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Bridge Springfield: Brother to Brother Program finds new home at Community Partnership

Sept. 18, 2019 (Springfield, Mo.) – Community Partnership of the Ozarks (CPO) is now home to the community’s Bridge Springfield: Brother to Brother Program (B2B)! The program was established to provide a system of support for males attending the local colleges and provide wrap-around resources and services for retention and college completion. B2B is the only citywide chapter of the national Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB).

SAAB was founded in 1990 by its CEO Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe in response to low African American male college attendance and graduation rates in the 1980s. Today, SAAB is open to any race and gender and is focused on preparing the next generation to be globally competitive. Chapters have an option of using the name SAAB or B2B. Springfield uses B2B to be inclusive of the Springfield area high school and college students.

B2B was established in Springfield in April 2014, through an effort led by Missouri State University (MSU), in partnership with Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC), Drury University, Evangel University, Southwest Baptist University (MODES) and Springfield Public School district. Springfield is the only national chapter that uses a citywide model. B2B had several accomplishments over the past five years, including on-time graduation.

For the past two years, CPO has been the backbone for B2B in partnership with MSU’s Chief Diversity Officer Wes Pratt. Each college has members, which enables the members to seek support from their college to attend national conferences and other networking opportunities. There was a gap for individuals pursuing careers through other post-secondary options and Prosper Springfield’s Director discussed the need with Janet Dankert, President / CEO of CPO, who agreed to give the chapter a home at the organization and expand the program to include individuals focused on all post-secondary attainment options that may include certification or degree credentials. “CPO has always focused on workforce development as well as positive youth and young adult development and mentoring, so it was a perfect fit for B2B to have CPO as their new home,” Dankert said.

Today, SAAB/B2B has over 280 chapters in 39 states with an 86 percent college graduation rate, compared to the national average of 42 percent for African American males. The program offers professional advising and mentorship to assist its members to excel academically, socially, culturally, spiritually and in the community. In addition, one of the main objectives of SAAB/B2B is to help all members become role models for each other, as well as for others in their communities. SAAB/B2B also helps members become well prepared to enter the workforce of professionals and compete as positive contributors with the best. Dr. Bledsoe has personally come to Springfield several times to work with the community and recently established an endowment with Community Foundation of the Ozarks.

Each chapter has an Executive Committee and a strategic plan with measurable goals that must be achieved every academic school year. Members are required to create individual 5-year development plans that are monitored by a set of mentors for the Springfield model. Each chapter must have six required committees, including Academics, Personal Development, Spiritual, Finance, Membership and Public Relations.

Dankert made a formal announcement at CPO's Annual Meeting earlier this week regarding the news of B2B becoming a program of the organization. A dinner was held Tuesday night at CPO with Dr. Bledsoe, as well as B2B partners from Missouri State University (MSU) and Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC), B2B mentors, members and alumni and CPO staff. CPO will continue the partnership with MSU's Division for Diversity and Inclusion and OTC which has supported the local chapter.

To support B2B or to learn more about the program, contact Francine Pratt at fpratt@cpozarks.org.



Original B2B members in 2014: Javeon England, Vikas Jagwani, David Valenciano, Dallas Duncan, Roy Hardy, Cadarius Dotson and Derrick Johnson

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ABOUT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OF THE OZARKS

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