

Success is a Journey, Not a Destination

“Success is a journey, not a destination,” said Ben Sweetland. The Michigan Works! Summer Youth Employment Program is a journey for many youth. Nearly one hundred 14-24 year-old area youth from each county are taking hold of this life long beneficial opportunity. The involved youth are fortunate to experience this historical event supported by President Obama’s American Recovery Reinvestment Act of 2009, a stimulus package created in efforts to jump start our economy and create millions of jobs.

The participants have been employed by Michigan Works! to assist many non-profit community based organizations with projects around the county. With the economic crisis at hand, employment is scarce. With this opportunity, the area youth are able to work while gaining skills, training and job experience. The adults and employers involved in the program are also able to be mentors, which for most is a very rewarding experience.

Bob Hemmingsen, Director and Youth Supervisor at Camp Wah-Wah-Tay-See, a youth camp for children with mental impairments, in Greenville enjoys working with the youth because it keeps him young, and it allows him to pass on his experience. He also said it’s a great program that offers excellent experiences for the youth. “They are taking the job more seriously, learning to come in on time and dress appropriately,” said Bob.

The Michigan Works! Summer Youth Program Media Crew visited the camp on check in day. Summer participants were busy helping children register, preparing their meals, and doing landscaping work.

Clare, 19, was working in the kitchen. She said that she enjoys working indoors. Her favorite thing has been cooking, and she said that she has learned many new recipes. Clare plans on using her first paycheck to fix her car.

Crews have also been working in some of the smaller villages in Montcalm County. A Maple Valley Township crew has spruced up Coral and Trufant’s cemeteries, giving their sheds new paint jobs and cleaning up loose brush.

Patrick Polega, Crew Leader for this group said that he has enjoyed this experience immensely.

Patrick has young children and enjoys this program work with and better understand older youth. He has also been able to teach the youth in his crew. “I’ve had to teach them about responsibility and reliability,” said Patrick. “They’re doing really well, sometimes you just have to nudge them.”



Youth working at Camp Wah-Wah-Tay-See, pulling up grass.



Youth painting at the Trufant Cemetery.



Clare, youth participant at Camp Wah-Wah-Tay-See chops



Youth cleaning out loose brush at the Trufant Cemetery.