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NEW HAVEN * City youth urged businesses to support jobs for teens at a press conference Friday afternoon in City Hall. Mayor John DeStefano Jr. and Superintendent of Schools Reginald Mayo joined in the appeal.

"Hundreds of youth have not been able to find jobs. I know because I am one of them. But I am doing something about it," said Rollesscia Hurd-Rosa, a student at Wilbur Cross High School.

She now serves on the steering committee for Youth@Work, the agency that develops jobs for New Haven youth in partnership with the city, the Board of Education, the Workforce Alliance, the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce and Empower New Haven. Youth@Work is trying to set up partnerships with businesses that will hire youth ages 13 to 18 for the summer, for paid internships, or for year-round part-time jobs.

Jose Crespo, 16, president of his junior class at Wilbur Cross High School, has found a job working in the graphics department at his school. For Crespo and many other New Haven youth, getting a job as a teen is not just a matter of ambition but one of urgent financial need.

"I come from a single-parent home, and now I can say to my mother, let me buy the groceries. Before I used to walk around the streets doing nothing, now I have a job and responsibility," he said. "I just remember to put God first," he added.

Last year, the city's summer youth employment program helped 470 youth ages 13 to 18 find jobs, but another 1,300 went jobless. This year the mayor wants to double the number of jobs filled by youth in the program.

"Book learning is important, but nothing substitutes for learning by doing," DeStefano said.

State Rep. Toni Walker, D-New Haven, told the audience that she is pushing for the governor to put \$10 million of the state surplus into a trust fund for youth every year. The money can be used to fund employment programs.

She also urged business outsourcing work overseas to reconsider the potential labor pool among local teens.

"I don't think we need to send a call center to India. Our children can work a phone very well," Walker said. "Give our children a chance to work in corporate America," she said.

UBS Financial Services New Haven branch Complex Manager Douglas Hedley told the crowd that one teen he hired from Hill Regional Career High School, Justin Augustine, performed at a higher level than many regular employees.

He kept in touch with his supervisor, filled out performance reports accurately without asking questions, and did them on time. When Justin's supervisor suggested he read "The Intelligent Investor," Justin not only read it, but asked for explanations and secondary material.

"We hope to see you on Wall Street someday," Hedley told Justin and to the crowd, he said. "It's not often you get a chance to make a difference in someone's life. Justin was terrific. I call on my fellow business partners to jump in. You will get as much out of it as you put in."

Alvin Johnson, a vice president at Yale-New Haven Hospital, told businesses that the partnership works both ways. For businesses, reaching out to high school students can be a way of finding and keeping talent at an early stage. As a hospital, Yale-New Haven has managed to get a nurse recruiter and nurse practitioner out of the deal. The hospital began its partnership with New Haven high schools in the 1980s with 10 students, today it has tripled to 30 students.

"They challenge us to grow up. This is a valuable business venture as well as a community interest," Johnson said.

Mayo told the audience that it takes only a contribution of \$1,000 to support a summer job for a young person if they could not find a job inside the company. He also stressed that many city youth need year-round, after-school jobs. Mayo said that he hopes Youth@Work can help every child seeking a job to find one.

"There were so many who wanted to work but couldn't work," he said.

Police Chief Francisco Ortiz Jr., also on hand for the occasion, used the opportunity to again point out the link between crime and unemployment. "That is the common denominator. The vast majority of the people we arrest do not have jobs," he said. "Jobs help people move toward independence."