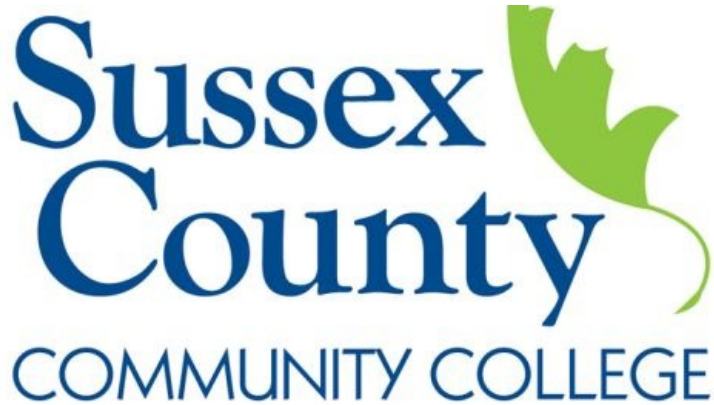


SKILLS EXPERIENCE FOR TEENS



A group of teenagers, all of whom came from low-income families in the New Jersey area, have decided to spend several weeks learning all types of different things and gaining new skills that would be valuable to them when looking for employment in the future. They are getting the type of experience that is necessary in this type of economy and it is all because of the Project Self-Sufficiency Summer Youth Employment Program. During the courses, the teenagers learn different types of curriculum while also gaining work experience, helping out with a number of non-profit organizations. The group of teenagers consists of about 20 individuals between the ages of 14 and 17. For many of these teenagers, it is the first time they are working, gaining experience and getting paid for it. These specific teenagers were chosen for this program based on the amount of income earned in their household, as well as how close they lived to transportation, amongst various other factors. For each day of the week, the teenagers spend an hour receiving job skill training and after that, they begin working for their employer. The teenagers are employed by a number of different organizations, including Birth Haven, the Sussex County YMCA and the Sussex County Community College. Some of the different jobs these teenagers are currently holding include data entry work, research, counseling, and caring for animals. In general, it is a great way for these teenagers to earn money but also gain the type of experience they need to have when entering the job market as adults. The Executive Director for the Project Self-Sufficiency, Deborah Berry-Toon, has said, "Project Self-Sufficiency is delighted to be able to offer these youths the opportunity to gain work experience and learn valuable skills this summer." She also says, "We are grateful to the area employers who took these teens under their wings, and we are indebted to the funders who made this program possible." Once students get off of the bus in the morning, they start learning about a number of different topics that are important for finding jobs. Some of the topics range from interview skills, how to leave lasting first impressions, and how to manage certain situations or conflicts. After the hour of discussion, the students are then transported to their place of work. Haley Ward, a program coordinator for the Summer Youth Employment Program, has said, "This program is a success because it provides the students with the tools and confidence needed to become competent and successful in the workplace."

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