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March 14, 2017

Ways and Means - Education Subcommittee

Senator Rod Monroe

Representative Barbara Smith Warner

Senator Arnie Roblan

Senator Chuck Thomsen

Representative Diego Hernandez

Representative John Lively

Representative Julie Parrish

Representative Gene Whisnant

Ways and Means –Education Subcommittee Hearing

Oregon Youth Development Grants

March 15, 2017

Honorable Senators and Representatives:

I am writing on behalf of SE Works, Inc. a recipient of Oregon Youth Development Grants for the biennium 2015-2016 and 2016-2017.

First, I would like to say that we at SE Works appreciate your responsibility as our locally elected officials for balancing the budget. We also appreciate the difficult choices you, as elected officials, have to make as you address the state budget in a challenging fiscal environment. Understanding the challenges you face, we want to ensure you consider the impact that the Youth Development Council grants have on our youth and our community.

As you prepare to decide on how the budget will be balanced, I would like to share with you the stories of several youth enrolled in our Youth and Community grant located in a high poverty community called Rosewood, located in East County Portland. These are only a few of the stories we chose from over 80 youth we have enrolled in the past 2 years.

Youth highlighted in the stories include: Johnny, Zulema, Verlean, Felicity, Elvia, Rachel, Kwame and Vanessa. They were disconnected from school and work and had no idea about how to connect to training and a career pathway that would lead them to career track employment. I have attached the stories for your review.



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The Rosewood community where these youth live has a high proportion of traditionally underserved individuals, with 33% of the population identifying as Hispanic/Latino, 10% as Black/African American, and 4% as Asian. Compared to Multnomah County as a whole, Rosewood has three times more Latinos and twice as many African American residents. The community also has a high percentage of traditionally underserved individuals in terms of English language learners and economic disadvantage. More than one-fifth of residents (21%) speak Spanish at home, and only 60.2% of residents age 5+ speak only English at home. The majority of residents face poverty. In the local schools, between 50 – 80% of school children qualify for free / reduced lunch. **The State through the Youth Development Council grants gave these youth opportunity.**

Youth seized the opportunity afforded through these YDC grants and connected to education, work experiences, employment and occupational training. This will assist youth in moving out of poverty and into living wage jobs.

We respectfully request that you maintain funding at the current level and consider what the long term costs will be for disconnected youth who are not in school, employed or in safe housing if this funding is reduced across the State.

Respectfully,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is on the left and the second is on the right.

Holly Whittleton
Executive Director

Encls: 1
SE Works InFocus Youth

SE Works, Inc. Youth Development Council Rosewood InFocus Program for Youth SUCCESS STORIES:

Zulema:

“What can I say about my experience with being able to have been a part of the work experience with SE Works? It honestly made such a huge difference not only with helping me get my foot in the door when it came to work experience but also with getting to know such amazingly talented and wonderful people. It has helped me so much because it helped me get connected with other people that if I were to have done this all on my own I wouldn’t be where I am today. It helped me go to school and get some really good jobs like working at the Rosewood Initiative. If I had to do this experience all over again I would in a heartbeat! Thank you!”



Thanks to work experience, Zulema is now working at **Adventist Hospital**. Here is a picture of Zulema, right, with SE Work’s staff, her Rosewood Initiative supervisor, and another youth work experience

Verlean:

“I worked as a prep cook and at the promotions station at New Seasons Market on Hawthorne. As a prep cook, I portioned out meat and vegetables for the stir fry cooks, operated slicing machines, and chopped vegetables. At the promotions station, I greeted customers, put out samples, and encouraged customers to buy products. I liked that it was a friendly environment to work in. Everyone was really down to earth and always ready to help each other. Any time I had questions about how to do something like how something should be chopped or how to measure the ingredients, I just had to ask for help and people were willing to explain things patiently. Because everyone was so kind and patient, nothing felt challenging or difficult. I appreciated that my supervisors gave me instruction, but then let me do my job without micromanaging.

I learned how important it is to be punctual, to have a good attitude and a work plan for each shift. Because of this experience, I feel like I know how to interact with customers better than I did before and provide friendly customer service.

Thank you for this opportunity. I liked my work experience. I hope to have more opportunities like this in the future."

Felicity:

"I worked at No Bonz About It, a doggie daycare. My responsibility was to check in dogs in the morning, keep a pack of 45 dogs calm, and make sure they were having fun and not being aggressive. I kept barking to a minimum, cleaned up after the dogs and also cleaned up the building. I have a passion for dogs so I enjoyed working with a huge group of dogs almost every day. It was a challenge learning to speak in a dominant voice to control the dogs. I had to learn to just get over the fear of talking loud. After I got over it, the job felt way easier.



Elvia:

"I started working 20 hours/week as an intern here at Wood Village City Hall, through SE Works, who gave me the best opportunity of my life to be able to have work experience. My position was Office Work, that position was utilized to help with general office work and duties like: filing- both paper and electronically, compiling/sorting documents; data entry, answering phones in English/Spanish as needed, interacting with customers as needed, use of typical office equipment,

provide license, coding, calculations and other duties.

At the beginning, I was shy and nervous. I didn't have confidence in myself. I was very scared to answer incoming phone calls or talk with the customers who inquired information; I was so afraid of doing something wrong or not following good directions. My first day of work they introduces me to everyone who I was going to be working with. I got even more nervous because I realized they were older and intelligent people with much more experience than me, after a few week later I started to feel more comfortable. My first duties in the very beginning was only scanning papers and name files on the computer; then Wood Village City Hall trained me to issue permits. That is when the magic started, answering more and more incoming phone

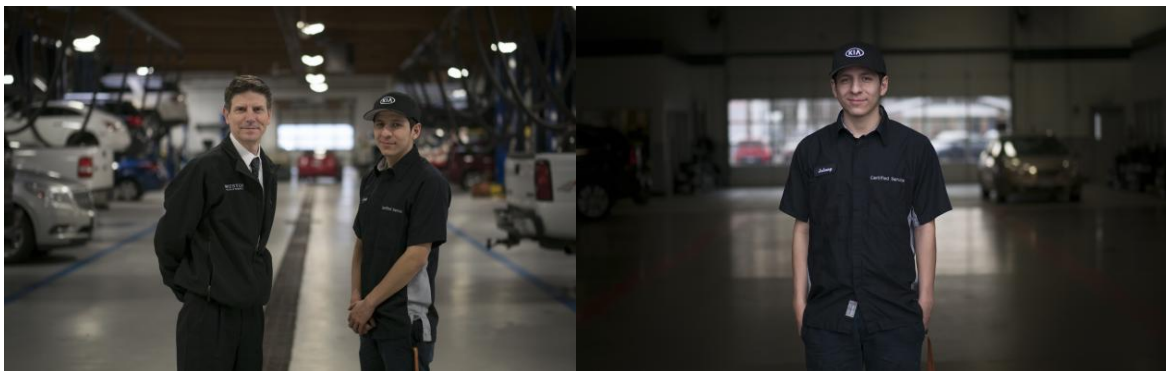
calls, having the ability to communicate with customers in both languages (English/Spanish). I started to feel more confident with myself.

I went to see Nathaly Pretell (Employment Specialist) and asked her if there is any opportunity to get a full time job in my workplace; she was so nice to show me how to navigate in the Wood Village City Hall website to find out some openings, but there was not opening jobs at that time. Nathaly advised me to talk with Greg Dirks (Records Manager/HR Specialist) about my interest in pursuing a career with them in the near future before I finish my work experience hours. I disclosed that that I was the only staff who speaks Spanish; and that they really need me in several instances. Nathaly again advised me that being Hispanic and having the ability to speak, write, and read Spanish I might be a great asset to them.

*Three months past and I was getting to the end of my 120 hours of work experience with SE Works. By the time I got to ten hours left with SE Works my supervisor from Wood Village City Hall called me in to the public works director's office, I got nervous I thought to myself what have I done wrong? When I went in they asked me if I liked working there I answered them yes and they talked to me about how I was helpful and that they wanted me to finish some empty working spot. They offered me a job and told me they would like me to stay if I accepted the offer. I didn't even think it twice. I said yes right away. I couldn't believe it I was really excited. **I was in shock when they offered me to start at \$15.00/hour** (I just thought is too much!!!) I talked with my parents who did not believe it!*

Thank you so much to SE Works InFocus who gave me the opportunity to help me build my confidence, skills, strengths through work experience”

Lastly, another successful work experience youth, **Johnny Bravo**. February 10, 2016



Dan Schofield, Service Manager Weston KIA in Gresham and Johnny Bravo

Dan Schofield, service manager at Weston Kia in Gresham, took a chance when he hired Johnny Bravo on paid work experience through SE Works Youth Center.

“On our side, the problem is we can’t find technicians,” Schofield says now. “We used to have training centers in Tigard, at Reynolds High School, at Mt. Hood and PCC. Every dealership has the same problem. And while the dealership has a lot of Latino customers, he couldn’t get any technicians who speak Spanish. This despite Weston ranking as the best midsize company to work for in Oregon. And for good reason. A technician with a two-year degree starts out making about \$70,000. They get 3 weeks’ vacation, health insurance and a retirement plan. Schofield sits across from Bravo in his office. Staff come and go. His phone rings and callers go to voicemail.

It takes a special person to work on cars. “You have to be a critical thinker, you have to be inquisitive,” Schofield says. “You want to take things apart and see how they work. It’s like a puzzle. It’s awesome.” Schofield’s most seasoned technicians are nearing retirement age and each makes well over \$100,000 a year. He’s been at Weston for more than 30 years.

Someone has to take his job, too. Weston helps a select few aspiring technicians earn their two-year degrees at Mt. Hood. As long as they maintain a B average, Weston pays half their tuition.

He says if Bravo stays on, he can look forward to starting the program this fall. Schofield has only worked with Bravo *for a few weeks. But he says he can tell pretty quickly whether someone is worth the investment.*

Rachel attended the BankWorks information session in December of 2015. She had just graduated from high school in November. She learned of BankWorks from SE Works staff. As a participant of InFocus, she also had the support of her InFocus Navigator for pursuing this career direction.

Getting into the BankWorks program is a competitive process which involves testing and interviewing. When Rachel interviewed, her demeanor was quiet, intelligent, friendly and thoughtful. She proved in her answers that she had a great work ethic and that she is an effective problem solver. She did great in the class and was excited to get a start in a teller position as we approached the graduation and job fair.

Rachel was offered a position by KeyBank at the job fair. After a couple of weeks on the job, she was worried about succeeding, but with a little reminder of her strengths and a couple of ideas how to practice, she was feeling confident again soon. In recent months, she stated that she loves her job and that she is still learning. She is attending school while learning this new field. Banking is a complex business so she is experiencing the ups and downs of learning and absorbing the large volume of information covered in the first year. We have every confidence that Rachel will succeed in her long term goals of completing school and becoming a bank manager.



Vanessa was an outstanding intern through SummerWorks for us at SE Works helping the BankWork\$ and Rethinking Job Search staff in September through November of 2016. From the first moment we met Vanessa, we knew she demonstrated intelligence, an incredible work ethic and positive attitude. Her poise and mature problem solving skills are those of someone with decades of work history even though she just graduated from high school. While helping us in the BankWork\$ program, she indicated an interest in this training and so we had her compete for a position in the next cohort. She easily earned a place in the class. The Infocus staff placed her at Nordstrom's while attending the 8 weeks of classes and kept up with many life stresses while doing both with grace and maturity. On March 8, she graduated from BankWork\$. At the job fair which immediately followed the graduation with our sponsor banks, two banks made her offers and she is considering Bank of the West which is closest to her home. They are in the process of running background checks.



Kwame

Kwame graduated with his Grade 12 certificate but was lost when it come to connecting to work. He had challenges identifying a career and tried a number of part time jobs in the community. He found out about InFocus and dropped by to see if he could enroll. Kwame worked with the InFocus Navigator and completed a work experience and decided that he wanted to take further training. Kwame found out about the BankWork\$ program and applied and was accepted into the first cohort in June 2015. Kwame successfully completed the program and wanted to work in retail first to secure references, build his confidence and improve his cusomter servcie skills and cash handling experience before committing to a bank. Kwame is working in retail at Clackamas Town Center and has built his confidence, cash handling and customer service skills. We continue to work with Kwame to secure him a position that will meet his long term career goal of banking.

