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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Summer Youth Employment Program Launching in Somerset and Hunterdon Counties

A new summer employment program for youth in Hunterdon and Somerset counties is looking for interested employers to help provide paid internships for 40 young people in the two counties, as well as candidates to fill those positions.

The Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (GRWDB) Summer Youth Employment Program is one of 10 summer youth programs to receive new funding from the New Jersey Department of Labor.

In mid-June, the GRWDB was notified that it received \$105,600 in grant funding for the summer youth program, which includes stipends for 40 youth from the two counties to work over the course of an eight-week period between the end of July and Oct. 31. In the program, each participant, who must be between the ages of 16 and 24 and can be in school or out of school, will work 25 hours per week, including four hours per week doing different work-readiness training.

The original mission of the state's summer youth employment program was to supply participants with on-site work experience supplemented by the workforce development training. With the uncertainty of COVID-19, the state asked that the programs be built as a work-remotely opportunity.

Now, for the GRWDB Summer Youth Employment Program, any employer in Hunterdon and Somerset counties with available remote part-time positions can apply to be part of the project. There can be some limited outdoor employment opportunities and on-site job offerings that abide by CDC guidelines, but these do not have to be included in an employer's available internship. The weekly four hours of workforce readiness training will be provided virtually by Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board staff and system partners and supplemented with hundreds of different online courses participants can take through the SkillUp Greater Raritan e-learning portal.

The internship opportunities for the 40 positions can be in any sector in the two counties, from office or web support to nonprofit work. All remote positions are welcome for consideration in this new program.

"We realize that employers are in a state of flux right now," said Paul Grzella, director of the Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board. "But we also know that there is work that needs to get done in our two counties, and that a lot of that work is getting done virtually right now. We hope that employers will consider this opportunity as a way to help train the younger members of our workforce while also meeting their business goals, especially since the program will fully fund the student's stipend for the eight weeks they are working with that employer."

Each intern will work for the company 20 hours per week and spend five additional hours per week in workforce readiness training. The intern's stipend will be \$11.50 an hour, per the requirements of the state program.

"We envision that based upon our employer responses, and the availability of our intern applicants, internships will begin by the fourth week of July, with staggered start times through the beginning of September," said Jeanne Cassano, the GRWDB's job developer and coordinator for the GRWDB Summer Youth Employment Program. "We welcome employer applications for businesses of any size in Hunterdon and Somerset counties. We hope to provide the program's internship participants with a variety of experiences that introduce them to the world of work, virtually."

The separate weekly workforce training will cover a variety of topics, including soft skills training, financial literacy, resume building, entrepreneurship skills, diversity training, and prevention of workplace harassment training. These sessions will be led by Cassano and supported by system partners.

As part of their workforce training sessions, participants also will utilize the SkillUp Greater Raritan e-learning portal for targeted training and certificates that align with the participants' individual career goals.

The employer Request for Applications (RFAs) for the program, which includes the internship job description form, can be found on Somerset County's Purchasing Division website, at <https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/Home/ShowDocument?id=38218>. The deadline for applications is July 21.

As employer applications are coming in, the GRWDB also will be accepting separate applications from eligible in-school or out-of-school youth who must live in Hunterdon or Somerset counties, and be 16 to 24 years. There is state funding for positions for up to 40 youth – 10 from Hunterdon County and 30 from Somerset County – who will be matched with the available positions. To obtain an internship application, visit www.thegrwdb.org.

The deadline to return material is July 20.

"The turnaround time is tight for employers and interns, but we hope our community will rally around this project, which aims to help 40 youth have a valuable summer work experience that sets them on lifelong career pathways," Cassano said.

Anyone with questions can contact Cassano at jcassano@co.somerset.nj.us or call 908-541-5785.

The Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (GRWDB) oversees federally and state-funded career and employment services for businesses and residents in Hunterdon and Somerset counties. Weekly text alerts highlight career and job opportunities in Somerset and Hunterdon counties. Text "onestop" to 565-12 to sign up.



Questions? Contact GRWDB Board Director Paul Grzella at grzella@co.somerset.nj.us, or 908-203-6044.

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