



Summer Jobs Aid For Teens Still A 'Win'

By [Anthony Cronin](#)

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John Beauregard sums up the success of the Eastern Connecticut Summer Youth Employment Program quite simply: It's a "win, win, win."

The jobs-and-training program, now completed, employed 660 youth from eastern Connecticut at 175 work sites across 29 towns and cities. Each worked for 25 hours per week for six weeks, earning \$8 an hour.

The summer program was funded through \$1.2 million in federal stimulus money, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Beauregard, who heads up the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board in Franklin which administered the program, says it was a win for the income-eligible youths who worked in a variety of public- and private-sector jobs at hospitals, town halls and tourism sites, a win for employers because federal funds paid the workers' salaries, and a win for the local economy because plenty of those workers' salaries got spent at local retailers, restaurants and such.

"The youth win because they have an opportunity to gain valuable work experience while earning a wage," says Beauregard. "And the local economy wins because history has proven that a good part of the worker's salary will get pumped back into the local economy."

Four social-services contractors from the region also were instrumental in the program this summer, including EASTCONN, New London Youth Affairs, Norwich Human Services and Thames Valley Council for Community Action. In addition, the region's chambers of commerce helped out, as well.

Because of the addition of federal stimulus money this summer, the summer works program was able to greatly expand its offerings compared to past summers, when the youth-employment program was state funded, and smaller in scope.

So instead of hiring several hundred youths 14 to 24 years of age, this summer the program hired 660. And in previous years, there were about 100 employers, compared to this year's 175 employers.

That's good news, since employment prospects for teenagers and those in their early 20s weren't particularly robust this summer. In fact, teens and young adults found themselves competing with other adults for much-sought-after summertime employment.

"People don't realize how high the teen unemployment rate is," says Beauregard. "This (program) is a one-time chance when people are young to develop workplace skills so they're ready to go to work when our workplaces need them."

The teens and young adults who worked under the federally funded program not only learned on the job, they also learned about a career path. Some of those involved in the summer program worked in jobs in career "pipelines" such as health care, manufacturing and early-childhood education. They had the opportunity to earn high school credit, along with good wages. There even was an online learning component as well as a "content coach" from Three Rivers and Quinebaug Valley community colleges to answer questions the teens and young adults had about their summer jobs.

Once those students completed the coursework part of the summer program, they then moved on to a six-week stint earning wages as a paid intern in those various "pipeline" fields.

And, says Beauregard, there's also a bonus: Some of these summer jobs could turn into year-round employment opportunities.

Anthony Cronin is The Day's business editor.