

ESBLN Eastern Shore Business Leadership Network
Putting Ability to Work www.esbln.org
By Jackie Gast, Director

Whether we agree with the federal stimulus package or not, we need to take advantage of what it is trying to do. Soon, there will be stimulus money coming into the states targeted towards getting youth to work. And, when it gets to our local area, we will be tasked to move fast in order to get these funds into the economy.

The students who qualify for these work opportunities most likely will have to meet certain criteria which include being economically disadvantaged, having a disability, and being an “at risk” student. The program hopes to support hundreds of students who will be paid by stimulus funds. In return, the employers will be asked to mentor the students while in their employ. The experience has to be a productive one and the goal is to match students with work that interests them. We all want students to have a positive work experience in order to become tax-paying, productive citizens. Remember, students, like all people, tend to rise to the level of expectation. If we expect more from students by giving projects for the work experience instead of filing papers, for example, then all can benefit.

Although times are tough, a student’s employment can in no way replace a dislocated employee’s position. There is a time frame for the employment experience, but the hope is that the student will be considered for permanent employment if the opening is there. This has historically been the goal of internships, along with mentoring and experience.

We typically think of students working independently at various businesses, however, students could work in teams. A team of students could be employed at a nursery, a landscaping business, a cleaning business, a construction business, and so on. Many students in the targeted eligibility group do not have transportation, and oddly enough, transportation needs are not expected to be paid by stimulus funds. Having teams of workers could help tremendously with that issue. Also, the growing sector of non-profits can take advantage of the stimulus work programs as well as our governments, for-profits, service and professional industries. All we have to do is open the door.

On a side note, the Eastern Shore Society for Human Resource Management, a group that serves the human resources professional and advances the profession, invites all business people to its “Riding the Waves” Conference in Ocean City, MD on April 30. The morning sessions focus on corporate culture, the aging workforce, top trends in employment law and the how-to on discussing the undiscussable. The afternoon is not your typical conference agenda but will be a mock trial that will include an acting judge, defense, prosecution, witnesses, and jury. One thing for sure is there will be a lot of informal, if not formal, discussion on the stimulus package at this conference! For more information on the conference, visit easternshore.shrm.org. Watch the news for more information on youth employment.