



Despite national decline, county teens join local workforce this summer

By Monique Brand
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COCHISE COUNTY — Sixteen-year-old Diana Ramirez was nervous on Saturday when she returned her application to the Sierra Vista Safeway.

“This will be my first job ever, at first I was discouraged but I am thinking about saving for college,” Ramirez said. “I can only get so much in scholarships, I need to help myself and my family as much as I can.”

Rebecca Perez is a seasonal certified lifeguard for the Bisbee Municipal Swimming Pool.

The 17-year-old Bisbee High School graduate — who said she comes from a long family history of first-responders and medical personnel — saw the opportunity to follow in her family’s footsteps.

She, too, like Ramirez, is saving money to attend college this fall.

At the pool, she works five days a week, four to eight hours a day for \$10 an hour.

“My goal is to save half of each paycheck to go towards school,” Perez said. “I have worked other (summer) jobs before including restaurants in Old Bisbee. I really like this one.”

As many America’s teenagers will take vacations this summer, most — like Ramirez and Perez — will be prepping their work clothes and begin seasonal jobs and internships.

According to a recent survey from TD Ameritrade, 71 percent of young millennials age 20 to 26 and half of teens are currently in the paid workforce.

Also, many teens will be trading paychecks for bullet points on their resumes this year, with half expecting to take unpaid internships during their college years.

And it shouldn’t be hard for a teen student to find a paid gig with the latest statistics.

In May, the U.S. unemployment rate fell to 4.3 percent, the lowest in 16 years.

The national unemployment rate for 16- to 19-year-olds in May was 14.3 percent. Back in 2009, the teenage jobless rate hit 27 percent.

“Teens are looking for summer jobs in the best labor market since the tech boom of the early 2000s,” as stated in the same survey.

Another recent study, conducted by the Monthly Labor Review, challenges TD Ameritrade’s survey.

The research, titled “The Early 2000s: a period of declining teen summer employment rates” stated in the last few decades, the summer job has been disappearing.

In the summer of 1978, 60 percent of teens were working or looking for work. Last summer, just 35 percent were.

Nonetheless, in Cochise County, both seasonal employees and summer internships are in full swing.

SIERRA VISTA

The city of Sierra Vista has part-time employees that work during various seasons throughout the year, but are not classified as seasonal.

Citywide, there are 317 full-time city employees and 162 that work part-time. Of the part-time employees, 100 make up for the leisure and library department, most are volunteers.

Teens — ages 13 to 18 — make up the 10 to 15 summer volunteers within the department.

Leisure and library provide a full range of special interest classes, excursions, and special events throughout the year including performing arts, culture, sports, and public recreation.

“We don’t have any interns as of today (June 13),” said Adam Curtis, Sierra Vista’s public information officer. “We do have opportunities for anyone wanting to apply for a part-time or volunteer opportunity.”

The city has 15 part-time job openings, including four that benefit the summer season such as lifeguards and a recreation leader for Kid’s WORLD summer recreation program.

To apply for the summer based positions, visit, sierravistaaz.gov/city-departments/human-resources/job-opportunities.

BISBEE

In Bisbee, the evidence is clear with teens working as a seasonal employees or through an internship — some in government positions.

According to interim personnel director, Monica Flores, there are eight seasonal employees that make the current number of city employees to 102 — 31 of which are part time including the seasonal positions.

After the summer jobs are over, the number will then fluctuate.

Flores added besides the seasonal employees the city offers volunteer programs, “which the city is actively recruiting.”

“The city of Bisbee has many people with a wealth of information and experience that they can help alleviate some of the workload that employees are having to fill which are sometimes comprised of two to three different positions due to them not being filled in the past because of lack of funding,” Flores said.

At the Copper Queen Library, two teens are volunteering 120 verified hours in exchange for high school credit. At the end of their participation, the students have to write an essay highlighting their experience.

“This is another opportunity for students to explore the workforce along with getting an elective credit,” said Laura Miller, principal of Bisbee High School.

Madison Dean and Gina Postles are both future students of Bisbee High. Dean, 13, will enter as a freshman and Postles, 14, will skip one grade and enter high school as a sophomore.

The duo work for four hours a day, four days a week, putting up books, and helping with the library’s publicity department. They also open the Friends of the Library bookstore.

“I feel like I am going out on adventures,” Postles said. “It’s great to help out people.”