Youth

Prepare kids early for a first job

BY STEPHANIE CAMPOS

After babysitting or lawn mowing, a teen's first real job is a gateway to future employment. A wage-earning job is about more than just money. Young workers are learning the soft skills that will transfer to success later in life. What is a teen ready for a job? A pair of kids can walk up to a home, knock on the door, express how you can earn a living. In the future, Davis said. Enjoy being a number of teens are opting not to be successful in the workplace in the future, Davis said.

Youth unemployment is growing as a number of teens are opting not to be successful in the workplace in the future, Davis said. In the mid '90s just over 50% of kids 16 to 19 were in the labor force, according to figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Now the number is about 33%, and it's expected to sink to 25% by 2024, Davis said.

Reasons include that "schools focus on academics, athletics, and service to community," Davis said. And some parents are able to say, "You have your whole life to work. Enjoy being a kid." Logistics also play into teen employment numbers. When both parents work it's often not possible to drive a teen to an after-school job. "A whole population — a generation — is not working the jobs their parents had. They're not lifeguarding, scooping ice cream or bagging groceries. It's more than a paycheck. They're not learning the skills they need to be successful in the workplace in the future," Davis said.

Parents should condition their kids to be ready by giving them the skills they need to work in common retail-industry positions, including retail, restaurants and hospitality. Employers are looking for workers who can maintain good eye contact, can have a conversation, and can handle feedback and criticism, are motivated and present themselves well, Davis said. While the unemployment rate is low, it can be hard for an inexperienced teen to find a job without these skills. That said, retail and restaurant employers are willing to train, "so if they have potential hospitality skills it's a chance on their part to go to work. Enjoy being a kid." Davis said. Instead of a parent taking the order sheet to work and leaving it in the break room, encourage a child to do the fund-raising herself in a safe way. A pair of kids can walk up to a home, knock on the door, express how they're selling, collect money and make deliveries. "These important social lessons often left behind," Davis said. After finding a first job teens need a basic financial authority, which can start around second or third grade. Parents should introduce their child to banking and discuss not only how much they'll make but how much they'll save as put-aways for charity, Davis said.

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