



Summer Youth Employment Program

A partnership between the Spokane Area Workforce Development Council, Career Path Services, Goodwill Industries of the Inland Northwest and Educational Service District #101

Spokane Consortium Update

V o l . 1 I s s u e 2 A u g u s t 2 1 , 2 0 0 9



Gabe refurbishes a computer at Goodwill Industries of the Inland Northwest.

Youth job placements exceed Spokane goals

As of August 17, the Spokane Area Summer Youth Employment Program registered 446 participants enrolled and 341 are in or have completed WEX. The area goal was 400. Congratulations to the Next Generation Zone for their tireless work and continued success at giving youth the tools they need to succeed.

ies he is still dealing with through drug court. Fortunately, unlike many of his peers [from which Gabe has disassociated] being arrested was a wake-up call.

“Doing time doesn’t compensate for past mistakes,” Gabe said. “Your record still matters to a lot of people, including employers.”

Although he attends regular outpatient meetings, works with a counselor and undergoes eight drug tests a month, he is realistic about what needs to be done.

With the help of Next Generation Zone (NGZ) and drug court, SYEP is turning his life around. And he is work-



Sharing a lighter moment during a break.

For many, SYEP offers hope

Although there are many stories, two individuals are profiled in this newsletter who have overcome odds with the help of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

GABE

Before he found work through SYEP fixing computers at Goodwill Industries of the Inland Northwest, Gabe’s outlook was bleak. But his story starts years before he moved to Spokane.

In southern Arizona he remembers using drugs and drinking alcohol. His mother brought him along with her while selling drugs. When she passed out on the couch, Gabe would drive the car to get to the store or school. He was nine years old.

Years later, the upside-down lifestyle caught up with his small family. His mother was taken to jail. Gabe’s estranged

father intervened, sending Gabe to a friend near Spokane. The friend ran a private academy that Gabe attended. Gabe’s geographic break from his past, newly found clean lifestyle and good grades earned him admission to Gonzaga University where he continued to excel academically.

However, after two years as a computer science major at Gonzaga, the tuition, fees and rent became overwhelming. He found that he could not support himself on financial aid alone. He dropped out of college without direction or employment, Gabe fell into the drug culture again; this time in Spokane.

Gabe recalls nightmarish images of having a loaded gun waved in his face and staying high for weeks on end until finally, his life came crashing down with multiple arrests that include two felo-

ing toward getting the felonies dropped from his record.

“I don’t know where I would be right now without drug court or Next Generation Zone,” he said. “I’m not interested

See ‘Hope,’ continued on page 2



Spokane Area WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

This program is funded through the Spokane Area Workforce Development Council by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). ARRA was created to preserve and create jobs, promote the nation’s economic recovery, and to assist those most impacted by the recession. Our goal this summer is to provide over 400 low-income youth living in the Spokane area with the opportunity to earn money and gain work readiness skills. Spokane Area Workforce Development Council is an equal opportunity employer and provider of employment and training services. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to persons with disabilities.



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SYEP offers hope, a second chance to many

'Hope,' continued from page 1 **ELIZABETH**

in beating the system, I'm interested in working with it."

This is what brought him to Goodwill where he refurbishes donated computers by installing hardware, new software and virus protection upgrades. While working in SYEP, he realized that he wants to return to school eventually. Gabe plans to either join the military, because they pay for school. Alternately, he would like to find work, get his student loans out of default and go directly back to school where he would like to study chemistry and pursue a career as a nuclear physicist.

Gabe remembers his struggles vividly and when asked about what he might say to others going through similar difficulties, he pauses.

"Life is not easy and not always fun, and its impossible to be happy all the time," Gabe said. "Getting high is only instant gratification to escape the realities of life. Its best to just deal with it."

At 21 years of age, Elizabeth loves her first job as a barista at Goodwill.

"Everyone is really helpful," she said. "And I'm doing something that I really enjoy."

This job is a big step for Elizabeth as she moves into her first apartment. For the past year she moved from city to city in Oregon while living in her car. After multiple recommendations from friends she turned to NGZ for employment.

Living below the poverty line with her family, Elizabeth had a difficult childhood. She recalls her mother waking her in the middle of the night to abandon an unhealthy, abusive environment. Elizabeth

spent time in shelters and finally foster care. After awhile she moved back with her mother. But not because the family situation had improved.

"The foster care system was overcrowded," Elizabeth said. "My mom got my brother and me back."

After graduating from high school Elizabeth attended college for one year studying art and Japanese. Although her tuition was paid

for through state grants, Elizabeth felt it wasn't right to live at home while her mother was only making minimum wage. She dropped out of school and began drifting.

After SYEP, Elizabeth hopes to find another job. She would like to work the ski lifts at Crystal Mountain and go back to school in the off-season to continue studying Japanese. She would also love to travel and live in a foreign country for a while. She keeps a grounded view of her ideas, however.

"You may have an idea and a plan, but things don't always work out," Elizabeth said. "Programs like Next Generation Zone help people but then they must help themselves and find a new job."

Through all of this, Elizabeth is ultimately thankful for her experiences.

"The happy moments wouldn't be so happy if you didn't have the hard ones to make you realize how grateful you really are," she said.



Elizabeth shares her story during a break from her job at the Goodwill espresso stand.



SYEP participants Ari and Wayne teach a few basketball basics at Junior Sports Academy, another worksite to be featured next month.



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