

Youth job programs big summer hit

By Steve Higgins Register Business Editor

Steve Higgins can be reached at business@nhregister.com or 789-5752.

NEW HAVEN — Summer jobs programs for youth ran up record numbers this year, according to the Workforce Alliance.

More than 1,450 young people in New Haven and six surrounding cities and towns landed summer jobs through the Alliance and other agencies. In the past, only New Haven youths were served by the funding, and about 700 to 800 jobs were provided.

The state increased its funding 25 percent, and the city of New Haven gave a record amount, said Robert A. Fort, marketing director for the agency.

“The increases in funding allowed us to expand on a program that other communities had frequently asked about,” said Fort.

In the South Central region, the Alliance found summer jobs for youths ages 14 to 19 in New Haven, East Haven, West Haven, Hamden, Meriden, Middletown and Old Saybrook.

The state gave \$1.1 million to the New Haven-based Alliance, which serves 22 cities and towns in South Central Connecticut. That was part of a record \$5 million grant split among five work force agencies statewide.

New Haven gave a record \$435,000 to Youth@Work — a New Haven partnership involving the city, Workforce Alliance, Empower New Haven and other groups.

About \$37,000 was raised in the private sector, and a variety of other agencies contributed, such as the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, which gave \$20,000, and the New Haven Housing Authority, which gave \$19,000.

The state money alone funded jobs — along with supervisors and other related expenses — for 688 youths in the region. Of those, 300 live in New Haven. Another 800-plus jobs in New Haven were funded by the contributions from the city and other groups.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell said the summer programs help build the state’s future work force. “These employment and learning programs not only teach specific skills, but participants come away with valuable lessons about responsibility, teamwork and the basic work ethic,” she said in a written statement.

Statewide, the Connecticut Department of Labor and the five Workforce boards served 3,715 youths during the summer and 385 during the school year.

Bill Villano, executive director of the Workforce Alliance, credited the efforts of two state legislators for convincing state officials to increase funding for summer jobs over the past two years — Toni E. Walker, D-New Haven, and Marie L. Kirkley-Bey, D-Hartford.