

Program offered summer employment to Bristol students

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STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL - Thirty Bristol high school students were given the chance for summer employment despite the state Summer Youth Employment Program positions in Bristol being cut earlier this summer.

An executive order Gov. Dannel Malloy issued over the summer - because a state budget was not adopted - cut funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program. The program helped students between the ages of 14 and 21 to find summer employment in places such as municipal offices and libraries that would have begun in July.

This summer, about 400 Hartford-area kids did not receive employment through the program, reported the Hartford Courant earlier in July. Though similar programs have been funded through community organizations to make sure youth had summer employment.

One of those was The Walsh Summer Work Experience Program that was funded with a grant from the Tim and Mary Walsh Charitable Fund at the Main Street Community Foundation. The program was coordinated by the United Way of West Central Connecticut.

Susan Sadecki, president and CEO at the community foundation, said, the program “filled a vital need in the Bristol community this summer. The grant award was expanded to fund 10 more slots, even before we knew the state program would be canceled.”

The program, which is roughly a decade old, was established to help youth not served by the state-funded program because of limited funding or eligibility requirements. This summer, it provided the opportunity for 30 Bristol high schools students to take part in the seven-week program.

Nancy Micloskey, program coordinator of Walsh summer work program, said, what really makes it unique “is the innovative classroom curriculum and the field trips to employer sites in varying industries. We’re really looking at the lifelong impact that this program can have on students.”

In the first week, student learned career-readiness skills and social and emotional learning in the classroom with Professor Christina Welch. For the next six weeks, each student had real-world work experiences four days a week, and the fifth day was spent in the classroom or on career-exploration field trips.



Main Street Community Foundation Bristol high school students learn about the aviation industry at the Oxford Airport.

The worksites were all located in Bristol and included Bristol Hospital, the Board of Education, Biker's Edge, the Boys & Girls Club of Bristol Family Center, Environmental Learning Centers of Connecticut, New England Carousel Museum and Imagine Nation, A Museum Early Learning Center.

On the field trips, the students visited Oxford Airport and learned about the aviation field and airport management, and attended a financial literacy workshop organized by Thomaston Savings Bank.

They participated in a walking tour of North Main Street in Bristol which included a presentation at the fire department, police department and post office, and had a conversation over lunch with Mayor Ken Cockayne and other city officials.

President and CPO of United Way Donna Osuch said the program "was an incredible success and we hope to be able to provide this opportunity to students again next year."

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