

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LEARN, EARN, AND RETURN - FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS TO DIRECT \$2.8 MILLION TO YOUTH SUMMER JOBS, GIVING BACK TO COMMUNITY

In the on-going effort to give more than 1600 young people in Franklin County jobs and internships this summer, County Commissioners are directing \$2.8 million in federal funds - part of President Obama's Summer Jobs Plus initiative - to connect low-income and disconnected youth to paid employment.

County Commissioners are putting special emphasis on helping teens find summer jobs at local non-profit and public service providers, giving young people an opportunity to learn job skills, earn a salary, and give back to the community at the same time.

"Summer jobs are an important step on a young person's path to success," said Franklin County Commissioner President Paula Brooks. "When these young people work for vital health and human services providers, the jobs are an opportunity to learn, earn, and return: young people serving the community, learning important life skills and work ethic, and earning money to help their families or put away for college."

The majority of the federal funds will be invested in the 2012 SOAR Hire (Successful Opportunities to Achieve and Reconnect) Summer Youth and Young Adult Jobs Program, a collaborative effort between Franklin County Job and Family Services and the Central Ohio Workforce Investment Corporation (COWIC), along with the City of Columbus and several local private companies, public institutions, and non-profit organizations.

The program has two primary goals: to give youth and young adults from low-income families ages 14-24 positive summer work experiences and to serve the local business and employer community by helping companies to fill seasonal positions.

Last year, 1660 young people were given paid jobs through the SOAR Hire Program, more than half of which were supported by local academic institutions and private businesses. These additional funds could help as many as 1300 more young people get employment.

"The experiences gained in these summer jobs are incredibly important in shaping the next generation's future career success," said County Commissioner Marilyn Brown. "And by placing these teens and young adults in jobs with community service providers, we can instill in them a greater sense of public service and neighborhood pride."

Earlier this year, President Obama announced the Summer Jobs Plus initiative, a national call to action for businesses, non-profits, and government to work together to provide pathways to employment for low-income and disconnected youth for the summer of 2012, with a goal of reaching 250,000 employment opportunities by the beginning of the summer.

“To be successful, we need our partners in business to step up again and recognize that hiring young people for summer employment is good for our entire community,” added County Commissioner John O’Grady. “These young people really do represent our ‘Opportunity Youth’ because of the untapped potential they can bring to any job. We simply need to provide the opportunities for them to succeed.”

County Commissioners are expected to approve the federal funding for COWIC at the May 15th General Session.

“The opportunity to have meaningful work and learning experiences is so important for the youth and young adults of Franklin County,” said COWIC President and CEO Suzanne Coleman Tolbert. “These dollars will allow us to expand Central Ohio’s summer youth employment program and reach more of the young people who need these opportunities. We look forward to working with the Franklin County Commissioners in their commitment to help our emerging workforce learn, earn, and return within our greater community.”

The summer jobs program is the latest effort in the County Commissioners’ “Investing in our Next Generation” initiative, a year-long examination of the estimated \$343 million in investments that County agencies will make in youth and child-oriented programs in 2012, and how these agencies and programs can work better together to increase their impact on Franklin County’s young people.

Youth and young adults ages 16-24, both in and out of school, can register for the summer jobs program by going to www.hirecentralohyouth.org.

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