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City trains VHS students for careers

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Five Valdosta High School incoming seniors are getting career training and a paycheck through a City of Valdosta program.

VALDOSTA — Five incoming high school seniors are getting career training with the City of Valdosta.

The Great Promise Partnerships Program held an employee orientation Jan. 10 for Valdosta High School seniors Aiyana Matchett, Samara Willis, Jessiah Ogundu, Aaliyah Daniels and Tyren Martin, according to a city statement.

The students are part of the Great Promise Partnership Program. The city is committed to providing local students up to two years of employment, job training, life skills,

mentoring and income as incentives to finish high school through the GPP program, the statement said.

"The program is designed to reach at-risk students who may not have the option to go to college either because of finances or grades. The GPP introduces them to the workforce and allows them to learn new skill sets," said Anitra Riley, neighborhood development coordinator.

The students work full-time in several city departments during July and part-time during the fall and spring around their school schedules, gaining real-world experience and job training while earning a paycheck, city officials said.

"A lot of times, high school students will think they know what they want to do, and then we thrust them into the real world, and they change their mind because they did not fully understand what that entailed. Programs like these allow them to get a foot in the door and see what it is like to be a part of the workforce in a real way. This program allows them to work with mentors from the city of Valdosta all while gaining employability skills," said Aqila Blankumsee, work base learning coordinator for Valdosta City Schools.

The internships are funded through the City of Valdosta's Community Development Block Grant program.

The students began work following their orientation in their assigned departments:

- Aiyana Matchett, customer service;
- Samara Willis, public works;
- Jessiah Ogundu, meter reading;
- Aaliyah Daniels, customer service;
- Tyren Martin, community protection.

For more information, contact Anitra Riley, (229) 671-3617.

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