



**Office of the Governor
JB Pritzker**

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Gov. Pritzker Celebrates New Summer Youth Employment Program Providing 2,400 Jobs Statewide

*Administration Providing \$9.3 Million to Fund Employment
Program for Young Adults*

ROCKFORD – Governor JB Pritzker joined local leaders in Rockford today to celebrate the Illinois Department of Human Services’ (IDHS) COVID-19 Summer Youth Employment Program (C-SYEP). The program will employ 2,400 young adults statewide between June and August 2020, helping them train for and find work amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. One hundred young adults in the Rockford area will be employed by the Rockford Park District. The State has dedicated \$9.3 million to support this important initiative.

“COVID-19 has completely turned the working world on its head – but young people still deserve a chance to start building their future. In fact, it’s more important than ever to ensure the most vulnerable among us don’t slip through the cracks,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “That’s why last month, my administration announced a redesigned \$9.3 million COVID-19 Summer Youth Employment Program, supporting dozens of projects across some of the counties hit hardest by the pandemic – projects that, across the board, will employ thousands of young people in need of an opportunity. Even in the midst of an extraordinarily difficult job market, this program is opening up myriad doors for the young people who need it most.”

Young people make up 24% of the overall workforce employed in industries at highest risk of closure due to COVID-19 and many of Illinois’ young people between the ages of 16 and 24 face significant challenges to securing employment. The C-SYEP employs low-income youth living in high poverty communities and counties hardest hit by the pandemic. Job opportunities through the program are being coordinated across Illinois by community-based organizations in partnership with IDHS.

“IDHS exists to assist residents who are in greatest need and who have not had access to resources and opportunities,” **said IDHS Secretary Grace B. Hou.** “In response to COVID-19, we have deployed additional resources to protect and support people who need it most, and to reach marginalized communities during an extremely difficult time.”

The Rockford Park District, one of the program’s employers, is placing youth employees in age, ability, and experience appropriate work-based learning opportunities while offering career development opportunities and access to pre-apprenticeship programming. The available jobs encompass nearly all areas of park district operations including Lockwood Park, Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens, and five public golf courses.

“COVID-19 has really limited where people can get hired but thanks to the C-SYEP there are opportunities to learn lifelong job skills throughout our entire organization that would otherwise not be possible. Thank you to Governor Pritzker, Illinois Department of Human Services, and Representative Maurice West for investing in at-risk youth and giving us the opportunity to develop their employability skills,” **said Nikki Lynch, Rockford Park District C-SYEP Project Manager.**

Additional park district positions will be available in park maintenance, community recreation, customer service, marketing, sponsorships, therapeutic recreation, and youth sports. Funding from the state will allow the Rockford Park District to provide transportation assistance, help cover costs of work attire, fund job coaches, and provide leadership development opportunities to youth employees.

The Rockford Park District is one of 30 youth employment providers and will receive \$500,000 to employ 100 area youth over the next three months. Additional C-YSEP programs are taking place in Champaign; Cook; Lake; Macon; McLean; Peoria; St. Clair; Stephenson; and Winnebago Counties where providers are partnering with local employers in need of summer employees to provide earning opportunities for youth in their communities.

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