

## USA Funds Strategy Aims to Bolster African-American Male Success

Nearly a third more African-American men in the United States were in prison in 2000 than were enrolled in higher education, the Justice Policy Institute estimates in its report *Cellblocks or Classrooms?: The Funding of Higher Education and Corrections and Its Impact on African-American Men*.

In Indiana, the rate of African-American males who graduate from high school with their peer groups stood at 46 percent in 2003-2004, according to the Schott Foundation for Public Education's *Public Education and Black Male Students*.

These statistics demonstrate the low educational attainment of many African-American males, and the need to change the learning environment for these students to put them on a path to success.

"Research shows that African-American males begin to encounter difficulty at an early age," says Kyle Malone, USA Funds® manager, access and outreach. "We need to intervene in students' lives early so we can successfully influence and positively change the direction of not only their academic paths, but their lives in general."

To help address the challenges facing African-American male students, USA Funds has designed an initiative to support programs that help increase academic achievement among African-American males.

USA Funds is launching the strategy in Central Indiana, with hopes of expanding the effort.

Malone reports that academic achievement is the ultimate goal of the initiative, but that achievement often comes from making changes in students' behavior through peer interaction, cultural awareness and self-confidence.



Facilitator Steve Jefferson of Indianapolis television station WTHR, center, joins students Evan Bradley, left, and KeAaron Roberts during a Center for Leadership Development Project MR. event.

### Program promotes respect and success

The Center for Leadership Development, based in Indianapolis, works to foster the advancement of minority youth in Central Indiana by providing experiences that encourage personal development and educational attainment.

USA Funds recently awarded a \$20,000 grant to CLD in support of its Project MR.: Male Responsibility program. Project MR. is an intensive, six-week youth development program that instructs African-American and minority males in grades seven to 10 on the skills that will help them become responsible males in society. The program provides participants with education and resources focused on how to make healthy life choices and overcome barriers.

Project MR.'s goal is to prevent African-American male students from "falling through the cracks," dropping out of high school, or becoming adolescent parents. The program focuses on key areas including:

- ◆ Academics.
- ◆ Responsibility.
- ◆ Health.
- ◆ Careers.
- ◆ Time management.
- ◆ Financial literacy.
- ◆ Self-respect.

"We try to teach and encourage the participants to make positive and responsible decisions. At the same time, we are able to emphasize the importance of refraining from the negative influences," says Anthony Ferrell, CLD program coordinator. "We do not want to just focus on what they should not do; we want to give them positive reinforcement and options."

Throughout the program, African-American men volunteer their time as facilitators, to provide positive role models for participants.

"We are working with these young men during their formative years," says Ferrell. "We are

able to be a positive influence. Our facilitators not only lead the students in discussions, but they also provide an opportunity for the students to have exposure to positive role models and see what they can become one day."

### Commission addresses key areas

The Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males is studying five areas of significance to Hoosier communities, and specifically to African-American males. The commission focuses on health, education, employment, criminal justice and social issues.

USA Funds sponsored the group's two-day annual conference. The event brought together educators, experts and more than 500 African-American male students from across Indiana for an opportunity to develop strategies to counter negative statistics and improve the quality of life for African-American males in Indiana.

USA Funds' sponsorship permitted 200 students who otherwise would not have been able to attend to participate in the conference. At the event, students learned ways to be successful students, ways to deal with challenges they face, and how to be upstanding young adults.

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# Selected Grants Awarded by USA Funds Jan. 1, 2008–March 31, 2008

USA Funds awards grants to advance its nonprofit mission to enhance postsecondary education preparedness, access and success.

## Business Higher Education Forum

Washington, D.C.

**Project** The College Readiness Initiative: Agenda for College Readiness, Access and Success

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$125,000

This initiative will engage corporate, academic and foundation leaders to address key issues in education for students in grades kindergarten through 12 and will promote college readiness.

## Sunnyside Unified School District

Tucson, Ariz.

**Project** Dollars for Scholars Scholarships

**Geographic Scope** Arizona  
**Amount** \$100,000

Funding will support scholarships to help graduates of the school district pay college expenses. Sunnyside is one of six communities in the Learning Communities initiative, which USA Funds helped to create to increase the number of youth who complete high school and successfully pursue postsecondary education.

## Junior Achievement

Indianapolis

**Project** Executive Service Corps Youth Mentor Program

**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$100,000

The mentoring program guides high school students toward opportunities to gain postsecondary education.

## U.S. Dream Academy Inc.

Columbia, Md.

**Project** Seventh Annual "Power of a Dream" Gala  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$100,000

The U.S. Dream Academy's seventh annual gala will raise support for programs that help address the cycle of intergenerational incarceration and school failure among children.

## University of Nevada Foundation

Reno, Nev.

**Project** Dean's Future Scholars  
**Geographic Scope** Nevada  
**Amount** \$75,000

Dean's Future Scholars encourages culturally diverse middle school students to enter a college readiness program and provides support services for students and their families throughout their high school experience. USA Funds is entering its sixth year supporting the program.

## Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Inc.

Washington, D.C.

**Project** Ready to Lead (R2L)  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$50,000

R2L focuses on college admission and financial aid in an effort to motivate, educate and empower Latino high school students to serve and lead in their communities. CHCI seeks to develop a civically active Hispanic community participating at the local, state and federal policy decision-making levels.

## Maryland Higher Education Commission

Annapolis, Md.

**Project** "Questions About College" Booklet  
**Geographic Scope** Maryland  
**Amount** \$50,000

As an advocate for more than 350,000 college students in Maryland, the Commission developed a publication that helps high school juniors and their parents navigate the process of choosing a college.

## Starfish

Indianapolis

**Project** One-on-One Mentoring  
**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$50,000

The Starfish Initiative cultivates promising low-income youth as leaders through an intensive academic and support program designed to promote college entrance and success.

## Central Indiana Community Foundation

Indianapolis

**Project** Latino Scholarship Fund  
**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$50,000

This new fund will support multiple organizations that offer scholarships to Latino students in Indiana.

## National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

Washington, D.C.

**Project** USA Funds Unlock the Future® Video  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$50,000

USA Funds is collaborating with NCCEP to develop an updated version of the USA Funds Unlock the Future early awareness video and training materials, focusing on preparation for higher education. The materials will provide overviews of the college planning and admissions processes as well as financial aid options for students.

## Hispanic Scholarship Fund

San Francisco

**Project** Alumni Hall of Fame Gala  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$50,000

USA Funds is a corporate sponsor of this annual fund-raising event. In its 32-year history, HSF has awarded more than 82,000 scholarships totaling \$221 million to students at nearly 2,000 colleges and universities.

## Circle City Classic

Indianapolis

**Project** College Readiness Workshops  
**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$50,000

The quarterly workshops help eliminate barriers that keep high school students from attending college. The events feature SAT and ACT examination preparation and sessions about test-taking strategies, financial aid and career development.

## American Indian College Fund

Denver

**Project** 40th Anniversary Scholarship Donation  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$40,000

USA Funds presented this award to help support scholarships for Native American students, in recognition of the 40th anniversary of tribal colleges and universities.

## Indiana Student Financial Aid Association

Bloomington, Ind.

**Project** 2008 Indiana College Goal Sunday  
**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$40,000

The free event provided parents and students with volunteer assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, required for federal aid as well as for many state and institutional student aid programs.

## Wind River Dollars for Scholars

Fort Washakie, Wyo.

**Project** Wind River Learning Communities Initiative  
**Geographic Scope** Wyoming  
**Amount** \$35,390

This chapter of Dollars for Scholars aims to strengthen the Wind River Learning Community by providing scholarships for higher education. Wind River Reservation is one of six communities targeted by the Learning Communities initiative to increase academic achievement.

## Indiana Latino Institute

Indianapolis

**Project** Carreras Para El Futuro  
**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$30,000

This community partnership provides program services for Hispanic/Latino high school students, their families and other community members interested in increasing student participation in postsecondary education.

## National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

Washington, D.C.

**Project** GEAR UP Annual Conference  
**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$25,000

USA Funds sponsored a plenary session at NCCEP's annual conference in support of college access and awareness for low-income students and families.

# Access and Outreach Manager's Role Is Latest Chapter in a Lifetime of Helping Others

Even as a teen, Kyle Malone spent his time being a positive influence in the lives of young people. He spent his summers as a camp counselor in north-west Indiana, and his school year working in the children's room at a local library in Gary, Ind. Years later, with a career built around giving back, Malone still is helping young people achieve their goals.

As USA Funds' manager of access and outreach, Malone focuses on a broad range of issues in promoting higher education preparedness, access and success. His background in dealing with youth has been a valuable asset when he encounters young people through his work at USA Funds.

"Looking back on life and my career, I realize that I truly enjoyed helping kids better themselves, even when I was young myself," says Malone. "My work at USA Funds is a culmination of my past experiences, and I'm able to use those experiences to better serve people today."

Prior to joining the USA Funds access and outreach team in April 2005, Malone was vice president of programs for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Indiana, in Indianapolis. He also has worked in adult education testing for the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C., and in enrollment management at Kalamazoo College in Michigan and Earlham College in Richmond, Ind.

## Overseeing early awareness

At USA Funds many of the projects that Malone manages are those that advance early awareness of the importance of postsecondary education. Those initiatives include USA Funds Consejos, a curriculum designed to provide Latino students and their families more complete information about the value of higher education, the education options available to them, and the availability of financial aid; and USA Funds Unlock the Future, a presentation that introduces middle school students and their families to educational opportunities.



*Kyle Malone, left, of USA Funds, discusses career options with student Jasmine Echols at the Center for Leadership Development Role Model/Advisor Experience.*

Malone worked closely with Betty Paugh Ortiz, director of programs and operations for the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships, when developing the curricula for both USA Funds Consejos and USA Funds Unlock the Future.

"Working with Kyle is an absolute pleasure. He has an ongoing optimism that is contagious, and he is always willing to explore new ways to make things happen," says Paugh Ortiz. "He is always thinking ahead and can visualize the end result and that thinking has been vital to the success of USA Funds Consejos and USA Funds Unlock the Future."

Also under his direction are the national USA Funds Access to Education Scholarships® program and USA Funds' placement of EduCat™ mobile classrooms in nine children's hospitals across the nation.

"It's fulfilling to work with children's hospitals and allow hospitalized children to continue their schoolwork during a very trying time," says Malone. "Successful completion of educational goals ties directly to our mission, but on a personal side it's nice to know that we are helping youth take their mind off their illness, even if it's just for a short time."

## Focus on national, local events

One of the programs Malone manages that holds special importance to him is the Learning Communities initiative. USA Funds helped to spearhead this initiative, and Malone has seen the program evolve from an idea to today's successful initiative that is changing the learning environment for students. The Learning Communities initiative involves a coalition of organizations that are focusing services on six pilot communities in a bid to improve access to postsecondary education for low-income students.

Managing the many programs of the USA Funds access and outreach division requires a great deal of traveling. That limits the time Malone can spend on one of his true passions — mentoring — but he takes any opportunity to do so that he can get.

"One of my first opportunities as a mentor was while I was in Kalamazoo," says Malone. "I mentored a second-grader every Thursday, and I realized that when you mentor a child you are really mentoring the whole family."

Recently Malone participated in the Center for Leadership Development's Role Model/Advisor Experience. The program allows students and their parents the opportunity to meet with professionals in a career field in which they are interested.

"It was a great opportunity to meet motivated students and their families," says Malone. "To know that you are helping to make a difference in a student's life, you just can't explain how good that feels. They are so eager to learn and hear what you have to say. The parents are appreciative of the fact that I reinforce the same things they are teaching at home."

Whether it's through a mentoring opportunity or hands-on involvement in the many programs he oversees at USA Funds, Malone remains committed to the path he began following in high school — being a positive influence in the lives of youth.



*Malone shares information about his job with students at the Role Model/Advisor Experience in Indianapolis.*

# Empowering African-American Males for College and Career Achievement: What Can We Do?

By Dennis Bland  
President  
Center for Leadership Development



One persistent, undeniable problem confronting our nation is the education crisis of African-American males. Educators, state and national policy-makers, sociologists, philanthropic organizations and citizens across the nation are grappling with this troubling and growing challenge.

The dearth of African-American males enrolled in, and graduating from, college reflects this problem. For instance, within the state of Indiana, where the Center for Leadership Development is located, the six-year graduation rate for all students is nearly 60 percent. By comparison, only 33 percent of African-American males who enroll in college earn bachelor's degrees within six years. Even more troubling is that their four-year graduation rate is a shockingly low 15 percent.

Given that the median annual earnings of an individual with a bachelor's degree are nearly \$20,000 higher than the income of an individual holding only a high school diploma, the education crisis has negative, far-reaching implications for African-American males and for our society as a whole.

The following are six of the many ways our society benefits when we increase the number of African-American males who earn college degrees:

- ◆ These men bring a higher earned income into the home and increase their earning potential.
- ◆ African-American males influence other African-American males to pursue higher learning.
- ◆ These college graduates provide neighborhood role models for teens who are developing their own college aspirations.
- ◆ Increased disposable income enables these men to begin or increase financial contributions to charitable causes.
- ◆ African-American males tend to improve their health because they receive better benefits and gain access to better health care for themselves and their children.
- ◆ Increased education and economic opportunities help decrease the level of criminal activity.

As a society, we have the unquestionable ability to help African-American males achieve greater education outcomes. We need only the will and a plan.

Local, state and federal leaders must take an aggressive, proactive role in helping our community address this educational and societal scourge. Policy-makers, higher education officials and college and university administrators must work actively and jointly to devise bold, proven, sustainable solutions that help African-American males overcome the barriers that preclude them from earning a college degree and reaping the many benefits of a college education.

Specifically, we must:

- ◆ Provide more effective teaching at the elementary and secondary level.
- ◆ Offer more counseling and guidance, especially for poor students and their parents.
- ◆ Make more financial resources available to help cash-strapped families.
- ◆ Provide more effective support programs for African-American males both prior to and during college.

Of course, African-American males also must take personal ownership and shoulder more individual responsibility and accountability to realize their higher education goals.

Since its founding in 1977, the Center for Leadership Development has been dedicated to nurturing, modeling, inspiring and expecting the highest achievement in African-American youth. As part of its effort to promote achievement in African-American males, CLD started the Project MR. program in 1989. Project MR., short for "Male Responsibility," aims to inspire confidence and success and to address the problem of males engaging in irresponsible, self-destructive behaviors.

At a time when so many African-American males are struggling to earn a good, healthy wage and overcome many socioeconomic barriers confronting them, one of our society's greatest solutions resides in empowering African-American males by helping them acquire an education and earn a degree. But getting into and graduating from college has proven elusive for an alarming number of African-American males.

If we want our families, our communities, and our overall standard of living to improve, we must aggressively pursue a cohesive, comprehensive strategy aimed at creating the broadest opportunities and inspiring the highest academic achievement and graduation rates in African-American males. In fact, given this current education crisis, we must make the academic, college and career preparation of African-American males a national imperative.

African-American males throughout the country are being left farther and farther behind. As a community, we have the opportunity to help.

## USA Funds Strategy

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"We work to ensure that the youth are constantly engaged in many different types of educational activities throughout the conference. Ultimately, we want everyone who attends our conferences to leave encouraged, and with a renewed sense of hope," says Steven Ingram, deputy director of the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males.

Leading researchers on education and African-American males addressed ways to improve retention of African-American males and to help prepare students for postsecondary education.

"The sad reality is that this is not just an Indiana problem — it's a nationwide problem," says Ingram. "We all must get involved in changing the lives of black males personally, educationally and socially. When we successfully better the lives of black males, we essentially better the lives of everyone in our community."

*The 2007 conference of the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males included a variety of group discussions, including a student-teacher discussion about their conference experiences.*

