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Learn & Earn Returns for Another Summer of Safe In-Person and Virtual Youth Employment Opportunities

PITTSBURGH – This week kicks off the application opening for the 2021 Learn & Earn Summer Youth Employment Program (Learn & Earn). Made possible through a partnership between Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh and Partner4Work, this six-week youth employment program provides meaningful work experiences, mentorship, and career exposure to low-income young adults ages 14-24 residing in Allegheny County. Twenty-two community-based organizations are prepared to lead the implementation of the program this summer.

While 2020 presented challenges unlike any encountered in years past, it provided the Learn & Earn partners a chance to reimagine the program in a manner that kept young people engaged and inspired, regardless of their physical location. To maintain safety and comfort for all involved, this year’s program will once again be implementing a blended model of in-person and virtual work opportunities for its participants. Whereas many other summer internship programs pressed pause last year, Learn & Earn helped narrow the technology gap, saw increased participation of new partners, and built capacity for digital engagement that strengthened programs beyond the summer. Now, in 2021, the Learn & Earn program aims to similarly motivate young people, help boost family income and introduce local employers to the future workforce.

“It has been a long year, and we are just as excited as everyone else to return to some sense of normalcy, and that is particularly true for our youth. We’re excited to see the return of the Learn & Earn program, and grateful to our many partners for their flexibility in providing both in-person and virtual
opportunities,” said County Executive Rich Fitzgerald. “We hope that our youth take full advantage of The Learn & Earn program so they may receive real-world experience as well as learning communication and teamwork skills which are in demand in today's workplace. We thank the City of Pittsburgh and Partner4Work for their continued work on and support of this program.”

Since 2016, the program has placed more than 9,000 youth to summer jobs and contributed more than $8,000,000 to the local economy. Despite the obstacles of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1,610 young people were employed last summer, earning an average of $958.41. In total, $1.59 million were paid to young people and put back into the region while youth gained meaningful work experiences in-person or at home virtually. By helping to close the digital divide and connecting participants to tech resources, youth who live far from public transportation were able to complete more projects and build relationships with other interns throughout the County. This year, the blended model will again utilize virtual work opportunities to ensure that an even greater number of youth have the chance to earn income, learn the value of technology in the workplace and develop new professional skills.

“We are excited to kick off another successful year of Learn & Earn with our partners at Allegheny County and Partner4Work. We are proud of the work that our young people do in this program in developing professional skills, creating their networks and earning wages Learn & Earn provides us the opportunity to equitably invest in our most important asset – our young people who are the talent that will define our region’s future,” said Mayor William Peduto.

One of the key factors in Learn & Earn’s continued success is its dynamic range of industries and employment options. Learn & Earn’s diverse opportunities are provided by community-based organizations and focus on 11 career tracks based on the growing or trending occupations in the Pittsburgh area. These tracks include health care, education, science and technology, entrepreneurship, government and community services, labor and trades and others. Throughout Learn & Earn’s history, youth have participated in work duties such as multimedia production, urban garden management, forest beautification, video editing, office coordination, outreach creation and more.

“For many young adults, Learn & Earn is their first glimpse into the professional working world, and thanks to our committed partners, we are pleased to kick off another year of future-shaping job opportunity,” said Earl Buford, Chief Executive Officer, Partner4Work. “Between the mentoring, professional skill development and hands-on learning approach, this program holistically prepares youth for career paths in any industry. We are thrilled to see the program enter into its now-7th year and continue to positively impact and educate tomorrow’s workers.”

The window for youth to apply extends from Monday, March 15 to Monday, May 31. The work period begins on June 21 and runs through August 6. Interested youth can complete the online application at jobs4summer.org, and if needed, schedule an appointment for in-person application assistance at one of the participating Application Support Centers. Virtual help is also available at select locations. A complete list of Application Support Centers and interactive map can be found here.

In addition to the invaluable support of the County, City, non-profit and community organizations, the local business community also plays a pivotal role in the ongoing success of Learn & Earn, particularly through the Learn & Earn Corporate Internship Program. The Corporate Internship Program is a highly selective 8-week professional internship program for young adults ages 18-24 who have prior work experience and want to build their skills in in-demand industries such as healthcare, engineering, government, finance and more. Past Corporate interns have contributed to projects such as digital media marketing, engineering project management, and robot program development. Businesses looking to make an impact, invest in our region’s youth and become a corporate host partner should contact Partner4Work. The window for Corporate interns to apply extends until April 2, with work dates beginning on June 14. Interested Corporate interns can learn more and apply here.

About Partner4Work

Nationally recognized for innovation, Partner4Work, formerly Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board, is the workforce development organization that connects funding, expertise and opportunities for employers, job seekers, agencies, and policy makers to develop a thriving workforce in the Pittsburgh area. As stewards of more than $21 million in public and private workforce funds, Partner4Work oversees and funds workforce programs for adults, dislocated workers and youth;
educates the community through labor market analytics; and implements innovative solutions to the region's systemic workforce challenges. More information is available at www.partner4work.org.

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