



July 31, 2010

## Stimulus funds help hundreds to land jobs

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**By Tricia Pursell**

The Daily Item

More than 300 youths and adults in Snyder, Union and Northumberland counties have found employment through the 2010 Way to Work Initiative funded with \$1.5 million in stimulus money.

Work force officials hope that the program, which ends Sept. 30, will lead to permanent positions for workers who had previously been underemployed or unemployed and who meet specific eligibility requirements.

So far, 285 youths in the Valley have been placed into summer work experiences at 81 different work sites.

At least 43 unemployed adults, age 25 and older, have also found a way to stay connected to the work force and increase their household income. Thirty employers in the three-county area have provided jobs for the adult program.

The Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corp. has a goal to serve a total of 750 youths and 196 adults through the program.

According to Carol Yagle, Title I supervisor, approximately 225 people have filled out applications in the nine-county region supported by the organization.

"We would like to have that turn into permanent full-time positions," she said.

While a similar youth summer program began last year, this is the first year the organization has operated a significant adult work experience program, according to Shannon Miller, executive director.

#### Getting acquainted

"The participants are able to stay connected to the workplace, strengthen their skills and network to assist in their employment search," she said. "Employers can add capacity while getting to know a potential long-term employee."

Businesses, in turn, have chosen to either hire a worker and be reimbursed 100 percent of the person's wages up to \$13 an hour, or turn to Central Susquehanna Opportunities Inc. to

supply a skilled worker at no cost.

Pennsylvania Careerlinks have recruited businesses that have a potential to offer long-term employment, though there is no requirement that participating businesses hire or retain the workers after the subsidized program ends Sept. 30.

To participate in the program, businesses may not displace current workers, including those who experienced partial reduction in hours or non-overtime work, wages or benefits. They also cannot replace workers who have been part of a layoff or furlough within the past six months.

While some people have enjoyed the opportunity simply to gain work experience to get to the next level of their career goals, others have been given a chance to prove themselves to potential employers.

"It just gives them the opportunity to show an employer their work habits, and what skills they would have if maybe they didn't have that opportunity," Yagle said.

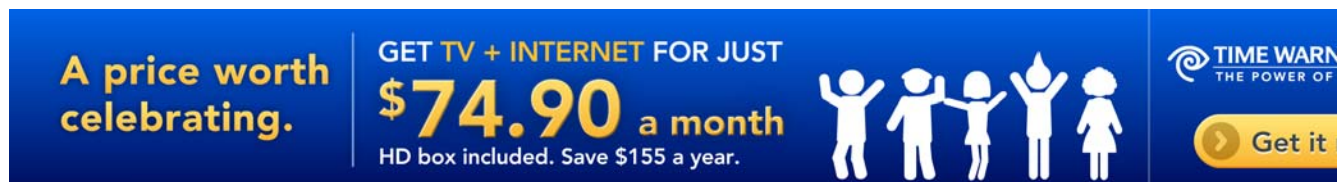
"I really do believe that it is going to be successful in the end," she added. "I see the participants eagerly willing to work."

#### New partnership

Last year, the organization received \$2.2 million to fund youth programs through June 30, 2011. During 2009, more than 700 youth between 14 and 24 obtained work experiences and participated in career development activities in the nine counties served by the organization. Another 150 participated between September 2009 and March 2010.

In January, the Department of Labor and Department of Health and Human Services encouraged state public work force systems to partner with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families agencies to promote subsidized employment opportunities in summer employment for low-income populations.

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