



Summer Work Experiences: Youth Beginning Their Occupational Journeys



BY HEATHER SHOGRY,
BCREB YOUTH DIRECTOR

With the youth employment rate continuing to be at the lowest percentage since the 1940's, the importance of summer work experiences for teens and young adults is becoming increasingly apparent throughout Massachusetts and the nation. Through these experiences, youth are able to learn about and grow their basic skill performance, develop an understanding of what it means to have a good work-ethic and learn industry specific skills that can serve as a vital foundation in attaining their future career success. To help bring more youth into the workforce, this summer the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, Inc. (BCREB) and Berkshire Training & Employment Program (BTEP) through Berkshire Works Career Center are implementing a series of state funded summer employment programs for eligible Berkshire County youth ages 14-24.

City of Pittsfield's Youth Works Program

Pittsfield's Youth Works program has served over 230 income-eligible youth ages 14-21 since the program's inception in 2005. Youth participants are provided with a paid work experience throughout July and August within local private, public and non-profit industries. This summer, Pittsfield received close to \$95,000 to serve 50 eligible youth participants all currently enrolled in the program. Youth Works funding was initially reduced by 50% in 2010; however most recently supplemental funds were allocated to the program through Governor Patrick's tireless advocacy and support for summer youth employment programming on

the state level.

A special "thanks" to the following employers for their willingness to participate in the 2010 Summer Youth Works Program!

*Lanesborough Elementary School
Goodwill Industries
Pittsfield Boys & Girls Club
Christian Center
Berkshire Works Career Center
Berkshire Community Action Council
Ralph Froio Senior Center
Catholic Youth Center
Dalton Community Recreation Association
Absolutely Experiential
City of Pittsfield
B&G Restaurant Supply Inc.
Berkshire Community College
Social Security Administration
Harry's Supermarket
Pittsfield's Reconnect Center
Riverview Homes
Gladys Allen Brigham Center
Berkshire Health Systems
TJ Maxx
Bisque Beads & Beyond
Canyon Ranch
LTI Smartglass
Berkshire United Way*

Interested in serving as a host employer

Calling all Berkshire County Employers!
Are you seeking to hire Berkshire County youth ages 14-21 for year-round part and full time jobs? If so, please contact Berkshire Works Career Center at 499-2220 x133 or x131 to post your website with application information on Berkshire Works' Youth Virtual Job Fair link. This can be viewed by visiting: <http://iwantajobnow.org/>.

for next summer's 2011 Youth Works Program? Please contact Heather Shogry, BCREB Youth Director at 442-7177 x103 / youth@berkshirereb.org.

American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Funded Summer Employment Programming

The local workforce area through the BCREB and BTEP received over \$300,000 in ARRA stimulus dollars to support youth employment programming throughout 2009 and 2010. Last summer, 65 income-eligible youth participated in ARRA funded programming throughout the region being provided with a paid summer work experience, workplace readiness and industry specific training in the areas of building maintenance, landscaping, food service, environmental studies, recreational education and human services. Throughout the summer 2010, an additional 60 income eligible, Berkshire County youth ages 14-24 will be provided with the same work-and-learning experiences throughout the following selected ARRA program vendors:

*North Adams Public Schools
Youth Center, Inc.
Hillcrest Educational Centers
Pittsfield's Reconnect Center (Berkshire Community Action Council)
Lenox Public Schools
Southern Berkshire Educational Collaborative*

As always, the BCREB extends its sincerest gratitude to Berkshire Training & Employment Program, Berkshire Works Career Center and all participating employers, school districts, and community agencies for your tireless efforts in making the abovementioned programs such a huge success and for your dedication to improving the lives of our region's youth. ■



Josie, a Lenox ARRA program participant, works on a landscaping project outside of the Curtiss Hotel in Lenox.



Southern Berkshire Educational Collaborative's ARRA program participants take a break from their landscaping work on the grounds of Mt. Everett Regional School District to pose for a picture.