

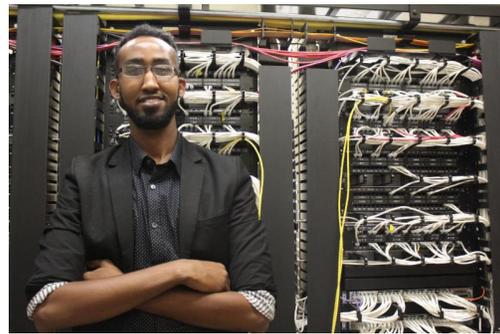


Ahmed Mohamed:

Family + Opportunity = IT Career at Fairview

CedarRiverside resident Ahmed Mohamed says that it all started with his mother.

She saw an ad at the Brian Coyle Center about IT Ready, and pushed her son to consider the program, created by EMERGE to connect unemployed and under-employed youth and young people from underserved populations to careers in IT.



Mohamed was working at an employee travel agency as an on-call reservation specialist when he applied to IT Ready. Computers and computer networking came easily to him, but he did not pass his first certification test. Discouraged but not defeated, Mohamed said that his family supported him during the certification testing and re-testing. "It's all about what motivates you," said Mohamed. "For me, that's my family."

Commitment to Opportunity in Cedar Riverside

His persistence and family support paid off, as Mohamed has been a successful member of Fairview Health Services' Endpoint Project Execution Team since February 2016. Fairview's System Director for Talent Acquisition, Laura Beeth, foresees more opportunities for Cedar Riverside youth at Fairview, including more IT positions. "Mohamed's experience is a great example of the vision we have for career pathways," she explained. "We are hoping to connect many more Cedar Riverside residents to careers at Fairview."

Fairview is one of the anchor employer partners in the new Cedar Riverside Opportunity Center, an initiative of the Cedar Riverside Partnership that will be led by Hennepin County and managed by EMERGE. The County just signed the lease for the new Center at the Five15 on the Park building across from the Brian Coyle Center. Construction is expected to begin this Fall, and the Center should be ready to open early in 2017.

Gaining the Tools

IT Ready trains students for nearly 300 hours over eight weeks to help them master the technical skills necessary to obtain professional CompTIA A+ IT certification. The program also nurtures



the soft skills its students must develop to succeed in interviews and thrive in their future workplace.

Over the last four years, IT Ready has been extremely successful in its goal of placing students in relevant, local, paid positions. According to Creating IT Futures, four out of five IT Ready students find IT jobs with local companies.

Giving Back as *Wayao*

Mohamed acknowledges that not everyone is lucky enough to have the strong family support that helped him succeed in the fast-paced and challenging IT Ready training program. Knowing this, Mohamed has made it his mission to motivate, inspire, and inform people in his community about career-advancing opportunities like IT Ready. In Cedar Riverside, Mohamed is known for his open-door policy. He is always ready to engage in a conversation about professional development opportunities, and tells youth that they can knock on his door or call him at any time. Mohamed lets those he mentors know up front that he will “push them when they don’t want to push themselves.”

Because of his patience, persistence, and sensibility, young people in the neighborhood refer to him as *wayao*. Given to Mohamed by his grandfather, this name means “wise, old soul.” Mohamed’s advice to youth suggests the aptness of his nickname. “Be passionate about what you do, and put effort into bettering yourself,” Mohamed urges the youth in his community. “Don’t give up, even when the odds are stacked against you, because giving up is easy to do.”

Cultivating Relationships

Mohamed credits the team atmosphere at IT Ready for preparing him to become a team player on the Fairview IT team. At Fairview, he constantly asks himself, “How can I make the team better?” He learned that approach at IT Ready. Mohamed has already helped several young people apply for and enroll in IT Ready. He offered a reference for one Augsburg College graduate from Cedar Riverside who applied for an IT position at Fairview, and Fairview made the hire.

When Mohamed began his job at Fairview Health Services, he instantly began growing his professional network. “I feel like I have another family outside of my family when I am here,” he said of working at Fairview. “I know Fairview is in my best interest.” Thanks to mentors like Lori Offerman, a consultant for the Fairview IT Workforce Strategy, he is excited to advance his career. Supported by the resources IT Ready helped to align, Mohamed personifies his mantra “you get out of it what you put in.” Mohamed hopes to become a project manager in the future, and no one doubts that he will achieve this next goal.

We are a public private partnership committed to investing strategically in the sustainable growth and development of the Cedar Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis.

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