

Local coffee shop helps inner-city youth

Subhead:

CityKid Java Café employs inner-city high school students and donates all proceeds to a nonprofit.

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[Hillary Kline](#) [1]

Minneapolis South High School sophomore and employee of CityKid Java Café Zulianna Speltz can pour you a cup of coffee with a cause.

Open since Jan. 26, CityKid Java Café is located in the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management.

CityKid Java Café partnered with Urban Ventures and Aramark, the University's dining service provider.

Urban Ventures is a Minneapolis non-profit organization dedicated to serving the communities in south Minneapolis.

CityKid proceeds go directly to Urban Ventures, which help fund athletic programming and learning labs for at-risk youth.

CityKid also employs five inner-city high school students that work alongside Carlson students.

"That exposure at such an early age, we are really excited about," general manager of CityKid Jenifer Siegle said. "We hope that we can do this with other college campuses as well."

Marketing Manager of University Dining Services Heather Mentgen said CityKid chose Carlson because there was an open space and they "thought it would be a nice tie-in with the Carlson School."

"We thought "what a great way to open up a free-standing café that all of the proceeds go back to Urban Ventures from the sale of the coffee?," Mentgen said.

Tough economy

Though CityKid has been open for less than three months, Mentgen said business has already been "doing well."

"It's actually growing despite the economic times," she said. "It's growing as the awareness is increasing and people are finding the café."

Siegle said, because people might be cutting back on coffee and instead brewing their own at home, people want to see their money go to a good cause.

"Customers can come in and get a great cup of coffee, but also feel good about the fact that 100 percent of our profits are going back to inner-city kids," Siegle said.

On-the-job experience

Siegle said she is excited CityKid is part of the University campus because the business is exposing inner-city kids to a campus setting.

Business and marketing education junior Dean Marquardt is one of the two student managers at CityKid. Marquardt has been with the business since the opening.

As manager, Marquardt said he is responsible for opening and closing, brewing the coffee and making sure things are "stocked and ready to go."

Marquardt said he had some management experience prior to working at CityKid but this is the first time he has ?actually gotten to deal with the whole operations of a coffee shop.?

Speltz said she works at CityKid Java Café about 12 hours per week. She said the best thing about working for this coffee shop is the regular customers that she encounters, adding that ?sometimes we guess what they are going to have.?

Speltz said she dreams of going to the University and pursuing a degree in the medical field. She said, by working at CityKid Java Café, she has learned how to be more independent.

?I haven?t had to ask my mom for money in a long time,? Speltz said.

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