



October 2, 2009

250 students benefit from summer work program

By *LOU WHITMIRE*
News Journal

MANSFIELD -- If the goal in Richland County was to give jobs to 250 high school and college students this summer through the Workforce Investment Act, case manager Famico Williams said the program was a success.

Just that many students were provided jobs as a result of funds awarded to Richland County Job & Family Services under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009.

That grant money paid for the students to work at 60 area employers that participated in the program, said Williams, whose employer, Mid-Ohio Educational Service Center, operates the WIA program. Students earned \$7.30 per hour, and those in supervisory positions earned \$9 an hour.

The students, ages 16 to 24, met Tuesday at the Educational Service Center for a final class called "Dress for Success."

Vonda Brent, 22, a Mansfield resident and Madison Comprehensive High School graduate, worked this summer at Mansfield Memorial Homes.

"I loved it. I prepared food and also delivered it," she said.

Although the summer work program is over, Brent said she was hired into a permanent position at the nursing home. She plans to attend college to study accounting.

For Heather Wilds, 23, of Shelby, working this summer at ABC Childcare in Shelby was a dream come true.

The 23-year-old Shelby woman, who is mother to three small children, said the job was great. She was able to take her kids with her to work, where child care was provided.

Wilds and Shelby resident Katie Otterbacher, 20, both now have permanent jobs at the day care center.

Otterbacher, a mother of two children, ages 16 months and six months, said she was a stay-at-home mom and now looks forward to earning an income. A graduate of Plymouth High School, Otterbacher said she plans to go to college to become a pharmacy technician.

For now she is thankful to have found a job.

For Justin King, 22, of Mansfield, working at the North End Community Improvement Collaborative this summer was a great learning experience. He worked on landscaping projects and did community

service work.

King, who is a junior at Akron University, plans to return to college for winter quarter with the help of grant money and student loans.

A sports management major, King said the job this summer provided him with daily living money.

"I learned a lot this summer," the struggling college student said.

Williams said many businesses supported the program, including Richland Bank, which provided an employee to speak to students about money management.

Staff from the local JFS office supervised students during the summer program, which ended Tuesday.
