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Workforce Council Expands Youth Programs with New Hires, Resources

Andrew Westlund and Justin McDaniels join nonprofit's staff

Vancouver, WA (Dec. 8, 2015) – The Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC) has hired two new employees in its youth program and will launch a new interactive database for business and youth in first quarter 2016 to increase engagement between businesses and their future workforce, teens and young adults ages 16-24.

“We’re pleased to welcome Andrew and Justin to our team,” said Jeanne Bennett, SWWDC’s CEO. “Given the high levels of unemployment among young teens and young adults, we must do all we can to increase opportunities for them to obtain the skills they’ll need to get a job and be successful.” Continued Bennett, “Work skills are learned through work experience.”

Andrew Westlund, Youth Initiatives Manager, is responsible for implementing youth-related strategies for workforce development and management of the youth provider projects and contracts that expose youth to training and employment opportunities for the region’s high-demand jobs.

Before joining the SWWDC, Westlund was an Educational Assistant for day treatment and re-entry programs with the Evergreen School District. He has experience working with at-risk youth and a desire to help them develop the skills to be successful in their education and the workplace. He has worked with a variety of youth programs at organizations including Cheney Public Schools, YMCA of Walla Walla and College Place Public schools.

Westlund received a master’s of Business Administration from Eastern Washington University and bachelors degrees in English and Kinesiology from Whitworth University in Spokane.

Justin McDaniels is the organization’s Regional Work-based Learning Coordinator, a new position that will collaborate with school districts and community partners to enhance education and employment opportunities for youth by connecting students to businesses for internships, mentoring, job shadowing and other experiences that will give them insight into the world of work and increase their awareness of career options, education and training.

He has served as an advocate and organizer and partnered with local radio stations to produce and host social justice broadcasts and collaborated with nonprofit organizations on grant writing, developing programming and outreach campaigns.

McDaniels has a passion for social justice and helping individuals overcome barriers. He has worked with several departments at Oregon State University planning events, organizing mentorship programs and managing projects. He has led work crews and coordinated volunteers for Wilderness International. McDaniels will receive a bachelor’s degree in political science with a focus on international affairs and social policy from Oregon State University.

“Our goal is to ensure employers can hire skilled and adaptable employees when they need them and individuals develop the skills needed to find jobs that meet their needs,” said Bennett. “Bringing teens and young adults into businesses and allowing them to interact with employees in work settings is one way to make that happen.”

Companies interested in participating in youth workforce development programs can contact Andrew Westlund at awestlund@swwdc.org or 360-567-3183.

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Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC), a nonprofit organization founded in 2002, contributes to regional economic growth by providing investments and resources to improve the skills and education of the workforce in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. SWWDC helps businesses find and hire the employees they need and provides people the skills, education and training to find work or advance in their careers. SWWDC partners with employers, community colleges and universities, labor groups, government and economic development agencies, high schools and community organizations. Learn more at www.swwdc.org.