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# Companies enlisted for youth jobs project



John Edwards is expected at a labor gathering on Saturday. (BLOOMBERG NEWS/file)

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By Kathy McCabe | June 7, 2007

FirstJobs, a summer youth employment program, is recruiting local companies to hire North Shore teenagers this summer. The goal is to place 300 youths, ages 14 to 19, in jobs paying minimum wage. And if a company can't hire a teen, they may contribute to a salary pool, to pay for them to work at a nonprofit group.

"We have two very good options," said **Mary Sarris**, executive director of the Workforce Investment Board, the regional job training agency based in Salem. "There are plenty of kids who want to work but just need the chance."

The pitch comes amid a bleak outlook for the summer job market.

The teen employment rate nationally is projected to be 36.5 percent this summer, matching a historic high recorded in 2003, according to an April report by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University.

"Unfortunately, the 2007 jobs outlook for the nation's teens appears to be slightly more gloomy than last year, despite an improving national job market for older adults," the report states.

Out-of-work adults, coupled with a loss of a federal summer jobs program in 2000, are among the factors contributing to a decline in job opportunities.

"Teens face a lot of competition," Sarris said. "It just gets harder and harder for them."

Low-income teens in Lynn and Salem will get help from the state finding a job this summer, however. Governor **Deval Patrick** announced a \$170,000 YouthWorks grant to be shared by the two cities on Tuesday during a visit to Lynn Vocational Technical Institute.

The money will be contributed to the FirstJobs salary pool. Teens eligible to receive free lunch at school will be employed by the grant. Based on the student population, 79 percent of the grant will be spent on Lynn youths, and 21 percent on Salem, Sarris said.

About 150 businesses have so far pledged either jobs or money to FirstJobs, including the new Coco Key water park in Danvers, Seven Seas Whale Watch in Gloucester, Eastern Bank in Lynn, and the TJ Maxx stores in Saugus and Swampscott.

The salary pool so far has about \$60,000. Gloucester Stage Company, Beverly School for the Deaf, and Salem Cyberspace, a job-training program, have agreed to hire teens paid from the fund.

Employers will interview young workers on Tuesday during a Teen Job Fair, scheduled from 2 to 5 p.m. at North Shore Community College in Lynn.

Teens who have completed FirstJobs workshops will apply for jobs at the fair. The workshops, taught by staff from the North Shore Career Center, included tips on interviewing, dressing for work, and writing a resume. They were taught at high schools in Beverly, Gloucester, Lynn, Peabody, and Salem.

"We're telling employers, 'Come. We've prescreened the kids,' " Sarris said. "They're ready to go to work."

## Candidate Edwards to speak at dinner

The North Shore Labor Council on Saturday will salute rank-and-file union folks during its annual Legislative Dinner at the Sheraton Colonial Resort in Wakefield. The guest speaker will be former North Carolina senator **John Edwards**, who is running for the Democratic presidential nomination.

As part of the event, **Tony Dunn** of Winthrop will receive the Labor and Community Award. Dunn is the program director of the E-Team Machinists Training Program, launched several years ago with the Essex County Community Organization. He also is a liaison from the AFL-CIO to the North Shore council, where he's been a delegate for 12 years.

**Jan Martin** and **Pam Edwards** of Lynn will receive the Delegate Leadership Award. Martin is a food service worker in the Lynn schools, and serves as co chairwoman of the labor council's Women's Committee, a volunteer position. Edwards is a community organizer for an advocacy group, Mass. Senior Action.

**Joanne Lindner**, a retired letter carrier from Lynn, will receive the Council Leadership Award. Lindner is treasurer of the labor council, and also serves on the Women's Committee. She is a member of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch 7, in Lynn.

The Community Activism Award will be presented to North Shore Neighbor to Neighbor, based in Lynn.

The group works in low-income neighborhoods, where it focuses on job training, child care, healthcare coverage, and other political issues.

## Datebook

The Homebased Businesswomen's Network will hold its annual meeting on June 21, 6:30 p.m., at the Village Green restaurant on Route 1 north in Danvers. A new slate of officers will be elected. Tickets cost \$20 for members, \$25 for guests. To register, contact **Lisa Kawski** at 978-335-1140 or visit the group's website, [h-b-n.org](http://h-b-n.org).

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