



Summer Youth Employment Program 2011 Year-End Program Report

Impressions of 2011 – SYEP

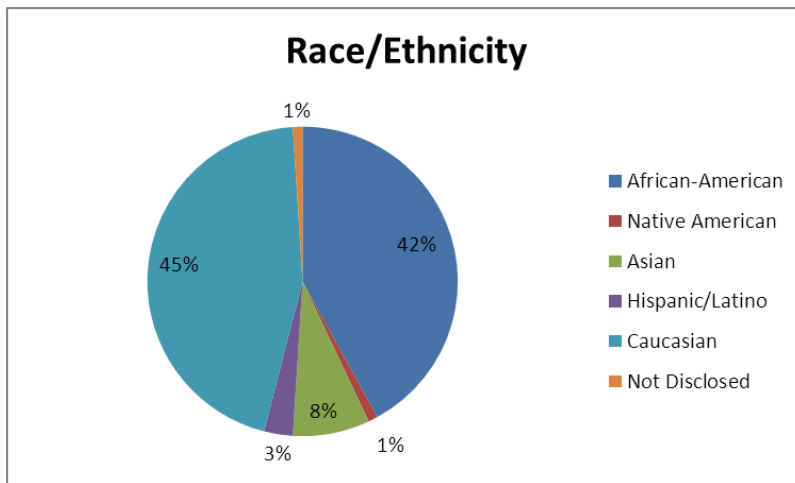
– Felecia Schmidt, SYEP Program Coordinator

Each year, there seems to be a unique event that adds definition and complexity to the Summer Youth Employment Program. This year’s challenge: the State of Minnesota government shutdown that occurred just one week into the program. Tree Trust was able to reassign most youth, but the impacts of the shutdown were evident throughout the program. The most unfortunate impact was the missed employment opportunities for those youth who were not reassigned.

While challenging, disruptive and disappointing at times, there is no question that the program achieved success. This was evident in the youth as well as the projects they completed. In the end, those that had the opportunity to continue working gained valuable skills and a better understanding of how bigger picture events can and will impact their lives. There is no question that the shutdown and the obstacles that resulted strengthened the program and our commitment to the youth we serve.

Youth Served Demographics

During the summer of 2011, our Summer Youth Employment Program employed 483 youth and young adults who self-reported the following demographics:

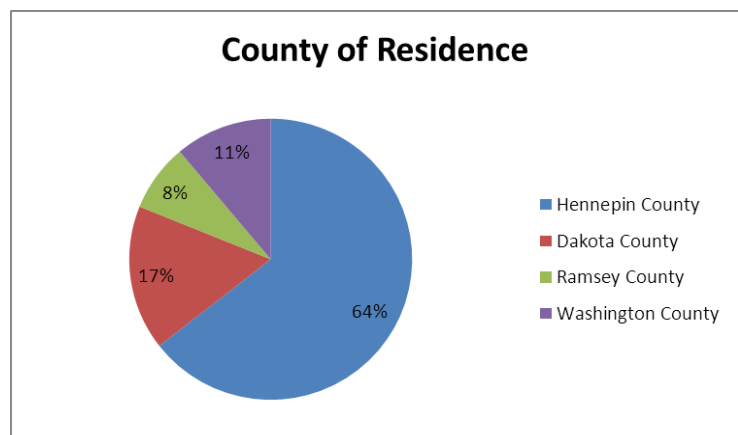


Age	%
14-15	23%
16-17	29%
18-21	48%

Gender	%
Male	64%
Female	36%

Of these youth 58% had a physical, emotional, or learning disability and 57% were basic skills deficient.

As in previous years, limited funding prevented us from offering positions to each of the youth who applied. In 2011 we received applications from 1,368 qualified, eligible youth.



Activities and Accomplishments

Individual Employment Placements

During summer 2011, **we placed 227 youth (47%) in individual internships in 69 schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses and government agencies** throughout the Twin Cities.



James performs administrative tasks at Dakota County Public Health

Through such placements, these youth gained skills in the areas of retail, food service, childcare, custodial, and administrative assistance.

In addition to the work performed by participants, many completed self-guided lessons related to budgeting, financial goal setting, and money management skills, improved their academic skills and earned high school credits.

Youth Conservation Corps (Landscaping and Construction Projects)

During summer 2011, we placed 256 youth (53%) on small crews at 24 Twin Cities parks and recreation areas. Crews worked with their crew leaders to complete parks improvement projects that have real, lasting value to the community.

In addition to the improvement projects, crew leaders at each work site used laptops to help participants create personal budgets and estimate job costs using spreadsheet software. They also composed letters and prepared resumes using word processing software. Directly relating these lessons to their work experience helped participants improve academic skills. In 2011, **youth earned a collective 322 high school credits** for completing lessons while working.

Like in previous years, parents and guardians of participating youth were provided with Tree Trust's Parent Handbook, which contained detailed information about the program and strategies for engaging youth in discussions about their work. Open houses were held at work sites so parents could view their children's projects and meet their crew leader and fellow crew members.

Additionally, five end-of-program youth recognition picnics were held at: Theodore Wirth Golf Course (Minneapolis youth), Phalen Park Picnic Pavilion (Saint Paul youth), Lake Elmo Park Reserve (Washington County youth), Tree Trust Training Room (Dakota County youth) and French Regional Park (Hennepin County youth).

These picnics were attended by youth job trainees, Tree Trust staff and community leaders who presented **26 youth with Governor's Awards for outstanding leadership and achievement.** An additional **68 youth participants received awards for perfect attendance.**



Youth build a staircase at Theo Wirth Golf Course

Evaluation and Outcomes

As in previous years, our 2011 program was evaluated through examination of participation rates, raises and receipt of school credit; analysis of pre- and post-assessments that rate improvement on 13 key measures of basic work skills; and analysis of post-program surveys of participants and parents/guardians.

Our 2011 **participants worked nearly 40,000 hours and collectively earned almost \$210,000** over the course of the summer program.

Of the youth who responded to post-program surveys, 77% rated their experience as good or excellent and 81% said they would recommend Tree Trust to a friend. Parents echoed these feelings – 89% were satisfied with the program and 90% would want their child to work for Tree Trust again.



Youth practice measuring skills while building a boardwalk at Lake Elmo Park Reserve

Additional highlights from the 2011 youth surveys:

- **96%** learned what an employer expects from a good employee
- **99%** learned to be responsible for their actions
- **95%** developed confidence in their ability to complete a job
- **96%** learned skills that may help them in future jobs
- **82%** learned the importance of staying in school
- **95%** thought that their work was important to the community
- **94%** learned how to work well with others

In their own words...

"I know how to apply for jobs now. I know how to get along with other employees. I know how to fill out applications. I can manage and budget my money better. I know how to write a correct resume now." – Crew Member

"It's just a really good program, I like it." – Alex

"I've learned that you have to work hard to get what you need in life. Life is not easy. I learned the values of having a job when I get older." – Diamond

"I learned to work better with people totally unlike me." –Crew Member

"Learned how interviews work, learned how to work in a workplace environment, learned to work with others (adults)." – Individual Placement youth

"I've done a good job here so far. I'm a good worker." – RaShaun