



NEWS RELEASE

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For more information, contact:

Jim Morris, DESE, 573-751-3469

Michael Waltman, DWD, 573-526-8267

David Lankford, MCC, 573-634-3511

Jeremy Kintzel, MDHE, 573-751-2361

Betty Brown, MERIC, 573-751-3635

Stimulus Program to Provide Summer Jobs

Next-Gen Jobs Link Youths, Employers to Better Future

It's the end of the school year, time for youths to find their summer jobs and for businesses to find their summer help. This year, there is a special program to help the two groups connect. The Next-Generation Jobs Team will place 16- to 24-year-olds in high-tech, high-growth industries — and pay their wages. It's a win-win-win situation, said John Fougere, director of communications for the Missouri Department of Economic Development.

"On the one hand, it involves valuable, on-the-job training for youth and young adults in high-tech, high-growth careers of the future," he said. "On the other hand, it gives employers the chance to connect with motivated, talented young people with an interest in their business."

The third win goes to Missouri's economy, Fougere said.

"These jobs of the future are going to play a crucial role in turning our economy around, and Missouri will have a large segment of its youth population trained to fill them," he said.

The Next-Generation Jobs program is a statewide program that will run from May 1 to Sept. 30. It is expected to match approximately 6,000 youths with summer jobs. The youth's wages will be paid by the U.S. Department of Labor through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Benefits for Youths

The value of summer jobs for students and young adults goes far beyond the paycheck.

"Youths will have the opportunity to gain work experience, network with businesses and obtain valuable skills they can take into the future," explained Jamie Moss, who works with youth through the Ozark Region's Workforce Investment Board. "When an employer compares résumés of applicants with experience versus those with none, they will see that the youth has shown responsibility in maintaining employment, which may be a determining factor in who gets a job."

The skills young people gain are both hard skills specific to the job and soft skills that will serve them no matter their career choice.

"Things like responsibility, punctuality, what is appropriate in the workplace and what is not," Moss said. "Everything they learn, they can take into their future."

Even students who plan on pursuing higher education, and so have some time before entering the “real world of careers,” will reap benefits, Moss added.

“Employment develops responsibility and confidence,” she said. “A student that has former work experience understands the meaning of being punctual and utilizing time management skills to be successful.”

There also the benefits of career exploration — young people get to experience a career and see if it’s really something they want to pursue — and networking.

“It opens a door for young people to have a contact in an industry that interests them for a future career,” said Brandi Glover, a youth coordinator for the Northeast Region’s Workforce Investment Board. “For some, it may lead to more than a summer job experience.”

Young people who worry about taking a job in a field that’s new to them need not feel intimidated, Glover added.

“It’s really about gaining and learning these work skills,” she said. “That’s a big, big part of the program, getting them incorporated into the world of work.”

Benefits for Businesses

“Free help” might be all a lot of businesses need to hear to sign up for the Next-Generation Jobs program, but there are other incentives for hiring youths.

“It gives businesses the chance to develop their future workforce, and that’s an exciting prospect for them,” Fougere said. “It’s a link to their tomorrow.”

Already, hundreds of businesses, large and small, have signed up. One is BJC HealthCare, based in St. Louis.

“It’s a great opportunity for us to empower young people and help them begin to understand the ins and outs of being in the workforce,” said Diana Wilhold, director of BJC’s school outreach and youth development. “If we can help get young people excited and showcase the opportunities available to them at our organization, they are going to be more motivated, enthusiastic employees.”

She also said that businesses have an obligation to inspire and mentor the next generation of workers.

“And if you don’t,” she said, “then you can’t complain if you don’t have quality people applying for your positions.”

How to Register

Both youths and businesses can register for the Next-Generation Jobs Team program online at www.summerjobs.mo.gov or by calling 1-800-592-6020. Applications will be forwarded to local Workforce Investment Boards, which will contact the applicants to determine eligibility and complete the registration process.

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More information is available at http://dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri_connections_news_room.htm.

The Missouri Connections Public Outreach Partnership workgroup represents a collaboration of state agencies concerned with education and workforce development who are helping inform and build awareness among the public, particularly students and potential students, of targeted careers, educational and industry trends, and workforce development priorities. Workgroup members represent the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Higher Education; Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development and Missouri Economic Research & Information Center; Missouri Center for Career Education; and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Freelance writer is Anita Neal Harrison.