

# LEARNING

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## Local students complete summer internships

BY MATT SANDERSON  
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**KILLINGLY** — An early exposure beyond the classroom walls, hundreds of eastern Connecticut youths got a taste of today's competitive job market this summer, including four local students working at Killingly Town Hall.

For six weeks, the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) provided about 600 regional students with federally paid summer employment. Through philanthropic matching grant monies, roughly \$1.6 million in stimulus funds were allocated through the State Department of Social Services' Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Contingency Funds (TANF).

Various regional sponsors, such as the Charter Oak Federal Credit Union, provided a 20-percent match of total summer employment program costs to receive the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds.

Finishing their internships last week, Michael Neff, 18, of Killingly High School, Jennifer Neff, 16, of Harvard H. Ellis Technical High School, Miranda Kolek, 17, of Killingly High School and Tyler Hartford, 16, of Plainfield High School, spent their summers inside the engineering office at Town Killingly Hall, as well as lending a hand in other town departments.

EWIB paid summer interns \$8.25 an hour during the program.

These individuals also participated in the School to Career Union Mentoring Project as a second pilot initiative with this summer's EWIB job program. Led by the Connecticut Central Labor Council, an employer such as a municipality, agreed to

take on students for the summer, who worked alongside a designated union member at job sites.

"We're definitely interested in doing this again for next year, provided the funds are in place," said Killingly Assistant Town Engineer David Capacchione. "It opens so many doors. Kids in their classes don't know about the local opportunities."

Town officials, EWIB representatives, interns, union representatives and U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, met at the Cook Hill Road and Valley Road intersection in Dayville last Thursday morning, Aug. 19, to assess the progress of the summer jobs program.

"They don't have practical experience," added Capacchione. "Interacting with different people is a key to most jobs these days. Listening was a huge skill to learn."

The Neff siblings split their time working on Town Hall and out in the field for the engineering office.

Jennifer Neff, who will be a junior at Ellis Tech this year, said the mathematics skills she learned this summer would be applied to her pursuit of a career in nursing. She spent a chunk of the summer filing and bringing the engineering office's data entry up to date. Neff also compiled an inventory of more than 50 roads in Killingly and included their current conditions. Some of those roads' conditions had not been updated for seven years.

"I've been learning information about the different roads," she said about her experience. "Students should look at how much work to put into it."

Her brother Michael spent most of his summer surveying potential job sites. At the Dayville intersection,

he said the work being done there was road realignment to ultimately make it safer. The work there began in late May and just finished.

"I've been taking down data and recording it," said the older Neff.

Capacchione said the interns documented town public works projects, from the bidding process, the drafting of contracts, the permitting process, the recording meeting minutes and the progress reports on all town projects.

"The kids were a great help to us," said Killingly Town Engineer Bruce Chimento. Killingly Town Planner Eric Rumsey said the interns also performed various tasks in his office, the finance office and the revenue office this summer.

"They're hard workers," he said. "I'd like to keep them year-round."

Courtney said the summer interns did exactly what was intended of the obligated grant funds for the 41-town area.

"Hopefully, it will create a goal in terms of education and work," he said. "They're trying to enhance their work experience. We had about 700 young people that found work [this summer] through this program."

Besides town halls, the summer jobs program targeted teens to work at libraries, community agencies, retail stores, recreation departments, day care facilities, restaurants and hospitals.

EWIB Executive Director John Beauregard said high school teens from Putnam, Thompson and other Quiet Corner towns participated in the program.

"This not only helps our participants' families but also is a helpful boost to stimulate our local economy," he said. "With worksites as



From the left are David Capacchione, Killingly assistant town engineer, Michael Neff, of Killingly High School, Jennifer Neff, of Harvard H. Ellis Technical High School and Eric Rumsey, Killingly town planner, at a job site in Dayville last week. The Neffs recently completed a federally funded summer internship program at Town Hall.

diverse as town hall engineering departments, hospitals, colleges, and even a baseball team, this program helps youth acquire valuable work experience, as well as enhance future employability and job skills."

"ASFCME took an interest in this to nurture kids into the foreseeable job market," said Mel Olsson, consultant for the state union council. "It introduces high school students to real job skill opportunities in their community."

The EWIB is a not-for-profit orga-

nization that oversees public investments in employment and training strategies throughout the 41-town area in eastern Connecticut, and guides the operation of its for CTWorks-East Centers in Danielson, New London, Norwich and Willimantic.

For more information, visit [www.ewib.org](http://www.ewib.org) and [www.ctaficio.org](http://www.ctaficio.org).

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