



The Trident Regions' Best Choice for Workforce Development

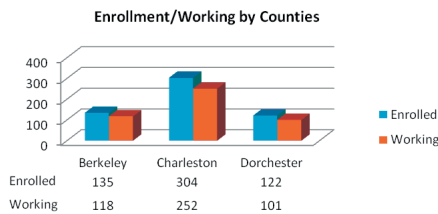
October 2009

News from the Trident Workforce Investment Board & Trident One Stop Career System

TWIB helps area youth become self sufficient and productive members of the workforce

The Trident Workforce Investment Board (TWIB) received almost \$1.8 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to provide tri-county in and out-of-school youth aged 16-24 with employment and educational experiences through the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

The SYEP ran from May 1 – September 30, 2009. More than 560 youth were placed in over 400 business positions across the entire Lowcountry. Youth worked in 4, 6, and 9-week segments and were paid \$7.25 an hour using the ARRA funds. Eligibility requirements stated that participants were to be unemployed high school and college students, out of school youth over age 18, single parents, and those working on their GED.



The TWIB collaborated with Palmetto Youth Connections, who oversees the TWIB's program that assists out-of-school youth with the training, education, and career employability skills needed to succeed in the current and future labor markets.

"The Summer Youth Employment Program allowed us to provide employment and work experience for area youth who might not have had the chance to find employment over the summer. It also gave us the opportunity to increase our visibility among area employers," said Kal Kunkel, PYC Regional Manager.

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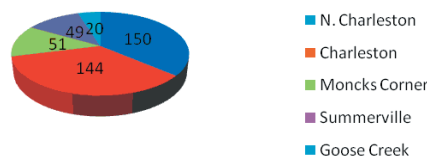
An Equal Opportunity Employer Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

The program received requests of 442 job openings from almost 300 employers throughout the tri-county area, including:

- Access Cellular
- Alternative Staffing, Inc.
- American Red Cross
- Berkeley County Government
- Boys and Girls Club of Trident Area
- Carolina Homeless Veterans, Inc.
- Charleston County Government
- Charleston County Public Library
- City of Charleston Government
- City of North Charleston Government
- Dorchester County Government
- Tri-county schools and educational sites
- Clemson University
- Cypress Gardens
- Dynair Industries
- Florence Crittenton
- Goodwill Industries
- Haynes Property Management
- Herald Office Systems
- LaFarge NA
- Metanoia Community Development Corporation
- New Beginnings Human Services Agency
- Palmer's Construction Services
- Palmetto Youth Connection
- Quan Chi Lawn Service
- Sangaree Special Tax District
- Sea Cost Mortgage Group
- Simplex Grinnell
- Town of Lincolntonville
- Town of Ridgeville
- Trident Technical College
- VanRobinson
- Youth Empowerment Services, Inc.
- YWCA of Greater Charleston
- Various retail, food, clothing, child care, and personal care businesses

Youth jobs included: Landscapers; Truck Drivers; Warehouse Attendants; Recreation Counselors; Maintenance workers; Teacher Assistants; Sales Associates; Stockers; Clerical workers; Caregiver Assistants; Receptionists; Camp Counselors; Program Assistants; Postal Clerks; Desk Clerks; Medical Records Clerks; and Data Entry Technicians.

Top 5 Highest City Enrollment



In addition to gaining employment experience, students at Burke, Stall, Berkeley and Woodland high schools participated in a Credit Recovery Program (CRP) that allowed them to earn high school credits as well as learn work skills. These students who had not successfully attained enough credits to graduate on time, were able to attend a comprehensive course taught at their respective high schools.

"We identified 14 students who would benefit from the Credit Recovery Program and who were also eligible for the SYEP," said Kenneth Utsey, Woodland HS principal. The students attended a 45-minute credit recovery class and then worked 4 hours in the school, doing clerical work and working with the custodians.

"This combined program afforded the students an unexpected opportunity. Once they recognized that they could recover a credit and be paid to work, they thought it was too good to be true.

"Students don't always see school as friendly, caring environment. Because this experience taught them that we did care about them, they gained more respect for the school and their teachers. Some of the students had been discipline problems. Once they realized that people cared about them their attitudes changed toward their school. They were proud of what they did.

"One young lady volunteered her time even after her paid employment ended. The students appreciated being responsible and having their teachers and principal value them as productive workers. It was a lot of work, but well worth it. I hope to do it again next year," said Utsey.

"One of the challenges of the program was finding youth who were eligible to participate and then finding employers located near where eligible youth lived," said Becky Ford, Assistant Director Dorchester County Economic Development.

"Overall, the program was very successful in Dorchester County. The employers we reached were very receptive and accommodating and gave the youth great work experience."

Summer Youth Employment Program

Supervisor, Darbis Brigham, at City Hall in North Charleston saw the program as a “blessing in disguise. With the move into the new City Hall building, we wanted to eliminate paper copies and store information electronically,” but didn’t have the staff to complete the project.

His youth employee, Frankie Frazier, was “well educated on computers and helped tremendously. This program came at the right time,” said Brigham.

Frankie enjoyed being a productive worker and was surprised at how well he “was able to get along with older individuals.” One of the things he learned was “to have a positive attitude” and “be motivated and be focused.”

The SYEP was designed to measure the work readiness of the youth, or what is commonly referred to as the “soft skills” in the workplace.

“Soft skills include attributes related to attitude, mental preparation, and emotional well being, as well as the ability to be at work on time, and possess the people skills that would allow them to adapt to different situations and personalities,” said Joyce Coakley, Trident Workforce Investment Board project officer who was responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

Both employers and youth employees were asked to evaluate the program.

“Employers were asked to not only train their youth in the daily work tasks, but to also mentor them in developing a good work ethic necessary to be productive and successful members of the workforce,” said Coakley.

Overwhelmingly, both employers and employees agreed that if they could change one thing about the summer program it would be the length of time afforded the workers. Both groups voiced that the time was just too short and that the youth should be able to work the entire summer.

When asked to rate the workers’ performance, more than 95% gave the students a satisfactory rating, and commented that their best skills included: “customer service, organizing, computers, listening well, being attentive to detail, and being able to relate to customers.”

Other comments included: “Hard worker; never had to be told what to do.” “Very pleasant to work with.”

Over 98% of the employers said that they would recommend the program to a colleague and more than 95% wanted to participate next year. 100% of the youth who answered the evaluation

said that they wanted to participate again next year if given the opportunity.

Employers rewarded their youth employees in a number of ways. The staff at the County Library gave their youth employee a going away party because he was an “excellent, independent worker.”

Andre Manigult’s summer employment at Cypress Gardens had an added bonus. He was permanently hired in October.

Andre learned plumbing, how animals interact with people, and electrical work. “I expected the job to be more labor intensive, just grass cutting, but they have given me varied duties.” He was most excited to be a “boatman” who takes visitors over the water to experience the southern plantation.

“I met people from all over the world. It was an educational experience learning how to act with people from different cultures. You must always have a positive attitude and smile.”

Andre’s supervisor CB Morris was very satisfied, “it was a good program, and gave young people a chance to get into the workforce and learn workplace responsibilities.”

In the closing evaluations, the youth were asked “Did you feel you were treated fairly?” Over 95% said they were treated like adults and productive contributors to the workplace. When asked “What did you like best about your job?” a frequent answer was “they made me feel welcome.”

Allen Gethers was placed with Palmetto Youth Connections. His experience with the program and the job itself surprised him. “When I walked through the door, they treated me like they knew me for a long time, you don’t see that from people. They made me want to go to work each day. This experience taught me to have respect for everyone and to remember good manners. I also learned that it is important to know the appropriate clothes to wear and what not to wear.”

When asked what did you learn from your job experience, Allen added “I learned you must have patience, especially when speaking with people over the telephone.”

His supervisor, Giovonnia McCall, was excited to know that she was able to get an assistant from the program. “When Allen walked in my office to inquire about the program, I knew there was something special about this young man. He was well groomed, gave great eye contact, was very respectful, and friendly. Allen had a take charge demeanor.”

During her monitoring visits Coakley observed that the best part of the program was that “I saw hope come alive in the young people. With all the news surrounding the down economy and high unemployment, this program gave these youth the opportunity to gain important work skills and experience with good salaries.”

This program has multiple success stories and not only in the tri-county area. More than 226,000 of the nation’s young people had the opportunity to participate. The Southeast states accounted for almost 29% of the national total.

Secretary of Labor, Hilda L. Solis gave the following statement. “The Summer Youth Employment Program surpassed our expectations and enriched the lives of thousands of our nation’s young people by creating real work opportunities.

“At the same time, tens of thousands of young people also participated in Recovery Act funded career readiness programs such as skills training and mentoring activities that will continue year-round. The 2009 Summer Youth Employment Program came at a time when young people were facing a difficult job market.

“It is important to note that at no time did summer youth participants compete with adults seeking permanent employment. In fact, public and private employers worked with states and local areas to create summer youth employment experiences specifically for young people.

“We have succeeded in our efforts to increase job skills and career readiness for our nation’s youth through this targeted program. That being noted, overall youth unemployment is still unacceptably high and the need remains to build on the clear successes of this year’s Summer Youth Employment Program.”

“On behalf of the Trident Workforce Investment Board and Youth Advisory Council, I want to thank all Trident One Stop Career System and Palmetto Youth Connections staff members for their hard work, commitment to excellence, and service to our youth customers,” said Paul L. Connerty, TWIB Executive Director.

“Our workforce system organized and launched a very complex program in an extremely brief time frame. I am very proud to be associated with such a great team.”

“Congratulations for a job well done!”