



posted August 04, 2005 12:37 PM



One in 11 youth Pennsylvanians is idle

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MEDILL NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON – (Aug. 4, 2005) More than 4,300 16-to-21-year olds are neither working nor enrolled in school in the Scranton-Wilkes-Barre area. The idle youths account for 8.3 percent of the people in that age group.

A report by Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children also shows that one in 11 Pennsylvania youth 16 to 21 is idle.

Most of the unemployed and not-in-school are concentrated among the 19-to-21-year olds. The study shows that 11.7 percent of the young adults in that age group are idle in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The problem of aimless young adults is worst in metropolitan areas of the Commonwealth. About 19 percent of urban Pennsylvanians, ages 19-21, are idle; the number drops to 13.4 percent among the rural youths.

The data, an analysis of 2000 U.S. Census Bureau statistics and current population surveys from 1996-2004, show that 60 percent of Pennsylvanians 19 to 21 were employed from 2002-2004.

The problem among racial minorities is greater: 1 in 3 African American and Hispanic 19-to-21-year olds is not working or studying in the state.

Joan L. Benso, president of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, called the situation “quite bleak.”

“Work experience is a valuable part of a successful transition from youth to adulthood. Learning how to be a responsible employee in the teen years creates a smoother transition into the workforce as an adult,” she said.

The study also reported that summer youth employment has declined the last years due to competition from jobless adults, retired workers trying to find new jobs and college graduate working at jobs that do not require a degree.

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