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## Teens get summer job boost in Boston

By Brian R. Ballou

Globe Staff / May 26, 2011

Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino praised a business partnership yesterday for adding to the number of badly needed summer jobs for youth and challenged others to follow suit.

"The business community has stepped up, but we need more help, especially from the smaller businesses," he said in a telephone interview moments after he led about 500 youths in a jobs rally downtown, to draw attention to the annual shortage of summer jobs.

The state Senate, after initially eliminating money for a youth summer jobs program, yesterday approved an amendment devoting \$3 million to the initiative, by a 36-to-1 vote. But even with that infusion of cash, Menino said there is a shortage of about 2,400 summer jobs for city youths this year, due to significant cuts in federal and state funding.

Nationally, summer jobs have been dwindling but locally John Hancock Financial, in partnership with Partners HealthCare, The Boston Globe, and Boston University, will be increasing the number of jobs it offers through its MLK Summer Scholars program.

"Because government money is being cut back, it's so important for the corporate world to step up and fill the void," said Carol Fulp, an executive at John Hancock, who oversees the company's corporate giving program, which provides about \$1 million annually to help fund summer jobs.

The money will go to as many as 80 nonprofits throughout Boston to fund about 650 summer jobs. In 2008, the first year of the program, about 500 teens were hired. The jobs pay about \$9.50 an hour. John Hancock plans to employ nearly 50 of those teens at its offices in South Boston and the Back Bay.

Past interns say the biggest advantage of the experience is attending board meetings, planning sessions, and workshops, along with being able to add a corporate name to their resumes. The scholars program also holds a weekly workshop at BU that focuses on professional growth.

"I gained a better aspect of the business world," said Carlos Rodriguez, 19, of Roxbury, who held a summer internship last year and will return this summer.

"Before my internship last year, I never stepped foot in the business world. It taught me a lot, especially how to work in a group. Getting up early every morning during the summer wasn't fun, and having to dress up with a tie . . . but it taught me responsibility."

Rodriguez, a freshman at Wheelock College in Boston, said he plans to be a teacher, but his internship spurred his interest in business and he is considering how he might incorporate it into his career. Thelma Terrero, 19, a Boston College freshman majoring in human development, also was an intern last year in the scholars program, employed in the workforce planning and development department. She helped train new employees.

"This internship did give me motivation to start looking into business, and I still have time to feel it all out in terms of what I want to do as a career."

Rodriguez and Terrero are among a shrinking number of teens who secure summer employment. According to a study by Joseph McLaughlin and Andrew Sum at the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, 45 percent of teens held summer jobs in 2000, compared to 25 percent in 2010, a 60-year low. "It's really the overall economy, and disadvantaged youth are the lowest in the pecking order when it comes to jobs during these down times," said Adrienne Fernandes, an analyst with the Washington, D.C.-based Congressional Research Service.

Twenty years ago, John Hancock started a summer jobs program, hiring 40 youths referred to the firm by Boston police. The scholars program eventually came out of that effort.

"It's empowering," Fulp said. "These kids get to see people who look like them and who don't look like them. They get their names on placards at their cubicles, they go to board meetings, and they have mentors, so their exposure to what goes on is truly a great learning experience."

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