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Article published Jul 28, 2006

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Jul 28, 2006

## Future is bright

### Teens get health care field skills

#### AT WORK: SUMMER JOBS FOR CITY TEENS

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**WORCESTER**— As they sit, day-by-day, in tiny cubicles surrounded by ominous stacks of charts and files, their friends lie bronzed on Hampton Beach and roam air-conditioned malls.

Still, Joanne Nhan and Drizmarie Feliciano don't mind.

The way they see it, they're getting a great experience — and one they'll remember long after the leaves start changing color in September.

"We're not really missing out, we're getting more than most kids get," said Ms. Nhan, a North High School student who is participating in a teen work program at UMass Memorial Medical Center. "You can always have fun on the weekend."

Both Ms. Nhan, 17, and Ms. Feliciano, 16, are taking part in the Building Brighter Futures program, a partnership among UMass, the United Way and Worcester public schools that provides job training for teenagers in various areas of the health care field. Forty-nine local high school students are participating in the program this summer, working an average of 20 to 24 hours a week.

"It's a great way to give experience to a portion of the population that's not otherwise exposed," said Heather Juhascik, who helps coordinate Building Brighter Futures. And for the hospital, "there's always a need for extra resources. We really gain from having an extra pair of hands."

Ms. Nhan is working in the pediatric endocrinology department at the medical center, a division that deals with childhood endocrine problems such as diabetes or obesity. Her day-to-day responsibilities include booking appointments, as well as clerical and phone work. Occasionally, she also tours the clinics and interacts with patients.

Next year the 17-year-old will attend the University of Massachusetts at Amherst; in four years, she hopes to study medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester.

It's always been her goal to become a doctor, she said. She chose that career path because of "the impact you have on other people's lives, even if it's the slightest encounter."

#### Editor's note

More than 700 youths are working this summer through the efforts of a coalition of community organizations, private businesses and city government. This is one in a series of profiles of youngsters benefiting from that program.

Ms. Feliciano, meanwhile, works in the human resources department at the medical center, where she files forms and disseminates paperwork.

It's her first real job; she applied elsewhere this spring and summer but couldn't get her foot in the door. When she graduates from Worcester Technical High School in two years, her plan is to study nursing and massage therapy.

"I was always interested in nursing," she said. "I like the feeling of helping somebody."

In addition to giving kids something to do in the droll summer months, the program has bigger-picture benefits, too, she said.

"It's good to see youth working, staying out of trouble," she said.

And it's nice to make your own money, rather than always asking mom or dad, she said. Also, it's really boosted her maturity level.

"We stay positive, we mature more through this," she said. "There are youth out there who don't even know what they want to do with their futures."

Employers interested in providing additional summer jobs should call the Worcester Community Action Council at (508) 754-1176, ext. 144.

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