

According to Person

# Busy Minds And Busy Hands Don't Present Problems To The Community

By Jalyne Strong  
Post Staff Writer

"It's an old cliché," admits Robert Person, "an idle mind is the devil's workshop. But," continues the Director of the City's Employment and Training Department, "busy minds and busy hands don't seem to present problems to the community."

Person is speaking about the need for teen summer employment in Charlotte. And in answer to the approximate rate of 20 percent unemployment among minority youth in the city, Person's office will be operating three different employment programs this summer.

The first, the federally funded Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), Person projects will employ 800 youths between the ages of 14 to 21. "It's quite a large program through which the youngsters will be paid to work in public and non-profit arenas of the city," he describes.

The jobs will be diverse with employment designated at 160 work sites in the community ranging from public schools, social agencies, day care agencies, the YMCA and YWCA and other public departments. The official kick-off for the JTPA employment program, according to Person, will be June 12 and the jobs are scheduled to last until mid-August.

Teenagers between the ages of 14 and 21 can apply for these jobs through the Employment and Training Department, located at 401 E. Second St., or at the Employment Security Commission within the Alexander Street Neighborhood Center, 910 N. Alexander St. "We've been recruiting youngsters for the past several months," says Person. "We're trying to afford the opportunity to those who want to work and gain experience through the program. Especially to attract



Robert Person  
...CETD director

those who want to work but are not able to find jobs."

There is the age requirement and an economic criteria for these jobs. Those youngsters who live with parents who receive public assistance are automatically eligible. Otherwise, to meet federal guidelines the teenagers must live with

a family of four that is making less than \$11,000. When applying for this program the person must possess a Social Security card and information on family income, preferably a W-2 form or paycheck stub.

In another program, the City will place at least 135 youngsters in jobs within the City departments. Titled, "The Summer Youth Program," it is projected to employ teenagers in various jobs such as operations, sanitation, parks and recreation, which all fall under the City of Charlotte. Criteria for eligibility is similar to the JTPA program.

Finally, Person's department is seeking to employ 300 youngsters in private sector jobs. "This last program involves training an individual whom we can send to an employer," he relates. An orientation class has been set up in conjunction with Central Piedmont Community College where the youngster will receive instruction on job expectations. "The basics will be covered, such as dress, punctuality and filling out an application," notes Person. "It's to help them understand what's involved in a day's work for a day's pay."

Following orientation, the best qualified candidates will be sent to the major companies that have developed jobs for this program," states Person. The jobs will run for at least eight weeks and teen employees will receive no less than minimum wage. "And in some instances more," Person points out.

In the first two job programs the emphasis is on the economically disadvantaged but in the last category Person maintains that it is open to all interested youngsters.

Also in the latter category, Person contends, "We have several major companies committed to x-number of jobs but we need more private sector jobs. We're expecting quite a number of applicants when high school and colleges close," he predicts. "And our strength will have to come from smaller businesses."

Any small businesses interested in offering summer employment to teenagers can call Robert Person at 336-3101.

"It's important for the welfare of Charlotte and every community to help afford employment opportunity to our citizens when they are young," declares Person. "It's too

late to get your first job when you're an adult," he points out.

"We believe in the work ethic," Person continues. "The sooner you learn that you don't get something for nothing, the better."

"Unemployment for minority youth is extremely high," Person complains, pointing to the national

average of 40 percent. Yet, acknowledging the lower average of 20 percent in Charlotte, Person expresses, "We have a good climate here owed to the attitude of the companies and elected officials who are generally concerned. Our community seems to present a very good effort and I'm glad to be a part of it."

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