

## Mercer Exec. Hughes announces shared service agreement

Mercer County is teaming up youth employed with its 'ACES' summer job program and Mercer County Community College (MCCC) in a shared services agreement approved recently by County freeholders.

Mercer ACES is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to provide full-time, paid jobs and life skills to disadvantaged youth. Many of the 300 available positions have been filled since the program was announced in late April, and this week, the youth started working in jobs such as administrative staff, child care, recreation, and others.

As part of the program, both the youth aged 14 to 17 and the young adults aged 18 to 24 will receive career exploration instruction and life skills training at the Kerney campus of MCCC in Trenton. On June 25, the County freeholder board approved \$151,074 to fund the shared service between ACES and the college.

"This agreement not only puts federal funding to use immediately, but directly impacts these young people who otherwise likely would not have had access to jobs and skills training," said Mercer County Executive Brian M.

Hughes. "I applaud the freeholders for approving this funding so quickly."

ACES ("Access to Career and Employment Services") was created to open job opportunities both to revitalize the local economy and also to assist those most affected by the recession, Hughes said.

Participation in ACES is limited to Mercer County youth ages 14 to 24 who are economically disadvantaged and meet certain eligibility requirements, such as "barriers to employment" like little to no work history, a mental or physical disability, or being a high school dropout.

Youth 14 to 17 years old work 25 to 30 hours per week and earn \$7.15 per hour in addition to attending a three-hour weekly life skills seminar at MCCC's Kerney campus. Young adults 18 to 24 years old work for a half-day for 25 to 30 hours per week and earn \$7.25 per hour and are taught job readiness, life skills, and occupational skills exploration for the remainder of the day at the Kerney campus. Jobs for young adults ages 18 to 24 are still available, and interested applicants should call (609) 989-6824.

