

With more access to tech leaders through social media, growing mentorship opportunities and cutting edge products at their fingertips, millennials may be the most ambitious generation yet. A study found that 72% of high school students interviewed want to start a business someday and 61% would rather be an entrepreneur instead of an employee when they graduate college. We're as impressed as you are.

Atlanta continues to grow as both a tech hub and entrepreneurial epicenter for women and minority founders. High school students in the city and adjacent suburbs can rip the benefits of having Fortune 500 companies and emerging startups headquartered in their backyard. High school students can attend meetings at several organizations in the city catering to their needs and providing mentor relationships that may be beneficial later in life. Available programs include:

- TiE Young Entrepreneurs — empower students by educating them about entrepreneurship.
- Innovation in Action summer camps — students are paired with local mentors to work on solving real problems.
- Endevvr — helping students fund their own companies and become entrepreneurs.
- Summer Camps at Georgia Tech — over 15 summer camps for students with interests in Robotics, Wearable Computing, Web Design and more.
- Club E's Young Entrepreneurs Society — provides support and resources for young entrepreneurs to build their companies and succeed.
- The Iron Yard Atlanta's Kids Academy — free, 4-week programming classes at the Iron Yard campus for students ages 8-12.

Those programs can catapult the student's career as seen in the case of this student.

Sai Maddali, a high school student at Northview High School in Alpharetta, Ga., isn't waiting for his high school diploma to start building his career in tech. Before starting his senior year, he spent this past summer as an intern at Rigor — one of the Atlanta Tech Village's rising software startups. In between classes, he also runs his own business — Lincc Apps, a freelance design and development business. We'll definitely be following Maddali's journey through the local tech scene and beyond.

Here, Maddali gives us a glimpse into his career journey so far, what resources he found useful and how you (or your kids) can get more involved.

What are some ways, from your experience, for high school students to get involved in the Atlanta startup scene?

I'd suggest getting into a program for youth entrepreneurship. I was part of the TiE Young Entrepreneurs program which definitely helped facilitate my involvement in the field. We got to learn from classes on innovation, marketing, business plans, creativity, and everything else needed to be an entrepreneur. We had mentors and contacts that were real entrepreneurs and founders, who could help get students involved.

Soon enough, I had built an extensive network and had connections who were ready to introduce me to other

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influential individuals. I also recommend keeping up-to-date on events by looking at co-working space events as well as Hypepotamus' own event calendar and signing up for their newsletter. I believe that most high school students don't try to network because they're afraid they won't fit in. For students who are afraid to network with adults or are scared to go to a networking event or competition, just bring a friend. The first networking event I ever went to, we competed against each other to get the most business cards. Being around my friends made me feel more comfortable when I was introducing myself to new people and allowed me to be more natural.

Why do you believe that thinking entrepreneurially is important for students at any level?

It's important because thinking entrepreneurially doesn't just mean to start companies in the future. It has a gamut of applications. Thinking entrepreneurially is to strive, to follow your passion towards success. Thinking entrepreneurially allows students to achieve new goals by taking advantage of opportunities. Thinking entrepreneurially is about making an impact. Students who think entrepreneurially innovate and succeed.

What resources have you found to help you with your goals?

The best resources to help achieve my goals are online. I first learned how to program from online courses at udemy and Treehouse. They taught me the fundamentals and after competing in hackathons and gaining real-life experience, those skills grew. I could find mentors and partners from networking events at ATDC and Atlanta Tech Village. I also used my school's organizations to my advantage. I joined clubs like FBLA and Robotics with highly motivated individuals. The people I've met at these conferences and competitions are now my friends and I've built connections with people at a multitude of companies and universities. There are tons of resources available, especially for students. Take some time to find the resources around you and create ways to take advantage of them.

You can connect with Sai Maddali via his LinkedIn, Twitter and portfolio.

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