

Program helping Valley residents figure out their future

By Marcia Moore
The Daily Item

Nineteen-year-old Hailey Gensel is looking for opportunities to help pinpoint what line of work she wants to pursue.

"I graduated from Midd-West High School in 2017 and I took classes at Bloomsburg University, but don't know what I want to be when I grow up," the Middleburg resident said.

To help her figure it out, Gensel went to the CareerLink last fall and was connected to the YES to the Future program

MORE INFO

■ If you are interested in being a business mentor, would like to partner with YES to the Future or would like more information, please visit www.csiu.org/yes

offered through the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) which aids young people unable to find adequate employment by connecting

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— Hailey Gensel,
a participant in
CareerLink's YES to
the Future program.



Robert Inglis/The Daily Item

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them with needed resources, including training, job counseling and internships.

The program is one of several being offered or in development in the Valley that is designed to assist young men and women in improving their employability.

After identifying that a high number of individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 are either not finishing school or employed in self-sustaining jobs, Joanne Troutman, president and CEO of the United Way, said area educators, business and community leaders are working together to solve the problem.

"It's a huge concern," she said of the high rate of disconnected youth which she attributes to a range of issues from lack of education to trauma.

At 22 percent, Northumberland County has the highest rate of 16-24 year-olds who are not in school or employed, said Troutman. In Snyder and Union counties, the rate is similar to the national average of 13 percent, she said.

"Our goal in the next 10 years is to get every community below the national statistic," said Troutman, who is working with local school districts, CSIU, Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce, YMCA and other agencies.

One problem identified by area employers is that job seekers don't have the necessary skills.

"There are job openings, but employers say it's hard

to find people with the skills they need," said Mary Mingle, a CSIU adult education program manager.

YES to the Future participants learn what jobs are available and what skills are required and have opportunities to job shadow or hold internships.

"The purpose is to get them employed in self-sustaining jobs, enrolled in training or college or in the military," said program director Paula Dickey.

In 2017, 225 individuals were served in the program which currently has 181 youth enrolled, Dickey said.

Case managers are available to assist them in developing basic skills, such as confidence and resume writing, and professionals are always being sought as mentors, Mingle said.

"Sometimes all they need is an opportunity," she said. "They may not hit the ground running in their first job,

Gensel, who is receiving paid work experience through the program, said she's narrowing her career choices to health

BY THE NUMBERS

The following numbers are based on a total population of residents ages 16-19 not enrolled in high school, but high school graduates or equivalent who employed, unemployed or not in the labor force — not employed or actively seeking employment:

Place	Employed	Unemployed	Not In Labor Force
United States	918,626 (53.2%)	330,167 (19.1%)	478,095 (27.7%)
Pennsylvania	35,058 (55.8%)	12,469 (19.9%)	15,277 (24.3%)
Northumberland County	286 (58%)	100 (20.3%)	107 (21.7%)
Snyder County	158 (76.3%)	19 (9.2%)	30 (14.5)
Union County	137 (67.8%)	8 (4%)	57 (28.2%)

Source 2010-14 America Community Survey 5-year estimates

care or social work, but said few local employers in those fields are offering job shadow opportunities.

"I've applied to about one-half dozen employers but most (require) experience," she said.

Educators have to provide students more career-exploration opportunities as well, said SUN Area Technical Institute's Jennifer Hain, who has launched Pathways Systems to allow students to align their academic choices with career goals.

Another initiative to help job seekers and employers is Career Hub, an online career management tool which is expected

to be available later this summer. Students can use the hub to search for jobs and employers can post what type of experiences they can provide.

"As obvious as it sounds, no hub like this exists," said Art Thomas, chairman of the chamber's workforce development committee. "Our intent is that whether you're a dropout or an SAT perfect scorer, we want to make sure everyone has the skills they need."

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