anchored by the state-of-the-art Gary Comer Youth Center, Gary Comer College Prep, and Gary Comer Middle School.

Working with the Noble Network and many other best-in-class partners, the Campus invests in the life outcomes of over 2,000 youth annually with a dynamic integration of academics, youth enrichment, and college and career preparation. Comer Education Campus empowers students with the tools and confidence they need to reach their full potential.

CAMPUS IMPACT

2,000 YOUTH SERVED ANNUALLY FROM 72 CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

95% OF YOUTH REPORT POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD LEARNING & ACADEMIC SUCCESS

500 YOUTH ENGAGED IN SUMMER & SCHOOL YEAR INTERNSHIPS & JOBS

100% COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE

3X COLLEGE GRADUATION RATE OF THEIR PEERS NATIONALLY
TOGETHER, WE’RE REDEFINING POSSIBLE

WELCOME
KIANA KALI
COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO, ’22

OPENING REMARKS
RHONDA HOPPS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
JULIANA STRATTON
LT. GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS

RESILIENCE THROUGH TOGETHERNESS YOUTH PANEL
COMER EDUCATION CAMPUS ALUMNI

AMORION BELL
KENWOOD ACADEMY, ’22

JOSHUA BUTLER
LOYOLA, ’24

NINA WEST
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS ’22

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & CLOSING REMARKS
RHONDA HOPPS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ART GALLERY
EXQUISITE ARTWORK AND JEWELRY WERE CURATED BY OUR YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN VISUAL ART CLASSES AT THE CAMPUS.

ALL ARE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE WITH 50% OF PROCEEDS BENEFITING THE YOUNG ARTIST & 50% BENEFITING THE MISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION
RESILIENCE THROUGH TOGETHERNES: YOUTH PANELISTS

AMORION BELL  KENWOOD ACADEMY, ’22
Amorion is a tenth grader at Kenwood Academy who learned about the Comer Education Campus through a family connection. He soon discovered the visual arts department and has since become an esteemed artist whose work is displayed in today’s art gallery. Amorion is passionate about art and its correlation with healing our communities and social enterprise. With that said, he is considering art as an entrepreneurial opportunity.

JOSHUA BUTLER  LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, ’24
Josh is a Gary Comer College Prep alumnus who currently tutors at Gary Comer Youth Center and partakes in a fellowship program led by UtmostU. In addition to academics, he is a photographer, graphic designer, musician, and someone who enjoys working with young people. Josh’ favorite Stevie Wonder quote is “We all have ability; the difference is how we use it.”

NINA WEST  UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN, ’22
Nina traveled annually to Yellowstone National Park to learn about conservation as a founding member of Expedition Yellowstone, a group that evolved out of our urban agriculture program Green Teens. During her four-year involvement with the program, Nina advocated for the evolution of park curricula featuring first-person narratives of BIPOC people and their historic involvement with the land that would eventually become the country’s first national park. Nina’s passion for social justice led her to major in African American Studies at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

KIANA KALI  COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO, ’22  MODERATOR
Kiana is a 2018 graduate of Gary Comer College Prep who recently received her associate’s degree from Olive Harvey College and is currently attending Columbia College to complete a bachelor’s degree in music. In addition, she is a member of the Comer Crops Leadership Crew, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, One Million Degrees organization and The Remix Project initiative. Kiana recently finished her internship with the Campus as a Comer Crops crew member and social media manager, demonstrating Comer Education Campus’ influence and impact amongst our young people and the community.
Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton is excited to serve Illinois as the state’s 48th Lieutenant Governor. As the first African American woman to hold this office, Stratton is passionate about equity and putting passion into government policy making. In her portfolio of work includes leading the Justice, Equity and Opportunity Initiative, and chairing the Illinois Council on Women and Girls, the Governor’s Rural Affairs Council, the Military Economic Development Council and the Illinois Rivers Coordinating Council. She is the chair of the R3 Board (Restore, Reinvest, Renew) and she co-chairs the Opioid Prevention and Recovery Steering Committee. Lieutenant Governor Stratton currently serves as treasurer of the National Lieutenant Governors Association. She is also a Cohort 6 Fellow of the Hunt Institute’s Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellows Program. Previously, Stratton represented the 5th District in the Illinois House of Representatives. Her first elected office was serving as Chair of the Kenwood Academy Local School Council. Lieutenant Governor Stratton was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago. She is a proud graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and DePaul University’s College of Law. Stratton is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated, Links Inc, and The Chicago Network. She and her husband Bryan live in the Bronzeville community and have four daughters. And when she can find a bit of free time, she enjoys going to concerts, a good documentary, and training for marathons and triathlons.
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THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO INVEST IN OUR YOUTH & STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ON CHICAGO’S SOUTH SIDE

TOGETHER, WE’RE REDEFINING POSSIBLE: SUPPORT OUR MISSION TODAY!

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