

St. Louis Urban League sends two clients to inauguration

By Ann Rubin

KSDK -- The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis is sending two people on an all-expenses paid trip the inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama. The trip is part of a program called the People's Inaugural Project, designed to help the socially and economically disadvantaged be a part of the festivities.

Victoria Brown, a client of the Urban League, is one of the lucky participants. She applied for the trip with an essay about her life. It described the violent crime against her, the long road to recovery and the success she's found in the classroom.

"I promised myself when that child finished school, the last one, that I would go back to school and that's how I ended up here at the Urban League," she said.

Her story has now won her the opportunity of a lifetime; she's headed to Washington for the presidential inauguration.

She could not believe the news.

"I dropped the phone, I screamed, I ran through the house," Brown said.

James Buford, CEO of the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, said he donated up to \$1.6 million for the program because he wanted to give an opportunity for people who would be unable to go otherwise.

That money will provide Brown and 299 other people with a presidential experience, complete with luncheons, watch parties and an inaugural ball. They'll even get ball gowns for the occasion.

"I was just crying, just crying, just crying because I was so happy. I have never won anything like this in my life," Brown said.

Brown hopes she'll get to see President Barack Obama up-close. And she plans to document the experience so she'll never forget.

"I love being a part of this history that's going on right now and that just makes me so elated," she said. "I hope to one day be able to tell my grandchildren what this experience was about."

Brown said she'll be taking lots of pictures and plans to make a scrapbook. She leaves for Washington on Sunday morning.

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