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OP-ED | THOMAS M. MENINO AND GARY L. GOTTLIEB

## Create a summer job for a Boston teenager

May 25, 2011 | By Thomas M. Menino and Gary L. Gottlieb





MOST OF us remember our first summer job. The thrill of the first paycheck and the feeling you had some independence and responsibility. The possibilities of what could be done with the money, and then the realization that it didn't go as far as you thought. These were important lessons that helped prepare us for adulthood.

But teenagers today face a stark reality. Nationwide, 27 percent of teenagers are expected to have summer jobs, down from 51.4 percent in 2000. The youth labor market declined precipitously after the terrorist attacks in 2001, and collapsed completely after the Wall Street crash of 2008.

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Still, Boston stood strong in the face of these national trends. Last year, Boston's summer jobs program provided more than 10,000 jobs to Boston teens. But this year, in the wake of federal and state budget cuts — and even with level funding from the City of Boston — we are more than 2,000 jobs short of that target.

Even as the economy gets back on track, more than 2,000 teens won't get to take their first steps toward a lifetime of achievement, unless we act now.

Boston employers can help out. For example, companies that have hired dozens of students in the past would each need to hire two or three more young people. For each bank, law firm, and university that has participated in the past, we need its counterpart to join the summer jobs campaign.

In addition, recent start-up companies could hire teenagers. GreenTech, LifeTech, and other innovation companies could provide teens a look at entrepreneurship up close.

Big and small. Old and new. In all industries and with jobs of all types, we are calling on businesses, nonprofits, and foundations to come together to provide jobs for over 2,000 more teens.

The Boston Private Industry Council stands ready with qualified students, placement services, training programs, and job descriptions. The council has all the tools necessary to make these first starts good fits.

Celtics legend Bill Russell remarked last week that he went to bed every night asking himself how he could make the team better. Here's our chance for Boston to provide inspiration and an opportunity for summer jobs, summer learning, and workforce preparation for the next generation.

*Thomas M. Menino is the mayor of Boston. Gary L. Gottlieb, president and CEO of Partners HealthCare, is chairman the of Boston Private Industry Council.*

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