

# Lamar Daily News

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Governor's summer job hunt kicks off 27th year

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Ledger Staff Report

For hundreds of teenagers in Lamar and surrounding communities, time is running out to get a great summer job. Still don't know what you're going to do this summer? The Lamar Workforce Center wants you to know that help is available. Since 1981, the Workforce Center has been connecting teens with local employers willing to give them a chance to learn, put skills to use and see firsthand how a business operates.

"This is one of the oldest programs of its kind in the country," said Department of Labor and Employment Executive Director Donald J. Mares. "It has a proven track record. We have assisted over a quarter of a million young people in the last twenty six years. Professionals at the Lamar Workforce Center are ready to work with young job seekers this summer."

Getting a summer job can be difficult, especially for teens trying to enter the workforce for the first time. Students don't know what to look for or what type of job they might be qualified to fill. That's where Linda Mulbery, Elva Macias and Joe Sena of the Lamar Workforce Center can lend a hand. Workforce Center staff work with the young job seekers, telling them what to expect in the world of work and how to be successful. Workforce Center staff counsel them on responsibility, dependability and commitment, the things an employer is looking for in a new worker.

Workforce Center staff help them recognize that even with little or no work experience, they still have something to offer an employer. "The simplest way to market yourself is to show that you are energetic, you're self-directed, and you really do want to give the people who are employing you value for their money," staff advise.

It's simple advice but it needs reinforcing and it's not something that every teen immediately grasps before encountering the dreaded face-to-face interview with an employer. There are a lot of things a young person needs to learn in order to be successful in the workforce and the Governor's Summer Job Hunt is there to show them how to do it.

Even when students are fully prepared to land a summer job, it can be a difficult task. A recent study at Northeastern University in Boston points to a ballooning teenage population that has flooded the labor market.

From 1992 to 2000, America's youth surged 15%, to 16.5 million teenagers. Seasonal summer job opportunities haven't kept pace. That's another reason teen job seekers should use the free

assistance provided by the Workforce Center staff in Lamar. Last year alone, the Workforce Centers in Southeastern Colorado assisted over 1,500 teens.

Economic trends can also dictate whether summer jobs will be plentiful or hard to find.

Teen job opportunities always ride on the outside of America's employment curve. During recessions, older workers settle for the lower-skilled jobs that teens often depend on. When the annual average unemployment rate for Prowers County stood at 5.7 in 2003, teens were affected. Today, however, with an unemployment rate hovering at around 4.6, the recovery for teen job seekers is underway.

"The unemployment rate for 16 to 19 year olds was over 20 percent in the third quarter of 2005," said economist Joseph Winter. "By the third quarter of 2006, it dropped to around 16 percent. As favorable labor market conditions return to Colorado, we are also seeing decreases in unemployment for 16-19 year olds."

Employers can't teach their summer job workers everything, of course, but opening the door to the marketplace can be a valuable companion piece to what they've learned in school.

It adds a unique element to the mix not usually found in a classroom. In addition to enforcing successful work habits like keeping to schedules and staying organized, the experience teaches young people the value of commitment, about gaining confidence and working with others.

"We all share the responsibility of developing our youth, providing them with opportunities and a bright future," Joe Sena said.

"In addition, this is the way we develop a workforce that will help our companies and local economy remain strong."

For those teens who are feeling overwhelmed at the prospect of landing that summer job, the Lamar Workforce Center offers assistance to help young people gain a competitive edge in their job hunt. And, of course, the office also has access to a wealth of job listings.

Summer job seekers and employers can obtain more information about this free service by visiting the Department of Labor and Employment's website at [HYPERLINK](http://www.coworkforce.com)  
"http://www.coworkforce.com" www.coworkforce.com (and clicking on the Governor's Summer Job Hunt icon) or by calling the Lamar Workforce Center (405 East Olive) at (719) 336-2256.