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Ald. Ashanti Hamilton
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Be the Change Youth Leadership Program Launches

Alderman Ashanti Hamilton, in partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools and Potawatomi Bingo Casino, is launching a new youth initiative designed to provide wrap-around mentoring, leadership and literacy support for targeted Milwaukee youth.

“We are in a crisis,” Ashanti Hamilton, 1st District Alderman, said. “We have record unemployment, record numbers of drop outs and terrifying literacy rates primarily among urban youth.”

The city is facing an unusually tough budget year and many community groups that are charged with providing youth services face budget struggles as well. “The reality is we have a number of organizations out there trying to do the work, but we are going to have less and less money to fund them and more and more need for their services. We have to strategize a more direct path to solutions,” Alderman Hamilton said.

Community groups like the Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative, Urban Underground, Inc., Running Rebels and the Center for Youth Engagement are part of the pilot program which provides summer enrichment learning and programming to students and then tracks the students through the upcoming school year, providing additional support.

“This partnership will add to the breadth of our program offerings this summer,” said Superintendent Gregory E. Thornton. “The Be the Change program will help Milwaukee students entering Vincent and Washington High Schools work on their literacy skills as well as their non-academic abilities in leadership and other life-skills. We thank Alderman Hamilton for working with us on behalf our young people.”

The program launches **Wednesday, June 22, 2011**, in the City Hall rotunda at **9:00 a.m.** and speakers will join Mayor Barrett to describe the goals of the project.