Empowerment Network

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Award

A quiet meeting with three devoted North Omaha community activists in the spring of 2007 grew into a quiet revolution of over three hundred… and the Empowerment Network was born. In his last years, Dr King focused on education, employment, housing poverty and entrepreneurship. The Empowerment Network continues this focus and advancing King’s legacy with targeted, intentional and comprehensive strategies developed in partnership with the community.

Founded on the motto, “It’s time to rise up and rebuild the village”, the Nebraska-based advocacy group Empowerment Network, now affiliated with over 500 organizations, is dedicated to continuing the goals of Dr. Martin Luther King addressing how issues of poverty, employment and housing impact the educational process.

Empowerment Network finds solutions to prevent social and economic gaps from denying young people their inalienable right— that to a quality education. Working in concert with the North Omaha community and neighboring areas, Empowerment Network has put into motion strategies that bring people together in monthly youth summits under one umbrella to learn and grow from each other, and find pathways for success. From honor students to former gang members, single mothers to grandparents, the Empowerment Network lives by the credo that each one can teach one.

Their “Cradle to Career” initiative works with the Omaha Public School district, parents, and local business leaders, to help improve reading and test scores and provide models for codes of conduct, so that students are nurtured in every step of their development from day one.

Empowerment Network’s “STEP-UP Omaha” plan provides jobs and paid internships for young people, enabling them to gain valuable work experience, while also avoiding the pitfalls of the streets during the summer season.

Empowerment Network strives to engage young people in the political process, encouraging them to register and vote, instilling the importance of voices being heard to impact their communities and making them aware that they hold the power to do so. These initiatives go hand in hand with imparting knowledge of the criminal justice system; advancing the belief that young people who know their rights can help prevent systemic wrongs.

The Network’s health and wellness impact on the community has been profound. The Network emphasizes the importance of regular checkups and screenings, providing affordable access, promoting proper dietary habits, and paying equal attention to one’s mental well-being which has been a game-changer for North Omaha.

Empowerment Network’s initial makeup with persons of color has now grown into a diverse coalition of advocacy entities, all working to serve the human family.

The revolution may not be televised, but the Empowerment Network continues to deliver the “good news” of social and economic self-determination in living color.