



Perris News

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

Student Interns Work for the City

The City of Perris is doing its part to combat teen-age and young adult unemployment.

More than two dozen area residents are performing a myriad of tasks around City Hall they say will give them a big leg up on the competition when they hit the job market for full-time employment when they graduate high school and college.

Student interns are trimming trees, planting landscaping, installing dry wall, plastering, painting, reviewing and cataloguing building plans and schematics and shooting and editing video for the City's website.

"I'm getting real-world experience to supplement what I learn in textbooks," said Betzabe Espinoza, who is interning this summer in the Public Works Administration Office.

Espinoza, 20, is a civil-engineering major at Cal Poly Pomona. Her duties include reviewing blueprints and plans, cataloguing them and assisting in planning a major ground-breaking ceremony at City Hall. She said she's learned that taking a project from the drawing board to the brick-and-mortar stage requires the cooperation of numerous people and several agencies. Her experience leaves her wanting to find work in municipal government eventually.

Eric Lee, 16, a junior at Rancho Verde High School, said his stint working in the City's Information Technology Department will serve him well as he pursues his goal of working in computer animation or other visual arts. His duties this summer have included assisting on Internet upgrades to City computers as well as shooting and editing video for the City's website, www.cityofperris.org

"Everyone has been really nice, and everyone works to get the job done," he said. "This program has helped me a lot."

Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin said the high-schoolers and college kids now working for Perris are doing more than just taking up space.

"This isn't just a babysitting program to keep kids off of the streets during the summer," he said. "These kids are being treated like real city employees. They have assignments in our City Clerk's office, our Public Works Division, the Community Services Department, Human Resources and the Information Technology Division. They are learning how to conduct themselves in a professional environment and at the same time earn a salary."

Madkin said the young employers came to Perris as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was signed by president Obama in February. The act authorized funding under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 for a variety of employment programs, including those for youth.

Funds were not directed to individual cities, but to counties to administer and disburse through a process of competitive proposals. Riverside County received \$9.4 million to fund employment programs, one of which is the Summer Work Experience Program. Due to the quick time frame required to hire the youths and begin scheduling them for work, most cities did not apply for the funds and the local non-profit Youth Opportunity Centers were awarded the grants.

The Oasis Youth Opportunity Center in Perris is one of the agencies awarded funding for the period of June 1 to Oct. 31.

Oasis partnered with the City of Perris to place 25 youths, between the ages of 14 and 24, to work in various departments. The Community Services Department is coordinating the program to ensure that the youths are assigned to city offices/departments where they will gain the most exposure to transferable job skills. The kids may work a maximum of 200 hours in the program.

Public works interns Rafael Quevedo and Anthony Lay say they don't want the summer to end. They've been busy learning how to trim trees, landscape, paint, install drywall and a myriad of other trades.

"It's been a much better experience than I ever imagined," said Lay, 21. "I didn't expect this at all. I've done a lot of things I've never done before and I'll be more confident when I look for a full-time job. These are some of the coolest people I've ever been around."

Quevedo said he helped build two new rooms at the Public Works Yard. He said he learned to work with people along with picking up some skills in the building trades.

"I had no expectations when I came here other than to do my best, show potential and have fun," said Quevedo, 16, who attends Citrus Hill High School. "It's been a wonderful experience."

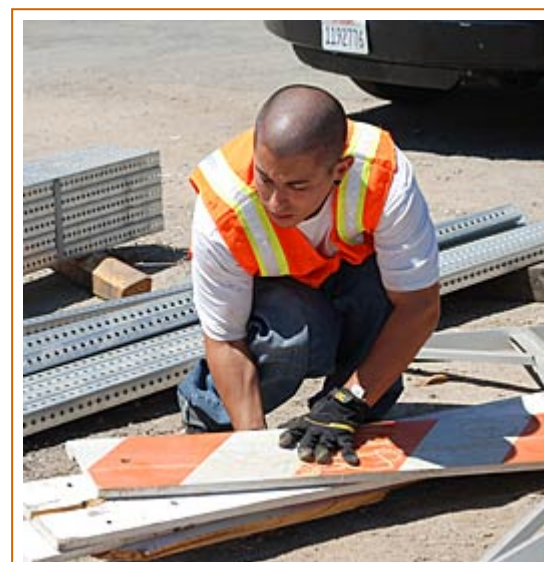
Madkin said the City is eager to do its part in helping young people learn work values.

"For many of the youths in our program this was their first working experience, so they did not bring much in the way of skills to the workplace," he said. "If you watch them now, they are all making contributions to their assigned workplace, which frees up our city staff to work on more demanding tasks."

See a short video...

You need to have the Adobe
Flash Player to view this
content.

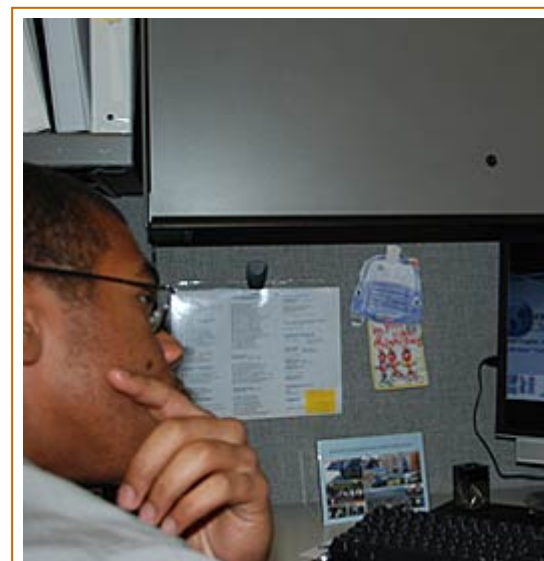
[Please click here to continue.](#)



Anthony Lay helps out in the Public Works Yard in Perris. Anthony has found employment as part of a summer youth program the City is using to provide area teen-agers and young adults with valuable work experience



Betzabe Espinoza reviews an engineering plan. The Cal Poly Pomona civil engineering major says she's learned many valuable lessons in her time with the City's Public Works Administration Office.



Eric Lee edits a video for the City's website.



Rafael Quevedo tosses a damaged stop sign into a recycling pile.