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FAYETTE GROUPS ADVANCE WORKFORCE INITIATIVE FOR LOCAL YOUTH

Uniontown, PA – A number of Fayette County agencies are on a mission to provide area youth with paid work experience and opportunities to learn new skills through local businesses this summer.

The Westmoreland – Fayette Workforce Investment Board receives funding through the Department of Labor and Industry to provide youth and young adults ages 16-24, the opportunity to work in various locations throughout Westmoreland and Fayette Counties.

“The Experience Works! program is a great way to give students work experience to learn new skills within local businesses within Westmoreland and Fayette Counties and gives them the experience needed to gain an employment history for students that currently have one” said Janet Ward, Youth Programs Manager for the Westmoreland – Fayette Workforce Investment Board.

The Private Industry Council (PIC) and Fayette County Community Action Agency (FCCAA) were selected to be the providers for the program. Community Action Experience Works Team Leader Rachael Mitchell said, “the Agency currently works with around 25 businesses and organizations in the Fayette County area, some of which include the East End United Community Center, the Connellsville Canteen, and both the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program and Planning and Development Department at Fayette County Community Action Agency.”

“The Community Action Agency strives to place at least 40 teens annually in summer work programs, where they can log up to 480 hours at a pay rate of \$9.00 an hour, so not only do they get great experience, they can earn over \$4,000 for the summer,” Mitchell added.

In addition to gaining hands-on experience, students also attend various training sessions and classes on such topics as social media in the workplace, budgeting, communications, professionalism and career development.

“Experience Works teaches our youth concepts that high school and college classes normally don’t,” Mitchell stated. “We want to try to give them that push towards a real career that they wouldn’t get otherwise. We want to prepare them for their future,” she said.



One of the worksites where the Private Industry Council placed seven youths last year was at the Salvation Army in Monessen. Debbie Cohen, Youth Employment Specialist at PIC stated, "These youths all came from various negative backgrounds. However, the Worksite Supervisor, Captain Sue, was great at figuring out where the students would excel during their time in the program."

She added, "This workforce initiative provided opportunities for them to learn teamwork, and open their eyes to new experiences (like camping and field trips). Through this work experience, they become more confident, engaged, and positive. For perhaps the first time in their lives, they begin to understand that they can set goals and are equipped to achieve them."

Fayette County Commissioner Vincent Vicites said Experience Works and similar programs give county youth opportunities similar to apprenticeship programs.

"(They) learn while they're on the job and gain valuable work experience to help build their resumes," Vicites said. "The program also helps local government with various projects by providing additional workers."

Commissioner Dave Lohr said the program gives kids the opportunity to both earn summer income and build relationships with businesses that may rehire them in the future or provide them with references for future jobs.

"County businesses have prospered (from it) and so has the county in the past," Lohr said.

"Students should take advantage of this program because it prepares them to become productive citizens and hopefully remain in Fayette County," Commissioner Angela Zimmerlink said.

For more information, contact Mitchell at 724-437-6050, ext. 3282, or visit www.fccaa.org. Applications can also be obtained at the Fayette County Community Action Agency at 108 N. Beeson Ave., Uniontown, or at www.privateindustrycouncil.com.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.info.

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