

OUWB Partners with Downtown Youth Boxing Gym

DETROIT, Mich., -- The OUWB School of Medicine has partnered with the highly acclaimed Downtown Youth Boxing Gym to mentor students with aspirations to become future scientists and physicians. The partnership was born from students in the program expressing their desires to study medicine and become, scientists, neurosurgeons or nurses, says executive director Jessica Hauser.

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- Jessica Hauser, Executive Director,
Downtown Youth Boxing Gym

Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program, based in Detroit, is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop good citizenship in urban youth through a demanding boxing program, strong academic support and a connection to the community through service.

“We recognized our kids really needed to be guided at a level that exceeded the bandwidth that we had when it came to careers in medicine,” Hauser says.

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The partnership is about a year old and so far three students have received monthly mentorship and guidance from OUWB’s Diversity and Inclusion director Caryn Reed-Hendon. “I check in with them throughout the month, guide them and provide them the inspiration and tools they need to be able to succeed,” Reed-Hendon says.

One of her mentees is currently a college student with hopes to enter medical school. OUWB guides her on how to build her portfolio. Mentorship includes coaching students on keeping up their grades, how to navigate undergraduate studies, what they need to do to apply to medical school and for scholarships.

Downtown Youth Boxing Gym currently has 65 students in its program, a majority of them between the ages of 8 to 18 years old, with dozens more on a waiting list. About 75% of the students live within a 3-mile radius from the gym, many of which are residents of the nearby public housing units.

There is no qualification process to enter the program but there is one to stay in, Hauser says. The program requires kids to spend time in academic, boxing and service programs.

“If they don’t meet all of our requirements, they go on a probationary period where basically they don’t get to take part in the fun parts of the program,” Hauser says. “It’s really not about boxing at all for us,” she adds. “What they get out of the boxing portion is mentoring. They don’t have to compete or get in a ring.”