

# Youth will survive the summer job search

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School's out and commencement exercises are over—but for some teens and recent college grads, there is still work to be done. They must find a summer job or get their foot in the door to start their career.

Unemployed youth in Norwalk and around the state got a helping hand in trying to secure jobs when Gov. M. Jodi Rell signed Senate Bill 2001 recently.

The bill appropriates \$11 million in federal stimulus labor funds for a summer job program that will benefit as many as 5,000 disadvantaged youths.

The \$11 million is part of \$30 million in stimulus workforce funds, with the remainder to be used for adult and dislocated workers.

Nestor Leon, assistant vice president of The WorkPlace in Bridgeport, said the organization is al-

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ready putting the money to good use. Sixty-eight Norwalk youths will be trained by The WorkPlace this summer and put to work at various jobs, through money made available from stimulus funds.

The WorkPlace—southwestern Connecticut's regional workforce board and one of five regional workforce boards in the state—operates under the mission of creating a qualified, well-trained workforce, Leon said.

"In line with what the stimulus bill is trying to accomplish, we're going to give kids the opportunity for career exploration," Leon said. "It will help put money in their hands."

Leon said The WorkPlace posted public applications through local school systems in April and

May. The 68 who qualified will complete a one-week training course at The WorkPlace and will then go on to work for six weeks in "financial services, Web site development, digital media and landscaping programs," among others, Leon explained.

"We want them to have a rich summer experience," he said.

Nearly 11,000 applicants statewide in the 14 to 24 year-old age bracket have already applied for the summer jobs made available by SB 2001.

While the competition for summer jobs in general will be greater this year because of the poor economy, John Tirinzonie, the state Department of Labor's Labor Economist, said that there are plenty of opportunities available throughout the state for youth to

secure jobs. He also offered up helpful advice for all teens and college graduates in search of work.

"We know it's going to be a tough year," he said. "But there are steps you can take to help yourself out."

Tirinzonie advised young job hunters to network, as studies have shown as many as 85 percent of people are hired through network ties. He also suggested youth develop a resume, with emphasis on any work history.

"Not necessarily just the positions they've held," he said. "But the skills they possess."

He even said it would be worth hiring a resume writer to help hone lackluster resumes.

Other tips Tirinzonie provided included taking advantage of local job

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fairs, combing through newspaper and Internet employment sites and attending free workshops at career centers.

He said youth should check for Department of Environmental Protection jobs and opportunities at town Parks and Recreation departments, which often look to hire summer help.

"It's the preparation that is going to be key for young people looking for work," he said.

"Make sure that your resume is foolproof. Avoid typos, show up properly dressed for interviews and research the company and learn about the company."

And the most difficult

challenge for teens and college grads looking for work?

"They're competing against people out there with more experience," he said.

Despite that, he said tourism industries, hospitality and leisure services, agriculture and education are still doing well.

"We get a lot of youth looking for work," said Maryann Donovan of Impact Personnel, a staffing agency based in Norwalk. "We tell them 'Don't limit yourself.'"

"Have a well thought out resume, and have someone check it, because you never see your own mistakes.

Be polite. Be professional. Attitude is huge. We hear a lot of clients complaining about attitude. And no matter how many times you've been turned down, approach an interview as a fresh start."

"The market is tough, but it's definitely getting better," she added.

In a bad economy, Donovan recommends taking a job opportunity that presents itself, even if it's not ideal.

"I'd say take it and see where it leads," she said. "It's great experience to try new things."