

Nashua, N.H., students find many opportunities in summer job market

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May 28, 2006 (The Telegraph - Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News via COMTEX) -- Mitch Adams was looking for new part-time work for just a couple of weeks when he landed a job as a salesman at Best Ford.

The 18-year-old Merrimack High School senior had been working as a lot attendant at The Home Depot for six months when he decided he wanted a change.

He now works at the Nashua automobile dealership from 3-9 p.m. after school and on weekends -- which works out to be a full-time schedule. But that's more than OK with Adams.

"I want to get rich," said Adams, who started his new job two weeks ago.

Adams and his friends say the summer job market is looking up this year.

And their opinion is echoed by a recent Northeastern University study, the New Hampshire Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau and Maine-based CollegeHelpers.com.

The Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies report released in April predicts a national summer employment rate of 37.4 percent, which would be almost even with last summer's performance, increasing 0.7 percentage points, and still one of the three lowest in the past 57 years.

"Typically, New England has higher teen unemployment rates than the national average," said Joe McLaughlin, senior research associate at the Northeastern's labor market center.

New Hampshire's employment rate in 2005 was 55.1 percent, according to the study.

Anita Josten, research analyst with the state Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, said the summer job market in the Granite State is a bit better this year because all industries, except for manufacturing, are growing.

"Overall, there's an increase in hiring, especially for the summer," Josten said. "But I think it's going to be a little better this year. A few years ago, people were scrambling to find a primary job." Students can thank their peers, in part, for the positive job market this year.

Over the last decade, the percentage of students enrolled in school during the summer has

grown from 16.6 percent in July 1995 to 27 percent in July of 2005, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

While students in school still work, only 50 percent choose to work when compared with the 75 percent not in school.

So, while many students will hunt for a summer job, an increasing number will hit the books, opening the door to employment for those wanting to work.

And Adams, the Best Ford employee, said wanting to work is the whole issue.

"McDonald's and everything is always hiring, so if you really want a job, you can get one," he said.

The McDonald's restaurants in Nashua, Hudson and Merrimack are all hiring, and are seeing more applications this spring over the same time last year and in previous summers, according to Janey Bishoff, CEO of Bishoff Communications, speaking on behalf of several area McDonald's owner-operators.

"McDonald's is definitely hiring," she said. "Applications are definitely up." The fast-food giant looks for employees who want to work not only during the summer months, but also part-time during the school year, Bishoff said. "We invest a lot of training in our employees. We're really looking for people who can stay on." Pay rates at McDonald's vary based on the employee's age, experience and number of hours they can work each week, among other things. "They can make excellent starting pay," Bishoff said.

Mike Clingham, 18, a senior at Merrimack, works as a prep cook at the Common Man, a part-time job he's had for a year. He said he has been looking at other opportunities, but it seems that all the college students get to them first.

His situation is not uncommon, according to CollegeHelpers.com, a new job search Web site.

"College students do have a bit of a jump on high school students because they're typically out of school earlier," said Fred Grant, president of CollegeHelpers.com.

"The market's pretty good right now, especially for college students," Grant said.

In the Boston-area alone, the hiring rate is up 25 percent. "It indicates there is a strong employment market right now," Grant said.

Once students land that job they still need to keep on their toes, Grant said. A summer job offers networking opportunities, new perspectives as well as receiving positive job references, he said, but students need to be pro-active to get the most out of their summer job experience.

To get the job, Grant suggests looking early and often, considering a location change and asking lots of questions.

The most popular summer jobs nationally are the retail jobs in malls and jobs in entertainment, such as at movie theaters and theme parks.

Pheasant Lane Mall in Nashua has more than a half dozen stores looking for part-time help, according to Ginny Szymanski, mall manager.

"There are more part-time positions this year because with students getting out of school and looking for summer jobs, a lot of them only want to work part time, that makes it easier for the retailer to divide up the schedules," Szymanski said.

Stores hiring include Victoria's Secret, Digital Outfitters, Facets, GNC, Lids and Banana Republic.

"Walking through the mall, you will always see help wanted signs," Szymanski said. "I always suggest they look for a job in a store they like to shop because then they get the discount." CollegeHelpers.com's Grant suggests that teens look to volunteer, especially if they're concerned about boosting their resume. "Even though they may not get the money for it, the experience for volunteerism can be better than the money down the road, especially when applying for college," he said.

But Kenny Waller, 18, a senior at Merrimack High, and his friends pick their summer jobs purely for the cash.

Waller works after school and on weekends earning \$11 an hour as a fueler at Nashua Airport. He works about 36 hours a week, he said, "because I just want to be able to buy stuff I want." He recently purchased a new, red Hyundai Tiburon with his hard-earned loot.

"I could get a job easily," said Waller, who added that he has been looking for a new job. "I just don't want to go down to lower money than I'm making now." By Karen Spiller To see more of The Telegraph, or to subscribe to the newspaper, go to <http://www.nashuatelegraph.com> Copyright (c) 2006, The Telegraph, Nashua, N.H.