



What did your Teenager do this summer?

By Deborah D. Thornton

When most of us were teenagers, we worked a variety of summer jobs, from babysitting (and explaining just how the front window got broken!) to putting up haybales, to serving ice cream at the local “Dairy Dip.” In contrast, if your teenage child had a paid job this summer, they were lucky. Nationwide overall unemployment in May fell to 9.7 percent, with Iowa slightly lower at 6.9 percent. The number of unemployed people in May was 115,400, up from 96,200 a year ago, but down 1,000 from April.¹ However for teenagers, 16 to 19 years old, the report remains very, very bleak. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 26 percent of these young people do not have jobs. Millions of teenagers hanging out all summer.² The trend, as shown by Challenger, Gray & Christmas (CGC), a Chicago-based employment consulting firm, has been in evidence over the past six years, even before the current recession. In 2005, over 1.7 million young people aged 16 to 19 held summer jobs nationwide. Currently only 503,000 teenagers have jobs as of June 2010, a drop of over 1.2 million for the five-year period.³

According to CGC, this is the lowest summer hiring since 1951. While July numbers are not yet in, the expectation isn't good. Dr. Harry Holzer, professor of public policy at Georgetown University, testified before Congress in May that he expects youth hiring to remain low for the next three to five years.⁴ He expressed concerns about the impact on minority and low-income students, especially men. In Iowa, the May 2010 youth (16-19 years of age) unemployment rate is 21.4 percent, slightly lower than nationally, but still significantly higher than the May 2009 rate of 16.6 percent.⁵

Holding paying summer jobs is an important part of becoming an adult and joining the real workforce. Summer jobs teach responsibility, accountability, and provide pride of accomplishment. They teach the hard lesson of what happens when you don't show up on time, aren't prepared to work, and get fired. These are lessons that need to be learned while still at home. Early work experience is also considered an important contributor to higher lifetime earnings.⁶ Presumably, if you learn to work early, the experience will help you to find and keep a job in later life.

According to Iowa Workforce Development, almost 250,000 jobs are generally held by workers aged 14 to 24 in Iowa, representing about 16 percent of the total workers. The largest sector providing jobs for 14- to 18-year-olds is the Accommodations and Food Services sector, with 19.8 percent, followed by Retail Trade at 11.1 percent. Polk County has the most young workers, as would be expected, at 42,649, but Lucas County has the largest percent for workers age 14-24 at 21.8 percent.⁷

In contrast, concern has been expressed over the last few years about teens working while going to high school, and the difficulties this may cause in focusing on their main priority — education. Hopefully, these concerns will abate as the number of 11th grade students reporting they work

A Publication of: **Public Interest Institute at Iowa Wesleyan College**

600 North Jackson Street, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa 52641-1328

If you wish to support our efforts, please donate by sending a check to us at the above address.

If you wish to donate by credit card, please go to our website: www.limitedgovernment.org.

PII is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

E-Mail: public.interest.institute@limitedgovernment.org

Phone: 319-385-3462 Fax: 319-385-3799

five or more hours a week during the school year has fallen from 62 percent in 1999 to only 47 percent in 2008.⁸ A positive result of the lack of jobs, the students will not only have more time for academics, but also for extra-curricular activities.

Summer Employment Growth Among 16- to 19- year-olds					
Year	May	June	July	Summer Jobs Gained	Change from Prior Year
2004	168,000	827,000	597,000	1,592,000	8.40%
2005	183,000	1,007,000	546,000	1,736,000	9.00%
2006	230,000	1,033,000	471,000	1,734,000	-0.10%
2007	62,000	1,114,000	459,000	1,635,000	-5.70%
2008	116,000	683,000	355,000	1,154,000	-29.40%
2009	111,000	698,000	354,000	1,165,000	0.80%
2010	6,000	497,000	?	503,000	

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. with data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Iowa Workforce Development received a \$4.5 million grant for the 2010 youth summer employment program. This grant, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), is targeted to low-income youth, and is anticipated to serve 1,200 young people.⁹ Unfortunately, as of July 12, the state website reported that there were no openings available in 15 of 99 counties.

When looking for a job, the CGC organization has several tips, applicable to all those 115,400 Iowans currently unemployed. They include making looking for work your full-time job, looking off of the beaten path at new and different opportunities, looking for jobs involving heavier labor, looking for behind-the-scenes jobs that might not be as attractive, using your network of friends and family, and pounding the pavement visiting employers in-person, dressed appropriately.

Then once you or your teen gets that job — make sure you give 110 percent, because if you don't want it, someone else does!

(Endnotes)

¹ "Iowa Unemployment Rate Dips Slightly to 6.8 percent," Iowa Workforce Development, June 18, 2010, <<http://www.iowaworkforce.org/news/XcNewsPlus.asp?cmd=view&articleid=81>> (July 8, 2010).

² "Employment status of the civilian population by sex and age," U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Table A0-1, <<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.html>> (July 12, 2010).

³ "Summer Employment Growth among 16- to 19-year-olds," Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc., <[http://economy.ocreger.com/files/2010/07/Challenger-June-Teen-job growth.jpg](http://economy.ocreger.com/files/2010/07/Challenger-June-Teen-job%20growth.jpg)> (July 12, 2010).

⁴ Henry J. Holzer, "Avoiding a Lost Generation: How to Minimize the Impact of the Great Recession on Young Workers," Testimony before the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress, May 26, 2010, <<http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/901354-young-workers.pdf>> (July 12, 2010).

⁵ E-mail from Jason Allen, Iowa Workforce Development, Workforce Program Coordinator – Youth Specialist, July 12, 2010.

⁶ David Schepp, People@Work: A Teenage Wasteland for Employment Opportunity," Daily Finance, <<http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/901354-young-workers.pdf>> (July 12, 2010).

⁷ Young Workers in Iowa, March 2009, Iowa Workforce Development and U.S. Census Bureau Partnership, <<http://www.youthforiowa.org/youngworkerprofile2009.pdf>> (July 12, 2010).

⁸ Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development, <http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/Planners_grantwriters/ICYD_resulta.html> (July 12, 2010).

⁹ "Iowa workforce Development Receives \$4.9 Million Grant to Implement Youth Summer Employment Program," Iowa Workforce Development news release, <<http://www.iowaworkforce.org/news/XcNewsPlus.asp?cmd=view&articleid=802>> (July 12, 2010).

Deborah D. Thornton is a Research Analyst with Public Interest Institute, Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

Permission to reprint or copy in whole or part is granted, provided a version of this credit line is used: "Reprinted by permission from INSTITUTE BRIEF, a publication of Public Interest Institute." The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of Public Interest Institute. They are brought to you in the interest of a better-informed citizenry.