Students also have an experience that will help them to create a post-secondary education plan that is achievable and, therefore, has a higher potential for successful completion.

Kayla Belcher, a junior at John Marshall High School, will spend her spring break touring ten of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). She and other students will visit colleges in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The tour is sponsored by the Urban League of Greater Cleveland.

Kayla entered a competition for a paid seat on the tour. All sophomores and juniors in the West Park MyCom neighborhoods were invited to enter. Students submitted an essay detailing their goals for the experience. A parent/guardian and a school staff member also submitted statements describing the student's qualifications and the ways they would be available for support after the tour.

Applications and essays were submitted to the youth staff at Bellaire-Puritas Development Corporation, the neighborhood lead agency for West Park MyCom. They were then reviewed by

a selection committee of neighborhood professionals, who are active supporters of youth and MyCom (My Commitment, My Community).

The committee selected Kayla to be the winner. She was notified of her award when the MyCom “Prize Patrol” knocked on her door. They arrived bearing balloons, flowers, sweet tea, and the traditional BIG check.

The tour will afford Kayla her first opportunity to travel outside of Ohio. One of her goals is to keep a journal of her experiences and use those to “aide in my decisions regarding my career choice, college, and future.” She also plans to share her experience with other youth in the community.

For more than 20 years, the Urban League of Greater Cleveland has been conducting HBCU tours. These tours spotlight three, high impact focus areas: get exposed, get engaged, and get experience.

The tours expose the students to a variety of institutions. They visit small, large, public, and private institutions. They walk the campuses and get a very clear sense of what it would be like transitioning from class to class and how different a college schedule is from high school.

Participating students engage in challenging educational activities that range from games on the bus, actual class work at the colleges, and exposure to museums and cultural activities in the surrounding communities.

Students also have an experience that will help them to create a post-secondary education plan that is achievable and, therefore, has a higher potential for successful completion.

To learn more about MyCom, visit www.mycom.net.

To learn more about Bellaire-Puritas Development Corporation, visit www.bpdc.org.