

## STUDENTS EARN WHILE THEY LEARN DURING SUMMER VACATIONS



For most students summer is vacation time and a time to relax and rejuvenate themselves, until the beginning of the next academic year, but for many high school and college students, it's time to get a summer job for themselves, that is, if they have not landed a job already. "We occasionally get the summer jobs from employers," said David Hodges, a manager for Workforce West Virginia. "We call it seasonal work." Where this seasonal work is available, depends on who is employing these teens, this summer, he said. Jobs are available in fast food restaurants, yard work, and working as lifeguards at swimming pools. These are some of the work avenues open to the kids, who want to earn an extra buck during the vacations. "Of course, we always encourage anyone looking for work to register with Workforce West Virginia," Hodges said. "And they can register online." However, he said that he did not see any perceptible difference in the job prospects between this year and the preceding year. "There's not much difference. If it's down, it's very slight. And we do everything we can to help everyone find employment," he stated. Compared to the national unemployment rate, which currently is a shade under 8 percent, apart from McDowell County which is at 8.9 percent, the rest compare rather favorably. West Virginia is currently at 6.7 percent and Mercer County is giving it company, with an unemployment rate which is the same as West Virginia's. Not all teens register to find a job. Some get the traditional jobs just by asking around. "I baby-sit," 17-year-old Chelsea Lester of Bluefield said. "I was coaching this soccer team, and there was this little girl who needed a baby-sitter." Lester said that she found babysitting much more preferable than slogging it out in a fast-food restaurant. "I like little kids, getting to know them and setting a good example for them, and it's easier than working at a fast food place with strangers and rude people," Lester said. Moreover, this time around jobs at restaurants are not as easy to get as earlier, because even adults are vying for the same jobs. The difficult job market has brought this unanticipated, competition for the teens. "Restaurants are not hiring as many new people during the summer months," she said. 16 year old Laci Sweeney, a student of Graham High School in Bluefield, Va., has found work as a lifeguard at a Tazewell County swimming pool. She says, that she has experienced that employers await the summer holidays, when they can employ the teens for their work. "It is a good way to expose us to the work world," Sweeney explained. However, she said, that the summer jobs had to be shared, with many teens, and even though jobs were available, there weren't too many job hours, making it not that lucrative financially. "Really, they have trouble keeping hours because people hire so many teenagers," Sweeney said. "There's a lot of positions, but not that many hours."