



## **Kenosha Emerging Leaders Academy Set to Open**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 10, 2024

For further information contact:

Tim Casey

Director of City Development

262-653-4030

[tcasey@kenosha.org](mailto:tcasey@kenosha.org)

Kenosha, WI – The Kenosha Emerging Leaders Academy (KELA) is pleased to announce the inauguration of its facility with a ribbon-cutting ceremony scheduled for Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 to 7:00pm. Located at 2222 63rd Street in the Uptown neighborhood, KELA is dedicated to equipping students and young adults with the necessary skills and resources to embark upon successful college and career pathways.

This collaborative initiative between the City of Kenosha and local partners in youth development, education, technology, career development, and workforce preparation will offer opportunities for local youth, creating a pipeline of local talent to area colleges and future employers.

KELA stands as a pivotal component within the comprehensive strategy to revitalize the city's older neighborhoods. Local partners include Carthage College, the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Herzing University, Gateway Technical College, Jockey International, the Best Buy Foundation™, the Kenosha YMCA, gener8tor and the Mahone Fund.

While programming is already underway at KELA, the forthcoming ribbon-cutting ceremony symbolizes a moment of celebration for all partners involved. "It is an exciting day for the community and for all the partners," said Cindy Altergott, Kenosha YMCA CEO. "We are very committed to aligning our CEO mentoring program with Katherine Marks' vision for KELA", said Tim Mahone, President of Mahone Strategies and Chairman of the Mary Lou & Arthur F. Mahone Fund. "This academic and career hub creates a comprehensive learning environment that develops the core skill sets of Kenosha area youth. Our historic collaboration of partners is foundational to Katherine's legacy."

The KELA building is located a few blocks from the Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood (KIN), a live, work, learn and play neighborhood focused on innovation, education, training, learning, and work opportunities. Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian notes that KIN represents the future economy of Kenosha, as it will change the region's economic trajectory and offer inclusive, diverse, innovation-based opportunities to position Kenosha competitively as a destination for technology and entrepreneurial development.

"KELA is so needed and critical for the young people in Kenosha, especially for our low to moderate income and young people who live in neighborhoods surrounding Uptown and the Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood," said Mayor Antaramian. "This unique collaboration will provide them access to career development, higher education, training, and exposure to various careers from building trades and entrepreneurship to business and technology careers. KELA will help prepare young people for opportunities at KIN and beyond."

The Kenosha Emerging Leaders Academy partners will work collaboratively to deliver the "Steps to Success" programming, encompassing a wide array of educational and vocational initiatives tailored to meet the needs of Kenosha's youth.

The Kenosha YMCA will offer their Teen Achievers program sponsored by Jockey. This program supports middle school students in reading and math, life skills, college and career readiness, positive relationships, and positive identity.

A Best Buy Teen Tech Center® powered by Jockey will also be housed within KELA. The Kenosha YMCA will operate the center where students age 12-18 will have access to the latest technology and develop critical skills through hands-on activities. Adult mentors and volunteers provide the support for teens to create, innovate and explore their passions in areas like robotics, photography, and music production. Teens will have access to computers, digital cameras, a music studio, virtual reality systems, and 3D printers.

"We are beyond excited to help bring a Best Buy Teen Tech center to Kenosha," said Jake McGhee, Chief Philanthropy Officer, Jockey International. "As the world becomes more technologically advanced, we want all youth from our neighborhood to have opportunities to engage in state-of-the-art STEM programs. Having something like this in our backyard for them to experience will hopefully pique their interest and lead them on a pathway they may not have considered otherwise."

The Mahone Fund's Career Exploration Organization (CEO) mentoring program matches first-generation and/or low to moderate income students with an academic and business mentor. The program is designed to assist students in pursuing their academic and career goals by providing internships and job training activities focusing on work ethics and core values. In addition, the CEO program opens a pipeline to careers in emergency services, legal, healthcare, education, building trades, and technology clusters.

gener8tor adds an entrepreneurial component to KELA. gener8tor brings together startup founders, investors, corporations, mentors, universities, and community partners in accelerator programs to assist business growth through its gBETA Kenosha startup accelerator, which is offered at no cost to founders. gBETA Kenosha offers access to programming that helps founders develop ideas for their startups or growth opportunities with an emphasis on assisting female entrepreneurs and people of color.

On-site staff from the four higher education partners; Carthage College, Gateway Technical College, Herzing University, and University of Wisconsin – Parkside will allow students to develop early relationships with local colleges and universities. They will have access to pre-college advising, financial aid counseling, financial literacy assistance, training, and classes.

Cyndeane Jennings, Dean of the School of Pre-College and Momentum Programs at Gateway Technical College stated, "We hope our presence as higher education partners creates a supportive environment for students, equipping them with the resources and guidance needed to pursue their educational goals

effectively. Establishing early relationships with local colleges and universities is pivotal in preparing students for the transition to higher education and ensuring their academic success.”

For more information on upcoming programs and initiatives at KELA, interested parties are encouraged to contact Cindy Altergott at 262-564-6810 or [caltergott@kenoshaymca.org](mailto:caltergott@kenoshaymca.org). Additionally, youths seeking engagement at the Best Buy Teen Tech Center may visit KELA during operating hours or reach out via phone at 262-898-5621.

###