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WKU launches new Jonesville Academy for local Black, Brown youth

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com

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Western Kentucky University celebrated the imminent launch of its new Jonesville Academy with a ribbon cutting celebration on Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021.

Submitted



Drawing upon the history and legacy of Jonesville – an African American neighborhood that once stood where the heart of Western Kentucky University’s campus now stands – a new academy is aiming to help local Black and Brown boys excel in school and become leaders themselves.

Tyreon Clark
Grace Ramey

Presented by the youth-focused nonprofits Boys to Men Leadership Group and For A Real Change, the new Jonesville Academy will launch Sept. 11.



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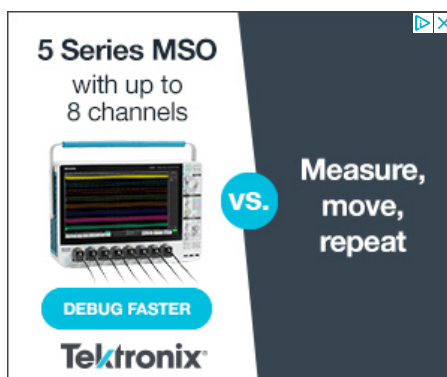
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Tyreon Clark is director of the Boys to Men Leadership Group and co-founder of the Jonesville Academy along with Aurelia Spaulding, founder of For A Real Change.



The inaugural group of more than 50 students will meet regularly on Saturdays to study reading, writing, history, culture and the science, technology, engineering and math fields, Clark said.

The academy has also recruited mentors, which it calls journeymen and journeywomen, to help support students, Clark said. These role models will check in with students and help support them on their journey to become community leaders.



“I hope that we change the trajectory of their futures,” Clark said of the program’s participants. “They’re everything we need to push this community forward.”

The academy's students, who range from the third to eighth grade, will get the support of nine educators, including a mix of educators from both local public school systems, a WKU professor and a specially trained reading interventionist.

Clark said the program took its name from Jonesville in the spirit of honoring the community's contribution to Bowling Green, one that hasn't always been appreciated and recognized as it should be.

The Jonesville neighborhood, which was home to several African American-owned businesses in its day, was displaced in the late 1950s and early 1960s to clear the way for WKU's expansion. Many of WKU's flagship athletic venues now stand where Jonesville once stood.

"We just want to honor the legacy and rich culture and history of the community of Jonesville," Clark said, adding there's no better way to do that than forming a community to nurture the next generation of Black and Brown youths.

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