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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Inspires Transformation of DeKalb's Summer Jobs Program into Virtual Career Academy *More than 850 youth will learn and earn online*

DECATUR, Ga. — In response to the COVID-19 health and economic crisis, the DeKalb Summer Youth Employment Program has been transformed into the DeKalb Virtual Career Academy.

Registration for the program will be open May 8-14.

The program, which runs from June 1 to July 31, will provide career development, education enrichment and summer income for 850 youth, ages 14 to 24, who will be paid \$9 per hour while learning online.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has stifled America's economy. The innovative partnership with the DeKalb County School District and Georgia Piedmont Technical College inspired us to reimagine our summer jobs program as a virtual career academy. By working together we have created much-needed employment and career development opportunities for our youth," DeKalb County CEO Michael Thurmond said.

While the primary mission of the DeKalb Summer Youth Employment program remains unchanged, the curriculum and service delivery strategy has been revamped in response to the COVID-19 economic crisis.

The DeKalb Virtual Career Academy (DVCA) is a cooperative effort by DeKalb County Government, DeKalb County School District, Georgia Piedmont Technical College, WorkSource DeKalb, and various public and private partners. The virtual curriculum will offer academic enrichment courses and life skills and job readiness training in a structured virtual learning environment. Additionally, motivational speakers will engage, educate and inspire participating youth.

"The exposure to career exploration strategies will ensure that our interns are career-ready because they will have the knowledge and skills required to be successful." DeKalb County School Superintendent Ramona Tyson said.

(more)

DeKalb Youth Virtual Academy, continued

Academy interns may also earn credentialing credits in industries such as business technology, game design, website design, healthcare and education, while out-of-school youth will be provided General Equivalency Diploma (GED) instruction and counseling.

“Providing high school equivalency and GED test preparation training at no cost, in support of this endeavor, falls right in line with our mission of workforce development,” said Dr. Tavaraz Holston, president of Georgia Piedmont Technical College. “When we work together, we are unstoppable.”

If needed, interns, will also receive “wrap around” services such as counseling and indirect financial assistance.

Curriculum delivery will mirror a traditional classroom setting and is aligned with the academic achievement levels of individual interns. DeKalb County Schools District’s VERGE, an established virtual platform, will track and document student progress.

To qualify for enrollment in the DVCA, a youth must be a DeKalb County resident aged 14-24. Applicants will be randomly selected to participate in the program.

Since 2017, more than 1,100 youth have participated in the DeKalb Summer Youth Employment Program.

For more information or to register, visit www.dekalbcountyga.gov/careeracademy.

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