

Residents honored for summer program

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Summer jobs have come to an end, but the Governor's Summer Job Hunt Program just keeps on giving.

Two local residents recently received awards from the Colorado Workforce Center, which sponsored the program.

Zachary Harding and Martha Starr were honored for their work during the summer.

Harding, a summer employee of the Royal Gorge Bridge and Park, was recognized with the "Reach for the Stars Award" for his exemplary work ethic.

"Zach is an intelligent and driven young man," said Tamara Powers of the Cañon City Workforce Center. "He has scored at the college level in math, but a family crisis temporarily derailed his scholastic plans and he had to leave school to get a job and help his family."

That setback was only temporary for Harding.

"He knows what he wants in life and will not stop until he reaches his goals," Powers said. "During his work experience this summer, his supervisor told the Cañon City Workforce Center that Zach was one of their greatest employees."

Harding is now preparing to take his GED exam, and his long-term goal is to become a heavy machine operator.

Starr, the volunteer coordinator for the Welcome Centers run by the Cañon City Chamber of Commerce, received an award for excellence from the program.

Historically, the welcome centers have been staffed by seniors, but Starr had the idea to put teens and seniors together to learn from and help each other. The program, "Learn and Serve," put 18 teens in the centers ranging in age from 12 to 20, while the seniors were from 60 to 83.

The teens created a Web site that targets youth and provides information about local attractions they might enjoy.



Zachary Harding, left, and Martha Starr, right, receive awards from the Governor's Summer Job Hunt Program. Tamara Powers, center, oversees the program for the Cañon City Workforce Center.
Courtesy Photo

“The seniors taught the teens about the area so they could provide more information to visitors who stopped at the Welcome Centers,” Powers said.

The centers receive thousands of visitors every year, and have assisted people from all 50 states and from 34 different countries.

“The teens and the seniors exchanged ideas and knowledge and worked closely together throughout the summer,” Powers said. “It was an opportunity for generations to bond together.”

Starr looks forward to future cooperation between the generations.

“I continue to look for more opportunities to expand this program,” Starr said, “helping more youth succeed.”

The Governor’s Summer Job Hunt offers more than job opportunities, Powers said. It also gives young people the tools and self-confidence to be successful.

“The staff of the Upper Arkansas Workforce Center dedicated many hours between the months of February and September, providing young people with assistance in resume writing, interviewing skills and job-search strategies,” said Christina Gonzales, regional supervisor.

For more information, visit the local Workforce Center at 3224 Independence Road or call 275-4108.