

Young adults get a leg up on careers thanks to Year Up

When O'Dell Lockhart IV spotted a flyer for the Year Up program at the Stop & Shop supermarket in Rhode Island where he worked, he had no idea that it would change his life. At the time, Lockhart could do little more on a computer than check his e-mail, but a year later he has completed an apprenticeship with Field Services at CFG in Cranston – and is a competitive candidate for jobs in technology support.

Year Up is a nonprofit organization providing education and training to urban men and women aged 18 to 24 and preparing them for successful careers and higher education. Participants spend six months in intensive classes that teach them professional culture and a variety of technical skills and another six months in full-time apprenticeships that give them on-the-job training. Since its inception in 2000, Year Up has been a great success, placing 100 percent of its qualified students into apprenticeships and placing 87 percent of its graduates in full- or part-time positions within four months of completing the program.

Graduates start at salaries averaging \$15 an hour.

Citizens' involvement with Year Up began in 2005 when it expanded to Providence, and *Vice Chairman and Chief Information Officer Bill Wray* joined its advisory board. Manufacturing takes on four Year Up apprentices per session, placing one each in Desktop Support, Customer Direct, Information Security and Field Services. Lockhart was assigned to Field Services for six months. He was matched up with *Senior Field Engineer John DiCarlo*.

"We spent every minute of every workday together," DiCarlo said. "I taught him about everything that we work on as Field Engineers, including service calls to branches that directly impact our customers. What he accomplished as my apprentice in his six months with us was impressive."

Lockhart said he started in the program not knowing anything about technology. "But I knew I wanted to become a part of it because the world is becoming more and more dependent on it," said Lockhart.

When work space for the Customer Direct colleagues at the Cranston Technology Center was renovated and new cubicles, computers, phones and equipment were installed, Lockhart helped make sure that reconnecting everyone went off without a hitch.



Senior Field Engineer John DiCarlo and Year Up apprentice O'Dell Lockhart check on the telephone system at the Cranston Technology Center.

He recently accepted a position as a desktop engineer with CVS/pharmacy. Not bad for a guy who just a few months before thought he knew virtually nothing about computers.

Lockhart is one of 32 Year Up participants who've apprenticed with CFG. Seven of those apprentices accepted positions with CFG after completing the program in departments including Customer Direct, HR Training, the Project Management Office and the Enterprise Command Center.

"Year Up is a great blend of not-for-profit social service with private enterprise," said Wray. "I am very pleased with the fruitful relationship between Year Up and Citizens – it's what the 'community' aspect of the *Credo* is all about. Colleagues involved with the program are changing lives for the better."

For more information on Year Up, please visit <http://www.yearup.org/>. If you work in Rhode Island and would like to host a Year Up apprentice in your department, please contact Sherri Martin at sherri.martin@citizensbank.com.

— by Sarah Belanger Hay