

Dozens Of Employers Sign Up To Hire STEP-UP Chattanooga Paid Summer Interns

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

Forty Chattanooga area businesses, nonprofits and organizations will employ HCDE high school students this summer through the STEP-UP Chattanooga paid summer internship program.

The students who are applying to be STEP-UP Chattanooga paid summer interns will be doing mock interviews Thursday evening with Chattanooga area business leaders to help them prepare for the work they will be doing this summer.

In collaboration with partners and funders, Public Education Foundation and Hamilton County Department of Education launched STEP-UP Chattanooga in January, an internship program for high school juniors and seniors in Hamilton County public schools designed to address the challenges faced by both businesses and students in a global economy.

BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation, Inc. committed \$300,000 and Benwood Foundation contributed \$200,000 for the first two years of the program which serves underrepresented students from low-income backgrounds, those most at risk for joblessness and lack of higher education. The City of Chattanooga and Hamilton County are also founding partners.

STEP-UP Chattanooga has recruited local high school students and is providing work readiness training designed to help them be successful in interviews and professional settings. One hundred students will be hired by area businesses, nonprofit agencies, and public institutions where they will complete assignments this summer. Throughout the experience, students will receive support and feedback from STEP-UP staff and supervisors at their place of employment.

The following businesses, nonprofits and organizations have signed up to hire STEP-UP Chattanooga paid interns this summer: Application Researchers, ASA Engineering & Consulting, Inc., Benwood Foundation, Bessie Smith Cultural Center, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee, Booker T. Washington State Park, Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA), Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce, Chattanooga Florist, Chattanooga Gas Company, Chattanooga Public Library, Chattanooga Lookouts, Chattanooga News Chronicle, Chattanooga State Community College, Chattanooga Renaissance Fund, Chattanooga Times Free Press, Chattanooga Zoo, Chattem, City of Chattanooga, The Company Lab (CO.LAB), Creative Discovery Museum, The Enterprise Center, EPB of Chattanooga, Greenspaces, Lamp Post Group, The Links, Incorporated-Chattanooga Chapter, Northside Neighborhood House, Public Education Foundation, River City Company, SmartBank, 2nds Building Materials (Southeastern Salvage, Home Emporium, Discount Building Materials), Southtree, SunTrust Bank, TechTown Foundation, Inc., Tennessee Aquarium, United Way of Greater Chattanooga, Vision Hospitality Group, Warren and Griffin Law Firm, WRCB-TV and WTCI-TV.

Research from the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce indicates there are currently 15,000 jobs that cannot be filled by Hamilton County residents based on educational requirements. Additionally, the Harvard Graduate School of Education found that a major reason students fail to complete a two- or four-year college program is that "too many can't see a clear, transparent connection between their program of study and tangible opportunities in the labor market."

"Organizations hosting STEP-UP interns will build relationships with a pool of talented, diverse future

employees while filling job vacancies and demonstrating a commitment to improving the lives of at-risk youth. Students will have opportunities to explore careers while developing work skills, as well as to network with adult professionals who can help them achieve educational and professional goals," officials said.

STEP-UP Chattanooga is modeled after the nationally-recognized STEP-UP Minneapolis program, which has served over 20,000 students since 2004. Ninety-six percent of STEP-UP Minneapolis supervisors reported that interns made a valuable contribution to the workplace and the program was a success at their companies.

STEP-UP Chattanooga complements PEF's other College Access & Success initiatives, including Camp College, Passport Scholars, support for Hamilton County's College Access & Career Advisers, and community education.

For more information on becoming a business partner, visit stepupchattanooga.org.