



News

LYNN OFFICIALS ATTEND SUMMIT ON TEEN JOBS

May 16, 2013

LYNN — Youth jobs matter to Guelmi Espinal not only because he is a youth but because he would like to be able to help out his family financially.

“But last year 1,216 teens applied for only 450 available jobs,” he said. “That means 65 percent of teens that applied did not get jobs.”

Espinal served as chairman Wednesday during a Youth Jobs Summit, sponsored by the Lynn Youth Organizing Network (LYON). The summit drew in state Sen. Thomas McGee and his Chief of Staff, Ward 5 Councilor Brendan Crighton, Mary Sarris from the Workforce Investment Board, Bob Fraizer from the North Shore Career Center, School Committee member John Ford and Mayoral Aide Mary Fountain along with several businessmen and women and LYON members.

"My mother has to feed herself and five other mouths in the house," □ said Espinal, 17. "Even if it's only a little work, that means paying my phone bill or the phone bill so that my little sisters could go to Girl Scouts." □

Sarris said there are definitive studies that show teens who work part time have higher grades, are more likely to go to college and will have higher earnings in their lifetime than teens who don't work.

Teens who don't work don't fare as well in interviews later in life or in the work world because they have no reference points.

"They use cell phones inappropriately "I; they don't know how to call in sick," □ she said. "It's really a deeper social issue than you think." □

This is the third year that LYON has advocated on the state level to restore cuts made to the youth jobs program, said coordinator Hazel Johnson. The group traveled to Boston where they gathered with teens from across the state to lobby for support for the Youth Works Teen Jobs Program. And McGee said he has supported them largely because they are an inspiration to him. He called the jobs program a small investment that pays big dividends to a community.

"How can I say I can't support that?" □ he said. "It's young people coming together saying I want to contribute to society, I want to work. That's a powerful message." □

Fraizer urged students to visit the [Youth Career Center](#), a branch of the career center aimed at helping teens hone their job search skills. They can check it out online at www.nscareers.org/youth_career_center.

"Interviewing is a skill," □ added Eastern Bank Senior Vice President Paul Pierre. "It's not just about answering questions." □

Eastern Bank is a large supporter of youth jobs, hiring upwards of 60 teens for summer jobs, Pierre said. However, he cautioned teens that many positions once considered "entry level" □ are disappearing. He pointed to grocery store self-checkout aisles as an example.

But it's not just about landing a job, it's about finding one, Espinal added. He and Johnson asked the leaders in the room to consider reaching out to local businesses and encouraging them to take a chance on a teen for the summer.

"This is important for our community if some would just come forward and participate," □ McGee said.

"There is no real risk," □ Sarris added. "You don't have to hire them. Just interview them, get to know them and maybe you'll meet someone that might fit." □

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