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## Grant helps more teens get work

Steve Higgins , Register Business Editor

**-NEW HAVEN — The Youth@Work program has placed more than 1,000 New Haven teenagers in summer jobs this month, compared with just 400 last summer.**

Much of the credit for the increase goes to a \$900,000 grant from the state Department of Labor to the New Haven-based Workforce Alliance in early July, said Robert A. Fort, marketing director for the Workforce Alliance.

More than half the funds went to Youth@Work, a coalition among the city, the Workforce Alliance, the New Haven Board of Education and Empower New Haven.

Youth@Work provides low-income students ages 14 to 19 with full-year and summer jobs.

Clients under age 16 typically work for the Department of Public Works, City Hall, the Boy's and Girl's Club and summer camps, along with other agencies and nonprofit organizations, and Youth@Work pays them a stipend.

"The agencies get help they need and don't have the budget for, and the kids get money for their efforts," Fort said.

Teens ages 16 to 19 often receive wages from companies that hire them through the program.

The Board of Education identifies teens who want to work and matches them up with employers.

Some of the state grant money went to other cities in the Workforce Alliance's territory — Meriden, West Haven, Hamden, Milford and Middletown.

The grant was part of the state's overall \$4 million disbursement to labor force agencies statewide this year.

"I want to make sure our young people have the resources to find jobs that will take full advantage of their individual talents and skills," Gov. M. Jodi Rell said.

William Villano, executive director of Workforce Alliance, said in a statement, "The approval of state funding for 2006 allows us to grow the summer jobs programs in our central cities of Meriden and New Haven, while supporting several other communities around the region."

Summer jobs build self-esteem and provide experience in the workplace, he said. Young people also gain much-needed earnings of their own, which is a welcome benefit for many economically disadvantaged families, he added.

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