

Summer Youth Employment Program 2019

The 2019 Lake County Summer Youth Employment Program recently wrapped up another exciting summer as more than 215 youth gained meaningful work experience while earning a paycheck. Funded by the Lake County Board, the program offers youth a paid, part-time work experience. For most student workers, this represents their first job. Before receiving their work assignment, student workers met at the Job Center of Lake County for a two-hour orientation and learned about positive work habits, the skills required in today's workforce and program expectations.

Student workers were placed at 35 sites, including a mix of nonprofit organizations, local municipalities, and private or community-based organizations throughout Lake County. Student workers were paid \$8.25 per hour during the program and worked in a variety of areas including office support, day camp programs, and indoor/outdoor maintenance. The largest employment sites included: The City of North Chicago, the Waukegan Park District/City of Waukegan, and Zion Township. Several school districts also participated including: Grayslake District #46, Mundelein High School District #120, North Chicago School District #187, and Round Lake Area School District #116.



The Waukegan Park District/City of Waukegan served as a host site. Student workers spread mulch, checked playground equipment and removed trash at 32 Waukegan parks, beaches and roadsides. Several student workers also served as day camp aides.

Rafael Ayala, Manager of Park Maintenance, oversees and mentors student workers. He says that this is also an opportunity to build a talent pipeline for the Park District. *"We need a lot of help during the summer. We are hoping some of these youth will return to be hired after the program."* He sees significant growth in the student workers and says that they learn to work as a team during the six-week program.



The Northern Illinois Food Bank also served as a host site. Student workers packed boxes of food to be shipped to food pantries and prepared the facility for volunteer events. Iona (right), who just graduated from high school, said that the job allowed her to get leadership experience as she worked with volunteers. After putting some of her earnings into a college savings account, she bought a cell phone. Jhovana (left) said that she appreciated when her supervisor asked her for ideas. She says that the summer job has given her an opportunity to think for herself. *“My supervisor told me if I saw anything that needed to be done, to take the initiative.”*



The Fuller Center for Housing (right) hosted student workers who were involved in urban gardening and construction. They helped build greenhouses and completed woodworking projects. They also discussed life goals and created vision boards for themselves.



College of Lake County, Adult Education and ESL Division, became a host site for the first time this summer. Alex (left) performed office tasks. He also worked at the recruitment table during special events.

71 student workers attended a High School Youth Summit on July 31, 2019 as a capstone to the program. The Youth Summit was coordinated by Waukegan Township, the College of Lake County, and Lake County Workforce Development. Attendees learned about healthy relationships, life skills, and money management. One participant summed up the program as follows: *“I learned about saving money and setting goals and showing love.”*

“The Summer Youth Employment Program will have a lasting impact on the young people who participated,” said Jennifer Everett, Program Director. *“We see former student workers years later who say that the summer program helped them get where they are today.”*

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