

MORE than you think.

THE INITIATOR

OCTOBER 2008

Youth Employment Summit: Preparing Teens for the Working World

How many kids are really prepared to enter the job market these days? At least 134 this year alone, thanks to a Youth Employment Summit organized by Disability Network/Lakeshore.

Now in its third year, the three-week summit equips 14- to 18-year-olds with the tools they need to get and keep jobs, according to organizer Lucia Rios. "While we created the summit for youths with disabilities, we like to partner with other organizations, as well," she says. "We've been working with the Boys & Girls Club, Youth ministries, and high schools to provide an inclusive summit"

The summit offers a laid-back atmosphere, hands-on activities, and a thorough preparation for finding and keeping a job - all in six after-school sessions. Topics include:

- Understanding the value of working, beyond the paycheck
- Managing money, including reading a pay stub and budgeting
- Setting realistic employment goals and understanding job requirements
- Meeting with a real-life employer to understand expectations
- Writing resumes and filling out job applications
- Practicing interviews and discussing legal questions about disclosure

Rios has also teamed with Katie Schonfeld, a staffing consultant from ADECCO, to help the students

practice interviews. Schonfeld says, "I offered tips and positive feedback, and we discussed the little things that can make a difference, like dressing neatly, sitting up straight, having a strong handshake, and making eye contact," she says. "What Disability Network does to prepare kids is wonderful. I wish I knew everything these kids are learning when I was 18."

Disability Network's support does not end with the Youth Employment Summit. Rios explains, "One girl came in during the summer for help filling out a job application, and I'm teaming with another on resume writing and interviews. If someone wants extra assistance, we'll help any way we can."

Last summer, the organization offered a summer job to a student who'd successfully completed the program. The students had to prepare cover letters and resumes and go through a formal interview process. Keshia Perales, the student who was hired, says, "The summit taught me how to answer questions, write a resume, and make sure I show up on time. I knew nothing about that before, and it helped me to get this job."

According to Rios, Perales made great strides as an employee, gaining confidence, computer skills, and valuable experience for her resume. After working with Lucia for the summer, Perales concludes, "I think the experience will help me a lot. That was my first job, and it made me feel like I can go out and get another one someday."



"I think the experience will help me a lot. That was my first job, and it made me feel like I can go out and get another one someday."

— Keshia Perales

Career Connections

A new program offered by Disability Network connects teens to professionals in a job field of their choice, allowing them to job shadow, ask questions, or take industry tours. Representatives from the workforce may also visit a classroom to describe their fields, workplace realities, job expectations, and specific career options.

Students and teachers have requested a baker, massage therapist, and banker, but professionals from all backgrounds are welcome to volunteer. "We're always looking for people to add to our job bank," says Rios.

Interested in inspiring a young person's career? Contact lucia@dnlakeshore.org.

THE INITIATOR

Who we are

Most people equate disability with limitations. But it's our job to change the perceptions and realities that prevent people with disabilities from sharing in the community. Every year, we provide training, mentoring, and referrals to help people with disabilities and their families live productive lives. Because disability touches so many people, we also work on a larger scale, helping governments and businesses make changes that benefit not just those with disabilities, but everyone in the community.



426 Century Lane
Holland, Michigan 49423
t 616 396 5326 800 656 5245
f 616 396 3220
www.dnlakeshore.org

Volunteers

We rely on our wonderful volunteers for so much of what we accomplish. To find an opportunity that fits your skills, interests, and schedule, please call:
616 396 5326

Donations

As a non-profit organization, we welcome gifts of all sizes. You may make a tax-deductible contribution by calling 616 396 5326 or mailing a check (payable to Disability Network/Lakeshore) to:
Disability Network/Lakeshore
426 Century Lane
Holland, MI 49423

Join Us

Your gifts of time and resources can help us change everything for the better.