



April 14, 2009

County plans to use fed aid for youth jobs program

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BRIDGETON -- Cumberland County is using nearly \$1.2 million in federal aid to organize what would be the largest youth employment program in its history.

The Summer Youth Employment Program will enroll 400 "economically disadvantaged" teenagers and young adults, county officials said Monday morning at a press conference here.

The N.J. Department of Labor and county Office of Employment and Training worked out details of the program. The labor department is sending the county money from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The summer program, which starts June 29, is for income-eligible residents from age 16 through 24. All the jobs will be with public sector entities, such as county government, schools and nonprofits. The work weeks will range from 20 to 40 hours.

"We're targeting, particularly though, those between 19 and 24 who are not currently engaged in education or the work force," county Freeholder Director Louis Magazzu said.

Dante Rieti, director of the Office of Employment and Training, said more than 300 public sector organizations have expressed an interest in the program.

Magazzu named Freeholder Nelson Thompson, who is a union official, as liaison. Freeholder Jane Jannarone also is assigned to the program.

"And the youth program as it's outlined will, I think, stimulate the minds of a lot of very unfortunate families or disadvantaged families into giving an opportunity to the children that live in those homes," Thompson said. "Places to go to learn a career, not just a job."

Thompson said most of those who take part will be paid \$7.25 per hour. The program starts with a one-week orientation camp, to be spent in class, from June 29 through July 3.

"Gives them an idea of exactly what they're up against," Thompson said. "And the actual work experience will be seven weeks, from July 6 to Aug. 21. Now, we also have another component for career paths, which will be offering actually \$8.25 an hour versus \$7.25 an hour. It's a little extra money for these types of camps, if they want to participate in them."

Thompson said the program has a special component. Forty to 50 young adults between 18 and 24 years old will be picked to go to a "career camp." The county college, county technical school and other service providers will provide staff to teach at the camp.

Thompson said the career camp will focus on careers that include law and public safety, health care, construction trades, information technology and horticulture/landscaping.

The career camp will have an orientation period from June 29 through July 3. Those picked for it then will work for another six weeks, from July 6 through Aug. 14.

Additional Facts

HOW TO APPLY

Program applications are available at Vineland, Mill-ville, Bridgeton and Cumberland Regional high schools.

Other locations are: Vineland Adult Education Center; Bethel Development Corp. in Millville; PathStone (Rural Opportunities); Tri-County Community Action Agency; Cumberland County College and the county Technical Education Center. The application also will be put on the county government Web site, www.co.cumberland.nj.us
