



Agency Happenings

Cincinnati-Hamilton County CAA Youth Services Director Receives Award for His Advocacy

On February 13, Shawn Kerley, Youth Services director at Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency (CAA) received the Youth Advocate Award from the Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board (SWORWIB) as part of their 2014 Super Awards during their annual meeting.



The Super Awards recognize employers and labor organizations for their commitment to putting more people back to work. Shawn has been the director of Youth Development at the Community Action Agency since 2007, where he oversees programs, including YouthBuild, Blueprint for Success and the summer employment youth programs. During a typical year, 70 youth may enroll in programs at CAA, while 300-400 youth may enroll in the summer employment programs. Shawn is also the basketball coach at Western Hills High School, where he has been for eight years. Between both jobs, Shawn touches the lives of a lot of kids.

“We found out that Shawn had a very profound connection to one of the WIA youth enrolled in Jobs for Cincinnati Graduates last year at West High,” Kathleen Williams, youth and public information specialist with SWORWIB said when explaining why Shawn was selected for the award. “Cortez Adams, then a senior, told us how Shawn had mentored him, helped him apply to colleges, and helped him get a scholarship. Cortez got a full-ride football scholarship to Texas

College – and Shawn drove him to Tyler, Texas, last August to get him settled. The relationship hasn’t stopped there – they talk every night.”

“He’s like my son,” Shawn said about Cortez. Kerley was a first-generation college kid himself – he got his bachelor’s at Wilberforce and a master’s at Central State. “I was an at-risk kid,” Shawn explained. But under the care and watchful eye of his grandfather, Shawn succeeded. He knew he had to give back, and he does that every single day. Shawn commented on the award saying, “It was a good feeling, not for me, but for the kid because he’d been through so much adversity. Being able to see his accomplishments after how much he’d been through gave me a warm feeling.” Shawn coached Cortez, who also participated in the summer employment program. “To see what can happen when you invest in someone, not just give them a crutch, but empower someone. It gives me joy seeing him overcome obstacles,” Shawn said.

Congratulations to Shawn Kerley!