

## Community Planning and Economic Development News Release

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### STEP-UP Announces 2015 Employer, Intern and Supervisor of the Year Awards at 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Intern Graduation Event

**Monday, August 10, 2015 (Minneapolis, MN)** – Earlier this afternoon, the City of Minneapolis STEP-UP youth employment program announced the recipients of the 2015 STEP-UP Employer of the Year, 2015 STEP-UP Intern of the Year, and 2015 STEP-UP Supervisor of the Year awards. The award winners were announced during the graduation of its 12<sup>th</sup> cohort of interns, a group of more than 1,600 youth ages 14 to 21 who worked at over 220 top Twin Cities’ nonprofits, government agencies, small businesses, and corporations this summer. The celebration, themed *Jobs Today - Skills for Life*, took place at the Guthrie Theatre from 2:30-4:00pm.

The awards were presented by Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges and STEP-UP Co-Chairs R.T. Rybak, Executive Director of Generation Next and Richard Davis, President and CEO of U.S. Bank.

“I am so proud of each and every STEP-UP intern for meeting and exceeding the work challenges they faced this summer here at the City, in businesses across Minneapolis and in their communities. The number one indicator of future workforce success is early exposure to work experience,” said Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges. “This is why I am committed to continued investment in programs like STEP-UP that provide our driven young people with opportunities that set them up for future career success.”

2015 Award Winners:

Employer of the Year

- Pillsbury United Communities
- Xcel Energy

### Intern of the Year

- Imani Evege, Minneapolis Public Housing Authority
- Logan Allen, Little Earth of United Tribes
- Jessie Vang, Ebenezer
- Juan Sanchez Garcia, U.S. Bank

### Supervisor of the Year

- Marques Bates , Community Bridge
- Tina Johnson, Minneapolis Public Housing Authority
- Diane Collins, HealthPartners
- Colin Owens, Metropolitan Council

“Xcel Energy is honored to receive this year’s STEP-UP Achieve Employer of the Year award,” said Chairman, President and CEO Ben Fowke. “As a participating employer since 2004, we’ve worked with some very bright and energetic young people. Best of all, we’ve had an opportunity to help shape our workforce of the future, which I think is going to be very impressive.”

“As a STEP-UP employer since the program started, Pillsbury United Communities is honored to be named the 2015 STEP-UP Discover Employer of the Year award winner,” said Julie Graves, Director of Youth Development for Pillsbury United Communities. “We sincerely value the opportunity the partnership provides to help youth contribute to their own communities as leaders and influencers, and the alignment of values for career and college access make STEP-UP a program like no other.”

The graduation featured a performance by former City of Minneapolis intern, now internationally renowned musician, radio host, educator, and community organizer, Toki Wright. Iny Asian Dance Group and Asian Media Access performed two Asian American dance fusion numbers featuring six STEP-UP interns. Reflections from current STEP-UP interns Abdirahim Mohamed and Lor Vang and alumni Matthew Vue were also woven into the celebration.

The City of Minneapolis STEP-UP program is a partnership with AchieveMpls, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and Project for Pride in Living. As one of the country’s premiere youth employment programs, STEP-UP serves Minneapolis youth and young adults age 14-21 who face some of the greatest barriers to employment, including youth from low-income families, youth of color, and youth with disabilities.

Since the program was launched in 2004, 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. Most interns receive 7-14 hours of work-readiness training certified by the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce. STEP-UP also offers advanced internships and industry-specific trainings and certifications in

partnership with local industry leaders. Learn more about STEP-UP at the [City of Minneapolis website](#). Follow STEP-UP on social media with hashtag #STEPUPMPLS.

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