

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Melissa Orner
Philadelphia Youth Network
Desk: 267-502-3718
Cell: 215-778-5791



For Immediate Release

PHILLY TEENS SHOW THE POWER OF WORK

**600+ youth display projects and portfolios from summer jobs;
Mayor recognizes employers for supporting youth internships.**

PHILADELPHIA, PA. August 7, 2008. Today, more than 600 youth from throughout the Greater Philadelphia region gathered at the Pennsylvania Convention Center to share their experiences and to celebrate the successful completion of summer and year-round internships and training programs offered through WorkReady Philadelphia, the City's system of youth workforce preparation. Selected to participate by certified academic advisors based on the quality of projects and portfolios developed during the summer, these young people represented more than 7,700 youth who participated in 2008 WorkReady programming. At the ceremony, young people were recognized for their accomplishments, with awards presented for exceptional accomplishment in the development of academic projects and workplace portfolios, both of which reflected their summer and year-round activities and internships.

Earlier in the day, at the "Breakfast of WorkReady Champions," Mayor Nutter presented "First Break" Awards to employers who provided internships for youth. "I applaud Philadelphia businesses who have opened their doors to young interns this summer," said Mayor Nutter. "By offering these high-quality workplace experiences, you are helping our young people understand what is needed for career success, and underscoring for them how important it is not only to graduate from high school but also to secure college credentials."

Recipients of a “First Break” Award included the twelve businesses that each hired 25 or more interns this summer: Brown Superstores, Citizens Bank, Comcast, Commerce Bank, Independence Blue Cross, MEE Productions, PECO, the Philadelphia Water Department, the Philadelphia Zoo, St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children, the University of Pennsylvania and Wachovia. Also receiving “First Break” Awards were smaller businesses that have hired interns through the program since its beginning in 2003: Cannon Graphics and Synterra Ltd. WorkReady “Investor” Awards, designed to recognize financial and leadership contributions, went to the Barra Foundation, the Samuel S. Fels Fund. United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, and the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.

This year, the number of employer-paid internships reached 1,500, an all-time high. Commerce Bank intern Serenity Ireland, graduate of Parkway Center City High School who is heading to Penn State Main Campus in the fall, convened the Breakfast. “The program was very exciting and opened my mind to new ways of thinking strategically, being more organized and working efficiently and effectively,” she said.

The Mayor also presented a special award to Joseph Frick, president and CEO of Independence Blue Cross (IBC), for his dedication and service to Philadelphia youth. Frick, who has chaired the Chamber for the last two years, has made youth internships a top priority. This summer IBC employed 54 WorkReady interns, and provided funding for more than 60 additional WorkReady internships in organizations throughout the city, including the Shriners Hospital for Children and the African American Museum of Philadelphia.

In accepting his award, Mr. Frick praised the young people and the Philadelphia employers who hired them. "These internships are a win-win in every sense. We created a place for the students to grow, learn and succeed – in return they gave us their energy, dedication and very hard work," he said. "These programs demonstrate that our community is not just sitting back and complaining about the lack of opportunities for our youth, we’re doing something constructive about it." Speaking about her experience as an intern at IBC, Kensington International School of Business, Finance and

Entrepreneurship student Janette Rivera said, “I am glad to have been able to work in an atmosphere where the associates are down to earth and nurturing, beginning with the President and CEO.”

Markia Zernell, student at New Media Technology School, spoke of her internship with Synterra, Ltd., and summed up the feelings of many young interns. “You have touched my life,” she said, “and for that I want to say thank you.”

The WorkReady Philadelphia concluding celebration, held annually for the last nine years, recognizes the hard work of thousands of young people as they complete summer and year-round programs. During the morning, students displayed projects and workplace portfolios, prepared as part of their internships, which reflected both practical experiences and academic achievement. Historically, as many as 70% of participating students earn school credit for projects and portfolios produced in WorkReady programming.

In addition to displaying impressive projects and portfolios, young people were also prominently featured in the awards ceremony. Marcellus Taylor, a student at Philadelphia Electrical and Technical High School and moderator of the 2007 Youth Mayoral Forum held at the National Constitution Center, served as emcee for the program. In addition, the Summer Youth Ambassadors Research Team, comprised of a dozen talented young people who spent the summer surveying participants in WorkReady programming to learn how it can be strengthened, reported on their findings.

Administrative support for WorkReady Philadelphia and staffing for the Youth Council is provided by the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN), a citywide youth intermediary organization, under contract to the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board.

“The work of these students is truly inspiring,” said Laura Shubilla, PYN President. “When you see such talent and energy on display, you begin to understand why it’s so important to give each and every one of our young people the opportunity to succeed.”

With the growing success of WorkReady Philadelphia programs, more and more sponsors are needed to provide these crucial experiences that prepare students for the world of work, and to help them to understand the importance of completing high school and earning postsecondary credentials. Through WorkReady Philadelphia, employers can give deserving young people their ‘first break’ – helping them to make connections and cultivate skills that can make all the difference.

To hire interns or learn more about WorkReady Philadelphia, visit www.workreadyphila.com.