

REDMOND YOUTH CAREER CONNECT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

by *Larry Holeman*



As part of workforce development in the Redmond community, REDI hosts The Redmond Internship program through Redmond Youth Career Connect. This program began its efforts last fall. Youth Career Connect is a centralized internship program that brings together employers and educators through REDI's Internship Coordinator to match students with real-world work opportunities. This update provides a review of our first year.

As with any new program, the start-up stage of the Redmond Youth Career Connect effort had its unknowns, and unexpected barriers to overcome. However, through a lot of work and support from the education and business communities, we have created a working model that has successfully placed a substantial number of students into internships.

The schools are critical to the program in developing successful approaches of engaging students, reviewing resumes and career path desires, which can lead to good internship opportunities. With the school's active support, we have placed students from Ridgeview High School, Redmond High School, Redmond Proficiency Academy, COCC, and OSU Cascades.

The internship program is a great opportunity for students not only to gain valuable work-place experience but also potentially receive school credit. Participating in internships has additional benefits for students in terms of improving resumes for fu-

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ture opportunities and college applications.

The second component to this equation is the business community. Employers have been very supportive and willing to become hosting partners. Interns are learning and participating in a variety of Redmond industries from engineering, manufacturing, video production, graphics design, construction, service, and recreation. The length of each internship also varies. An Intern could be working a few hours a week learning and performing different tasks, or work on specific project-based ef-

orts over several months. Because of this start-up success, REDI is taking advantage of this program bringing on its own intern from Ridgeview High School to do a project-based effort focusing on supply chain resources. "Having an intern in the office is one of the best steps we've ever taken. It's allowed us to get a number of projects done, as an organization that we just didn't have the resources to complete. The energy these students possess is remarkable", stated Jon Stark, Senior Director of REDI.

The final and most valuable component is the student. Today's youth are eager to explore things they didn't know existed and dispel myths of what they know about the work world. Here is what a few of our students had to say:

"...The whole staff is great and it feels like family there. So blessed to have this opportunity. They're definitely putting me to work. Thanks!" -- Logan

"It has been a pleasure to work here, and

yes we have discussed future plans for this summer and boy am I excited. After graduation I will continue to work here....FULL TIME!!!!... " -- Kaylee

Clearly the business community is actively supporting and helping our next generation workforce. With this support we have currently connected 63 students to internship opportunities supported by 31 Redmond employers. Another statement to the success and commitment to this program is that 87% of the interns placed are paid internships. Further, the hours students have

worked in internships is approaching 5,000 with some interns being converted to full-time employees. Employer's feedback hosting interns has been favorable, beyond expectations.

This is a credit to the student's eagerness to work in opportunities not previously available, to educational systems who have helped launch the effort and engaged businesses that are training to help our youth prepare for their career development.

As summer is in full swing we are actively preparing for the upcoming school year to commence with expectations of taking this program to the next level. We will continue to improve and evolve beyond what we have seen in first year. This program is a regional effort with internships available in Bend, Madras and LaPine, with other communities coming on board soon. We are looking to make the Central Oregon Youth Career Connect program a clear leader and a broadly supported example of experimental learning through internships.

If you are an employer or student and want to find out more about the Redmond Internship Program, and Youth Career Connect, visit www.youthcareerconnect.org.

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