



Camp RISE

Program Report

2025

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Dear Partners, Supporters, and Friends,

Another memorable year of Camp RISE is complete and we're so grateful for each one of our campers! This summer, our participants explored a wide variety of careers, enjoyed field trips around the city, and experienced personal growth. Campers' experience was enhanced by community connections to exciting employers and inspirational speakers who campers could see themselves represented in.

This year, Camp RISE introduced Career Day. Over 25 employers participated, including firefighters, arborists, police officers, reporters, meteorologists and more. Campers heard from every employer present and had the chance to interact with professionals and learn more about their jobs.

In addition, we served 20% more campers than last year, our most ever at nearly 350 youth! 2025 was the fourth year of Camp RISE, which means seven campers participated in every year of Camp RISE since its inception. We were thrilled to see so many returning campers, who made up 65% of total participants. Those who age out of Camp RISE receive priority for participating in Earn & Learn starting at age 14, like camper Jace plans to do next year- you can read more about his journey with Employ Milwaukee on page 10. This summer, 38 participants moved onto Earn & Learn to build on their Camp RISE foundation through paid work experiences and career readiness training.

The outcomes detailed in this report showcase the success of this summer's programming. From gaining self-confidence to participating in hands-on career activities, our young participants made strides in their personal goals and development.

With over 900 applications received in 2025, Camp RISE remains an in-demand program. As we look ahead to 2026, we are excited to continue serving the youth of Milwaukee and helping them discover their passions. Our dedicated community partners and sponsors help make innovative programs like Camp RISE possible. Together, we are investing in the future workforce of Milwaukee and ensuring that these young individuals have access to the career pathways and mentorship that will lead them to success. **With your support, we can connect even more youth with local employers and community mentors next summer, fostering positive relationships with the potential to last a lifetime.**

Sincerely,



Julie Cayo
President and CEO
Employ Milwaukee



Looking Ahead

In summer 2026, Employ Milwaukee will launch Career Routes within its youth programming - industry-driven learning pathways that support youth development across Employ Milwaukee's portfolio of programs. While youth participants in Camp RISE are offered opportunities through Earn & Learn, Career Routes will start with youth in Camp RISE and strengthen their pathways of opportunity to be future-ready for the workforce.



About Our Campers

Camp RISE exclusively serves Milwaukee Public Schools students between the ages of 10-13. Nearly all youth live in high-need neighborhoods*. Sixty-five percent of campers this summer were returning youth from 2024, highlighting the strong impact of the Camp RISE experience and the shared desire for continued exploration and growth from both participants and their guardians.

95%

living across 20
Milwaukee zip codes in
low income
concentration areas

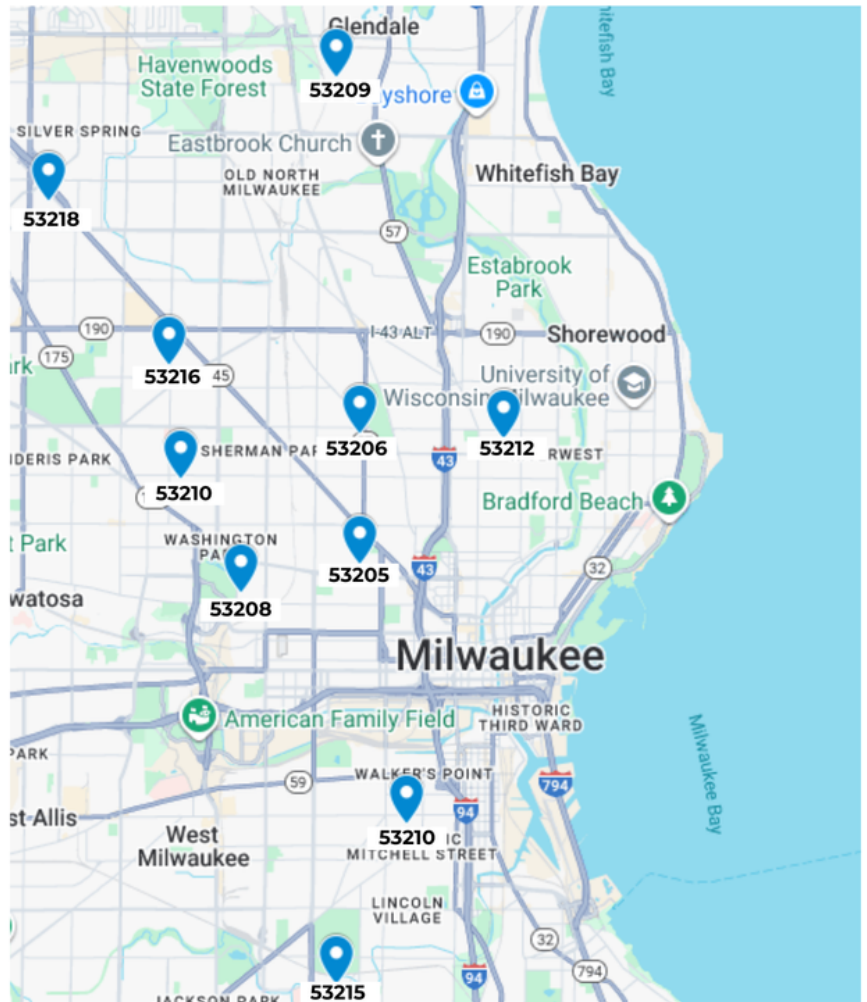
95

different Milwaukee
Public Schools attended
by campers

68%

of campers were ages 12-
13

Top 10 Camp RISE Participant ZIP Codes



**as determined by City of Milwaukee Community Development Grants Administration Five Year HUD Consolidated Plan 2025-29, which defines "areas of low income concentration", as those census tracts where at least 51% of persons are considered low-moderate income according to HUD's standards of 80% or less of the area median income.*

940

applications received

346

youth enrolled

94

participants eligible for
Earn & Learn in 2026

\$152,600

earned by campers



To promote financial literacy, increase youth engagement, and invest directly in the community, campers who successfully completed the program earned a \$700 stipend. This earn-and-learn approach is innovative for this age group, as paid career exploration for youth ages 10-13 is not typically offered in other workforce programs, where federal funding for youth payments begins at age 14.

Through Camp RISE, these young participants are launching their journey on Employ Milwaukee's opportunity pathway, which will provide them with continued growth and support throughout their teen and high school years, ultimately preparing them for success in the workforce.



Camp Activities

Camp RISE offers a well-rounded experience through three core categories of activities: Career and Interest Exploration, Life Skills and Enrichment, and Civic Awareness and Engagement. Each category is thoughtfully designed to promote personal growth, build practical skills, and cultivate a strong sense of community responsibility. Through these engaging and purposeful activities, campers gain valuable insights and tools that prepare them for success in both their future careers and their roles as active, informed citizens.

1 CAREER AND INTEREST EXPLORATION

2 LIFE SKILLS AND ENRICHMENT

3 CIVIC AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

1 Career Interest and Exploration

Camp RISE exposes youth to a wide range of career paths through hands-on activities, field trips, and interactions with professionals. Campers explore potential career paths in fields like healthcare, public safety, skilled trades, technology, and more. These hands-on experiences ignite curiosity and help youth discover their passions and goals. By engaging with real-world opportunities, campers gain meaningful insights that can shape their future career decisions.

Career and Interest Exploration activities and sectors included:

- Aurora Healthcare (Healthcare)
- JA Finance (Financial Services)
- Esports (IT)
- Marcus Theatres (Hospitality)
- PepsiCo (Manufacturing)
- Port of Milwaukee (STEM, Engineering, Water Science)
- Discovery World (STEM, Engineering, Water Science, IT)

90%

of campers learned something new about a job or industry

84%

of parents reported that their child expressed interest in a career



Want to see campers' career learning in action? Scan the QR code to see a TikTok of their PepsiCo field trip!

"When she gets ready for Camp RISE, she has a smile on her face. She's eager to go."
-Parent of Ava, a first year camper



2

Life Skills and Enrichment

Camp RISE equips youth with essential life skills through engaging workshops, practical activities, and motivational speakers. Campers build critical competencies valuable in both personal and professional settings, like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.. Enrichment activities also promote creativity and personal development, helping campers gain confidence in their abilities. These skills lay the foundation for long-term success and personal growth.

Female campers participated in talks on etiquette, finances, confidence, and decision-making. Male campers received impactful talks from Ed Hennings, a local entrepreneur previously incarcerated for 20 years, and Gideon Verdin, who reports from the north side of Milwaukee for TMJ4.

Life Skills and Enrichment activities included:

- Financial Literacy
- Professional phone call etiquette
- Mock interview workshops
- Team-building exercises
- Communication workshops
- Problem-solving challenges
- Art and creativity sessions
- Personal development workshops
- Leadership training
- Confidence-building activities



97%

of parents/guardians
reported an increase in their
camper's confidence and
self-esteem

"I enjoyed making new friends and not being shy. I built up enough confidence to be comfortable around people."

-Gabrielle, 13

3 Civic Awareness and Engagement

One facet of Camp RISE, Civic Awareness and Engagement, offers campers meaningful experiences to connect with their city and understand the critical services that shape their community. Campers heard from firefighters, police officers, and local government employees over the course of the summer.

Campers also participated in activities with these community members; participants rolled up their sleeves for park clean-ups with the Milwaukee Police Department, painted a mural in a conference room at Employ Milwaukee's offices, and celebrated the successful completion of camp with Mayor Cavalier Johnson. These activities not only gave campers a greater appreciation of their city but also instilled a sense of ownership and responsibility for their community's future.

By engaging in these activities, campers were empowered with the knowledge and confidence to become active contributors and potential leaders in their communities.



*"It was a good opportunity for me to meet new people and open up new chapters."
-Ava, 13*



Success Story

Jace White

Jace just completed his fourth year of Camp RISE, a six-week summer youth program which focuses on career exploration and aims to provide kids ages 10 to 13 in Milwaukee with tools to become leaders in their community. This experience equipped Jace with more maturity and patience that he will utilize as he goes on to Earn & Learn, a youth program that provides meaningful work experiences and career exposure to young people ages 14 to 24 in Milwaukee.

Jace's favorite activity this summer was career day, which was new for Camp RISE. Professionals from a variety of fields, such as firefighting, newscasting, healthcare, photography, and many more, spoke to the campers about their careers, allowing the campers to begin considering their own interests and passions.

Before this summer, Jace was most interested in music because he plays the saxophone, and acting because he performed in A Christmas Carol with the Milwaukee Repertory Theater. But during career day this year, he found himself most interested in photography after listening to a fashion photographer. "This summer really taught me to be more open minded about the possibilities of my future," Jace said.

"Jace is going to flourish in Earn & Learn and life," said Camp Director Romell Greer. "Jace is someone who you can tell is being raised right, he greets everyone with a firm handshake and eye contact, and he speaks up for himself and others."

On the last day of Camp RISE 2025, the camp counselors chose Jace to introduce Mayor Cavelier Johnson, allowing him to showcase the confident young man he has become over the last four summers.



Jace, 2022



Jace, 2025

Impact and Outcomes

Employ Milwaukee administered a post-program survey to parents/guardians and campers to gather feedback and make improvements for future programming.

99%

of parents/guardians
would enroll their
camper again next
summer.

97%

of parents/guardians
noticed positive changes
in their camper's social
skills.

97%

of parents/guardians
reported an increase in
their camper's
confidence and self-
esteem.

96%

of parents/guardians
observed that their
children were engaged
and enthusiastic about
attending camp each
day.



*"It's been a great experience
for my son and myself as well.
He's become more outgoing,
opening up to different
opportunities."
-Parent of Adonis, 13*

Innovative Approach to Problem-Solving Award

Camp RISE was selected as the **2025 Innovative Approach to Problem-Solving awardee by the Wisconsin Policy Forum** as an example of a promising practice for addressing Milwaukee's youth disconnection crisis through summer youth employment. Each year, the Wisconsin Policy Forum chooses a school district or local government unit that uses an innovative solution or management technique to address a fiscal or programmatic challenge while saving money and/or improving upon the program.

Participants in Camp RISE receive stipends for their involvement, a first-of-its-kind approach for a workforce development board where federal funding for youth employment starts at age 14. At present, no other workforce development board is known to offer paid summer enrichment and career exploration for youth as young as 10-13 years old – making Camp RISE a distinct national model. Employ Milwaukee is honored to receive this award for Camp RISE as an example of integrated systems aligning for a community-based intervention to youth disengagement.



THANK YOU

to our generous funders and partners who made Camp RISE possible.



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Interested in sponsoring or partnering with Camp RISE? Email us at CampRISE@employmilwaukee.org to learn more about how you can get involved.

Employ Milwaukee

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To support Camp RISE:



Watch a thank you video
from our 2025 campers:

