



SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

ProMedica | Toledo, OH

Overview

In 2012, then-Toledo Mayor Mike Bell approached ProMedica for help with an initiative to provide meaningful opportunities for Toledo youth during the summer months. ProMedica responded with a Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) with four primary objectives: (1) improve the youths' readiness for higher education and employment; (2) increase awareness among youth for health care careers; (3) engage students academically in health care-related fields; and (4) strengthen the local health and human services infrastructure and workforce.

The ability to maintain a job is critical for future success, and the responsibilities and life skills learned by youth in the workplace are also valuable skills in a school setting – particularly in a higher-education environment, where students have more individual responsibility for their success. SYEP provides valuable skills to youth workers by offering realworld work experience in a multitude of environments that stress personal accountability, development and learning. It also provides additional wrap-around services to the youth, including financial literacy.

SYEP seeks “tipping point” youth who are on the verge of going in a positive or negative direction, and works to identify at-risk youth who may benefit from this program. Youth are encouraged to apply through recommendations from guidance counselors, clergy, community agency partners, and others.

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Impact

Since its inception, the program has employed 374 youth (39 in 2012, 72 in 2013, 74 in 2014 and 2015, and 75 in 2016). In 2016, 72 of the 75 youth hired completed the program. Throughout the summer, an average of 15 to 25 youth attended ProMedica University (classes held on a variety of topics such as communication, conflict management and career planning), and 29 youth attended the financial literacy classes. In 2017, the program underwent some changes to more effectively serve our youth.

The 40 employed youth attended personal and professional development activities that were built into their ongoing program rather than as optional activities.

Lessons Learned

Recognizing the need to create diversity in the SYEP program, we are adjusting strategies to recruit students from a variety of areas, including working more closely with faith-based and neighborhood-based agencies to encourage youth to apply to the program from specifically identified underserved zip codes. It is important to create open-ended job descriptions so each supervisor can best utilize youth employees. The training for ProMedica supervisors who work with youth has evolved over time as well, to ensure that the program is a learning experience for all participating youth.


Future Goals

ProMedica plans to expand this program throughout Toledo to other employers, and we will develop a guide book for potential employers looking to implement a similar program. Ideally, in five years there will be standardized processes for summer youth employment and a “one stop shop” to learn about summer youth employment opportunities. Additionally, in the future, employees completing the program will be prepared to take the ACT’s National Career Readiness Certificate. This is a portable credential that demonstrates achievement and a certain level of workplace employability skills.

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