

## EMPLOYERS NEEDED FOR YOUTH JOBS IN SANTA CRUZ



While the recession seemed to be at its worst, the Santa Cruz County had about \$1 million that would be put toward helping younger individuals find employment, specifically those who come from low-income families and were in need of a summer job. The money came from the federal stimulus and while it did help many teenagers from low-income families find employment during the summer, that money has come and gone. Even with the money being spent, supporters of the youth refuse to give up and are actively seeking ways to help youth in the county find the employment that will help to keep them out of trouble during the summer months. One of the student support services coordinators of that Office of Education in Santa Cruz County, JoAnn Allen, said that if they want the youth to find summer employment, something needs to be done and they are doing it all on their own. She says that she and others are spending time volunteering because this is something they believe in and feel is necessary. During the month of April in the state of California, the unemployment rate for individuals between the ages of 16 and 19 was at 36 percent, much higher than the unemployment rate for that age group in any other state. It is quite obvious that teenagers are dealing with the downfalls of a crippled economy, especially with all of the competition they now have to deal with, along with fewer opportunities available than there once was for other generations before them. Supporters of the youth in Santa Cruz got together to create a talent show as a way to raise money for youth employment. The talent show actually ended up raising a considerable amount of money, with about \$40,000 raised. Ron Slack, the publisher for Good Times, set a goal of \$375,000 for youth employment and at this point, there has been \$75,000 raised so far. They have come a long way but of course, they still have to raise a whole lot more as well. At this point, there is enough money to hire at least 40 youth between the ages of 14 and 24, all of which would be paid minimum wage per hour. This would help these younger individuals to earn nearly \$2,000 throughout the summer months but the amount earned would ultimately depend on the number of hours the individuals actually work. The only problem is that right now, there is only enough money to support 40 of those individuals and there are 124 teenagers that have applied for the program, hoping to find employment for the summer. Because of this, Allen and other supporters are trying to encourage employers to participate in the program and hire younger individuals.

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