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## Teens fill vacancies as job openings persist

By Ashley Dong

For many children, summer is a sacred season. It is the time to swim at the public pool or attend fun summer camps. Unfortunately, with the nationwide labor crunch and reports across the country of a shortage of lifeguards to monitor pools and camp counselors to run the programs, finding qualified employees is proving to be a challenge.

The Lafayette Parks and Recreation Department, which runs a local summer program for 4- to 11-year-olds, Camp Awesome, found a solution to their summer labor deficit. Using Camp Awesome as their foundation, they created an afterschool program, called After School Awesome [ASA], to offer childcare throughout the school year. This way, the employees of Camp Awesome have an opportunity for year-round employment with the ASA, according to Director of Lafayette Parks, Trails & Recreation Jonathan Katayanagi.

With less experience than adults and more time on their hands, teenagers are often willing to work for lower pay and benefits, which is ideal for hiring companies. In the annual summer job outlook for American teenagers, the Drexel University Center for Labor Markets and Policy predicted a summer teenage employment rate of 32.8%, the highest it's been since 2007.

By getting a job, teenagers not only help out companies in need, but they also learn invaluable life skills, like how to work with adults, how to assist customers, and how to take responsibility for one's actions. "We have found that working in programs like these camps and classes creates well-rounded individuals and gives the students experiences they can write about in their college essays," Katayanagi said. Additionally, teen employment is path-dependent, meaning that teens who are working now are more likely to continue working as adults.

But, working as an inexperienced teenager in a fast-paced environment alongside more adept and well-trained adults has its difficulties. "The biggest challenge for me was learning how I should be treated at work, even as just a minimum wage employee, and how to stand up for myself when I am mistreated," Acalanes High School graduated senior Anson Añonuevo said, after spending a year working as a crew member for Chipotle.

"Real" jobs like Añonuevo's - as cashiers, retail associates, waitresses, and more - are mostly available to just those 16 years old and older. According to the California Child Labor Laws, 14- and 15-year-olds can only work 18 hours a week, while 16- and 17-year-olds are permitted to work up to 48 hours a week, which makes them more hireable.

However, there are still many job opportunities for those 15 years old and younger. Eden Berzansky, a 14-year-old rising freshman at Campolindo High School, has a summer job coaching 3- to 5-year-old swimmers at Las Trampas. But Berzansky is already learning some hard lessons after joining the ranks of the recently employed.

"Earning money is a lot tougher than it looks," Berzansky said. "I didn't expect to have to work so much and whenever I get a paycheck, it's never as much as I thought it would be."

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