

Written by MARK JAEGER
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Port High students seek insights into filling idle days of summer with meaningful employment

Finding a summer job is one of the rites of passage for most teenagers, but dipping that first foot into the labor pool can be a daunting process.

The business development organization Port Washington Main Street attempted to reduce that anxiety factor when it hosted a summer job fair at Port Washington High School on Wednesday, April 24.

“We have been talking about ways to build a stronger relationship with the Port Washington-Saukville School District, and thought hosting a summer job fair would be good way to expose prospective employers to a target-rich environment,” Main Street Executive Director Sara Grover said.



The fair, which was held during the end-of-the-day resource period at the high school, was

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divided into two sessions. About 100 job-seekers participated.

Although open to the community, high-school students looking for seasonal employment were primarily the target audience.

“The students came prepared. They were ready to ask questions and fill out job applications,” Grover said.

“What was exciting is that the businesses that participated had actual positions they were looking to fill. That was the most encouraging point for the students — there are jobs out there.”

The Main Street program is primarily concerned with promoting business development in the downtown, but the fair was open to any area employer.

Among the exhibitors were several local restaurants, including the Pasta Shoppe, Dockside Deli and Culver’s, the offices of Ansay & Associates, Holiday Inn Harborview, Workforce 2020, the Port-Saukville School District and two sales representatives of Mary Kay Cosmetics.

“We would have liked to have a little greater participation, but we felt this was a good start. Hopefully, it is something that will grow in the future,” Grover said.

“For future job fairs, we might get a greater response from employers if we push the date up a little bit into early April or even March. We learned that is when a lot of them are doing their summer hiring.”

As an example, Grover said the City of Port Washington has already hired its summer crew for the Parks and Recreation programs.

She said job seekers looking for professional positions may have been less inclined to attend the Main Street job fair because Ozaukee Economic Development recently held a more technical job fair.

Port Washington High School Principal Eric Burke said he was impressed by the job fair and the reaction students had to the opportunity to learn about seasonal employment.

“My experience has been that it is still a challenge for students to find summer jobs,” Burke said.

“The best thing about the job fair was that it exposed students to the hiring process. I think a lot of students learned getting a job is not something that just happens.”

Burke said learning about job screening and the kinds of questions prospective employers will ask was an eye-opening experience for some.

“It was a really good experience for some students. I heard at least one student who came out of the job fair, shouting, ‘I got a job,’” he said.

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Image Information: STUDENT INTEREST WAS intense Wednesday, April 24, when Port Washington Main Street hosted a summer job fair at Port Washington High School. Above, Miranda Winkworth completed a job application for Dockside Deli in Port Washington. Photo by Sam Arendt