

GM Creates 'Student Corps' to Help Develop Career Skills

by Jim Stickford

Mark Reuss, president of GM's North American Operations, was on hand at the automaker's headquarters at the Renaissance Center May 20 to kick off the GM Student Corps, a program designed to bring students and retirees together in a mentoring program.

Terry Rhadigan, GM Product and Brand Communications, said the Student Corps is the result of a whole cadre of retired GM employees giving of their time and their expertise to 110 students across metro Detroit.

Under the program, GM will pay for the budgeted student projects and provide Chevrolet Express vans and Chevrolet Silverado full-size pickups so adult mentors can transport materials and students to project sites and life skills classes.

Throughout the summer, students will be encouraged to document their projects on social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #GMStudentCorps.

GM Student Corps members were selected based on leadership potential, overall energy, enthusiasm and grit, school activities, citizenship and academic performance.

At the end of the summer, leaders from each student team will formally present their programs and results to Reuss and his staff.

In addition, the GM Student Corps experience will be chronicled in a documentary filmed by UDM Professor Jason Roche.

The students representing 11 United Way Network of Excellence Schools will work in teams of 10 to develop and implement service projects in Detroit-area neighborhoods.

Helping to train and mentor them are 60 GM retirees and 12 GM student interns from the University of Detroit Mercy, where many students major in service-based programs. Employee volunteers from TeamGMCares also will assist throughout the summer.

The teams are currently planning their projects. Work is scheduled to begin in mid-June and conclude in August.

"Improving the quality of life in our communities means more than writing a check," said Reuss.

"It also requires investing in our young people, teaching them how good it feels to see their hard work help others, and providing them with the skills they need to lead and succeed as professionals and as citizens. Once you serve, you're hooked for life."

A unique aspect of the GM Student Corps is that it unites people from a range of age groups and walks of life to work toward a common goal - improving local neighborhoods - while helping students develop career skills.

Schools participating in the GM Student Corps are: Central Collegiate Academy, Detroit Public Schools Cody Campus, East Detroit High School, Hamtramck High School, Harper Woods High School, Henry Ford High School, Madison High School, Melvindale High School, Detroit Public Schools Osborn Campus, River Rouge High School and Van Dyke Lincoln High School.

Reuss said the project is part of GM's larger efforts to help area students achieve.

He said the idea came after the Champions Council on which he serves heard from students tak-



GM executive Mark Reuss at the Renaissance Center spoke about helping students develop life skills.

ing academic programs.

The students wanted to know what was available to them during the summer months. And they weren't adverse to making some cash and getting some work experience that looked good on their resumes.

The result was the Student Corps.

He said the students will, in addition to working on their projects, also get life skills training from the retired GM employees. That's very important, too, Reuss said.

He credited former GM executive Mike DiGiovanni, who retired in 2010 and is now a full-time professor of economics at UDM, with working with the GM retirees to help the program.

DiGiovanni said he grew up on the west side of Detroit and attended U-D High School and UDM College.

"I'm about as much of a Detroit-

er as you can get," DiGiovanni said. "It's my honor to be here today. Mark is tapping me and other GM retirees to get the Student Corps off the ground. It's great to be in this building again and see it full of energy. We're passionate about getting this to work and working with the students."

Detroit Mayor Dave Bing was also on hand. He said that GM has once again reached out to the community. The company was his first customer when he started out in the auto supply business more than 30 years ago, Bing said.

"Detroit is on the verge of a comeback," Bing said.

"I know there are people who don't believe that, but we are. We see so many negative things, but today is the beginning of a new day."

Bing said that part of what will help Detroit's comeback is young people like the students attend-

ing the May 20 event going into public service.

He said he understood the value of private sector work, but people could really make a difference by entering public service as well, and government needs bright, dedicated young people.

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