

Meridian, SuitUp Competition Lets Students Dive Into Hands-on Corporate Experience - Oct. 12, 2023

Partnership connects learners to real-life business challenge and coaching to equip teens for life beyond the classroom

DETROIT, Oct. 12, 2023 [PRNewswire/](#) -- Meridian, a Michigan-based provider of government-sponsored health plans and wholly owned subsidiary of [Centene Corporation](#), hosted 30 students from Central High School this week in its downtown Detroit office to help solve a real-life business challenge to increase their career readiness and leadership skills.

As part of the half-day business competition, the 10th, 11th, and 12th graders were divided into teams of four and asked to create a teen-friendly app for Meridian that supports students in underserved communities struggling to find answers to important healthcare questions and access to care.

Dozens of Meridian employees coached the teens on product development, strategy, marketing and design. They prepped the students on how to pitch their ideas to a panel of four judges from Meridian's executive leadership team. The winning app called Helping Hands would provide health literacy and other resources including telehealth that addresses mental and physical health. The judges loved the team's rap-style presentation and that the app seeks to empower the next generation to advocate for their own health. Each student on the winning team received a \$25 gift card along with a certificate recognizing their accomplishment from SuitUp.

Meridian partnered with SuitUp, a nonprofit organization based in New York City, which connects companies and students to prepare them for life beyond the classroom. Central High School is a Title 1 school in the Detroit Public Schools Community District. Students from Central were chosen to participate in the competitive business program because the school's curriculum emphasizes career pathways giving them the opportunity to work with local businesses in their community. Meridian is located less than 10 miles from the school and this SuitUp competition provided students with a glimpse of what it would be like to work there one day.

The goal of the SuitUp program aligns with Meridian's commitment to expose students to career experiences while they are still in high school to expand students' idea of their potential career pathways and stretch their knowledge about vital employability skills, such as teamwork, problem solving and persistence.

In addition to gaining real-life business experience and practical understanding of the creativity of the product development process, the Central High school students were able to work on an app that can help them, their peers and their communities.

"The SuitUp community aims to provide equal opportunities for all students to thrive in the corporate world. Many young individuals possess the ambition and determination to succeed, but lack the necessary resources and guidance to advance," stated Hananatu Tunis, Sr. Program Manager. "SuitUp steps in to offer students the chance to explore different career pathways and opportunities, with the goal of preparing and empowering them to become future executives."

While there has been some progress, Michigan like the rest of the U.S. healthcare profession shows a lack of representation of people from historically underrepresented groups and those who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Blacks account for about 14% of Michigan's population. Yet only 5.1% of doctors in the state identify as Black or African American. The numbers are even lower for Hispanics and Latinos.

"This disparity highlights the need for greater representation and inclusivity in the medical field to ensure that healthcare providers better reflect and understand the experiences and healthcare needs of all individuals," said Meridian in Michigan's Chief Medical Officer Kay Judge.

"As the largest managed care company in Michigan, Meridian has a mission to help pave the way for the next generation. Students from historically underrepresented groups and those from low-income families may have less personal exposure to entrepreneurial careers and role models. We hope some youths from Central High will consider careers in healthcare and become part of the solution to eliminating unconscious bias and eradicating systemic racial and ethnic health disparities, which leads to healthier communities."

About Meridian

Meridian in Michigan provides government-sponsored managed care services to families, children, seniors, and individuals with complex medical needs primarily through Medicaid (Meridian), Medicare Advantage and Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (Wellcare), Medicare-Medicaid Plans (MeridianComplete), and the Health Insurance Marketplace (Ambetter from Meridian). Meridian is a wholly owned subsidiary of Centene Corporation, a leading healthcare enterprise committed to helping people live healthier lives. For more information about Meridian, please visit [mimeridian.com](https://www.mimeridian.com).

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