



**Brian Leonard**, left, tells students at St. Louis' Construction Career Center if they want something in life, they have to go out and get it.

## Sparking an interest in Ameren careers

### Helping inner-city students envision their futures

By **Keith Anderson**

**I**n 1975 he was hanging out on the street corner with the guys back in his East St. Louis 'hood. But as **Brian Leonard** told a group of students from St. Louis' Construction Career Center (CCC), he had football and a goal to get off the streets and go to college. Three decades later, some of those same guys are still on that street corner.

Leonard, manager, Business & Community Affairs, is one of several Ameren leaders working to mentor and develop a hand-picked group of high school seniors at the inner-city trade school. He says he sees himself in these students who are at a critical time in their lives.

"Some of these kids have real problems and issues when they come to this program. Growing up in the inner city, sports are the way to college for many students," Leonard says. "I was in college when I realized my future wasn't in sports and I needed to go a different direction. These kids can learn that there are many choices in life. You just have to go out and get it."

"Ameren has committed to work with these students to develop their job skills and provide insight into skilled crafts or other careers at Ameren," says **Amanda Brittingham**, talent sourcing specialist and coordinator of the CCC program. "We're developing relationships with

these students and we're committed to seeing that relationship through until they get that first job in their career. The students have the responsibility to uphold their grades, and make the right choices that allow them to become the type of individuals we'd like to employ."

Brittingham says Ameren's program at CCC gives these students the resources they need – pre-employment testing tutorials, behavioral interviewing skills, resume writing and job skills – that will put them on a solid career path. The program extends to St. Louis' North County Tech and South County Tech schools on Jan. 1. Brittingham says she's hopeful the program can expand to other schools in Ameren's Missouri and Illinois service area.

"I'm learning valuable life lessons and I'm also learning about business. Ameren is a great company. I feel like I have an opportunity to get a great job – not just a job, but a career," says Jamal Sneed, 17, who wants to study construction management in college.

"We're investing in quality kids who can be a part of Ameren's future. We're interested in developing a more diverse workforce," Brittingham says. "Success is success no matter how you look at it. If they're not the right fit for Ameren, we'll help them find opportunities somewhere else. We'll give them the jump start they need to find a skilled job."

"I really am excited because of the opportunities Ameren is giving us," says Trevon Williams, a 17-year-old senior interested in electrical engineering. "I'm very fortunate. I feel lucky to be here." •

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