

WAYNE TOMORROW!.COM

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Wayne Tomorrow! A county-sponsored, community-based collaboration focused on projects, resources and infrastructure needed to move Wayne County, its people, its culture and its economy into a vibrant future.



Intern Talks Value of Experience



Johnson College Rural Access



PROSPER Helps Kids, Families



At the Farm Continues Aug 14

Wayne Tomorrow! Intern Reflects on Valuable Summer Paid Work Experience



Wayne Tomorrow! benefitted from an extra pair of hands this spring and summer in the form of Intern Kerry Rodriguez, a second-year student at Lackawanna College who is studying business administration and marketing.

Community Network Specialist Kim Rickard said when the Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance reached out to her about the Paid Work Experience opportunity, she saw it as

an opportunity to get more young people involved in Wayne Tomorrow! She also immediately thought of Kerry, whom she had coached as a tennis player at Honesdale High School.

"I knew her and her enthusiasm and ability to include people, especially the young ones. I knew she was willing to take direction and was 'coachable.' I also knew she was pursuing her education in the local community," Rickard explained. "Then I literally ran into her while shopping during the holidays."

Rodriguez said she was "a little nervous but excited" when she started back in March. "It felt like my first career step." She had worked several other jobs, but not in her field of study.

From the start, she was able to help by creating several spreadsheets to assist Rickard in the formidable task of managing the broad network of community partners and supporting various efforts of four active task forces. "There are a lot of actions and activities to monitor as Wayne Tomorrow! builds momentum," she explained.

"I'm a sucker for a good Excel sheet," Rodriguez joked, noting she had taken two elective courses on Excel spreadsheet software for that reason. Now it was already paying off.

She also found she has skills of which she was not fully aware.

Part of her duties has been to attend the Wayne Tomorrow! meetings. As pandemic restrictions eased, the Action Committee began to hold hybrid virtual and in-person meetings in the cafeteria at the Park Street Complex, which is equipped with an audio-visual system.

"Kim was trying to hook up the projector with the laptop for zoom and I didn't really think I could help, but I figured it out," Rodriguez explained,

learning her everyday experiences can translate into skills in the workplace.

Even in doubt, Rodriguez was able to shine. Rickard praised her for her knowledge and helpfulness in mastering Zoom Meetings, yet she said she knew little about it at the start, having used other platforms in college.

Rickard said she has been impressed with Rodriguez' level of professionalism for a young person, her adaptability and her work ethic. "In the public sector, there are always 'other duties as assigned' and Kerry never hesitated to help out, including during the May primary elections."

For her part, Rodriguez said she learned a lot about professionalism and reading people. "I've gotten a lot better at 'reading the room,'" she said.

All of this earned her yet another opportunity, when she was invited to oversee the Wayne County Commissioners' Youth Summer Camp Program that provided off-season coaching and skill development opportunities to more than 100 young athletes over four weeks.

With the help of former teammate, Ali Miszler, they reached out to the athletic directors and coaches in the County to determine their interest in holding camps this year. In this role with the Parks and Recreation Department the pair were responsible for ordering T-shirts, food, medals and coordinating appearances by the Commissioners, among others. "I got to be creative, and I liked being able to run it my own way," Rodriguez said.

Not only did her co-coordinator learn some valuable skills through working in the county Parks and Rec department, Miszler gained another opportunity out of her time in this role and is now working directly with Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance on the new Wayne Tomorrow! Work Crews Project.

Rickard said she was glad to provide the opportunity and was particularly excited that Rodriguez was part of one project from start to finish – Newfoundland Community Hub Survey. She said Rodriguez attended all the meetings about the project, helped in formulating the survey, sat in on the preparation of the public presentation and then assisted that night at the township meeting.

"She had the chance to see the project from beginning to end. Not many sophomores in college have that opportunity. They usually only work on part of a project here and another part there. They rarely get to see the whole process. I hope it was valuable," Rickard stated.

Rodriguez certainly sees the value of her internship. "If anyone has the opportunity they should try it. It can open doors, get you references and help you start networking." She also said the experience helps you to decide if that type of work suits you or help refine what area of an industry to focus on.

"I feel like it can't hurt," she said.

Rickard offered her thanks to the Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance for the opportunity, and she encourages others to get involved with the Alliance and this program. "This was a great experience and I hope to continue the relationship with Kerry as a professional mentor going forward," she said.

The Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance offers a wide range of career and employment services, including career counseling, on-the-job training and much more. [Learn more about internships online.](#)



Announcements

[At the Farm Series](#) continues Aug. 14 with Storytelling on the Robinson Family's fifth generation farm. The Rumping Radishes Program is held then as well.



[Alternative Transportation Interest Survey](#) remains open to residents and visitors to share their thoughts and help inform the work of the Transportation Task Force.

Leadership Northern Poconos receives applications for the 2021-22 leadership development class until Wednesday, Aug. 4. Some scholarships are available.



Johnson College Rural Access Grant Creates Opportunity for Transformation



A new Distance Learning Grant awarded to Johnson College could change the lives of generations of Wayne County residents.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) granted nearly \$500,000 as part of the agency's Telemedicine and Distance Learning Program to support the College's goal of implementing a distance-learning program to improve access to higher education opportunities for rural areas in Wayne, Pike, and Susquehanna counties.

"This is about bringing Career and Technology Education into rural areas," said Kellyn Williams, Chief Academic Officer at Johnson College. The project provides access to training in high-demand skilled-labor industries that need the workers now. Williams said a huge number of tradesmen are approaching retirement, leaving a significant gap that needs to be filled sooner rather than later, thanks to COVID-19.

This project will link Johnson College with four rural high schools: Forest City Regional High School, Honesdale High School, Wallenpaupack Area High School, and Western Wayne High School, as well as three libraries:

Lakewood Library, Newfoundland Library, and Pleasant Mount Library by high-tech telecommunications equipment.

It will create a direct route to career technology education (CTE), a college degree, and ultimately a fulfilling career with family-sustaining wages for students in rural Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Williams said the College plans to build on existing programs, such as Honesdale High School's welding program that provides certification by the time they leave high school. There, Johnson College would host welding, construction and code enforcement classes. At Wallenpaupack, they will build on the manufacturing and computer technology, Automotive and Diesel at Western Wayne and HVAC and Computer-Aided Design at Forest City.

Both high school, and adult students, will have interactive, two-way access to Johnson College faculty and will participate in remote education, discussions, testing, and skill demonstrations. Laboratories and classrooms at Johnson College will be similarly equipped to enable maximum interaction between faculty and students.

In addition, the three rural libraries will be equipped with laptops to give community residents access to career exploration services and information about courses at Johnson College. Students participating in the distance-learning program will be able to work towards completing any one of the [15 academic programs Johnson College](#) offers.

Williams said the Dual Enrollment Program allows students to begin college instruction while in high school. The cost is lower per credit and the students can receive the training and still take the late bus home.



For many families, this will be the first generation empowered to attend college. The distance-learning platform will use the latest in two-way interactive telecommunications technology to create an environment that is as close to the Johnson College onsite classroom and laboratory experience as possible while being delivered in the high school community.

The rural nature of the region presents several barriers to accessing higher education. The high schools collaborating on this project are between 21 and 31 miles from Johnson College. Because of family responsibilities, cultural norms, or factors related to working while enrolled in school, many students stay close to home for college.

When there are no career & technical schools close by, as in Wayne County, transportation and distance become barriers to upward mobility, fulfilling careers, and financially rewarding positions. This program can really change that.

The specialized STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) training made possible by this grant will give students the opportunity to start their college degree while still in high school and complete earlier for in-demand positions throughout the region, as well as provide an opportunity to train non-high school students for new careers due to job loss or the desire for positions with higher family-sustaining wages.

"You can graduate from Johnson College with very little debt," Williams said, "and move right into a job paying \$40,000-\$45,000 a year. There are even some employers in the region who will pay for the training."

In addition to the distance learning opportunity funded by the grant, students will also have access to [Johnson College's](#) full array of on-campus support services including tutoring, counseling, career advisement, financial aid, internship opportunities, and exposure to industry from day one.



Penn State's PROSPER Eases Youth, Parent Transition to High School Years



Moving up from middle to high school can be a critical time for young people and their parents. That is why Penn State Cooperative Extension administers [PROSPER](#) in Wayne and many other counties in the Commonwealth.

PROSPER stands for Promoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience and it is a model for bringing evidence-based prevention programs to schools and communities. The goal, explained Christina Pulman, the Extension Educator who oversees the effort in Wayne County, is to strengthen families, build youth skills and reduce youth substance use as well as other problem behaviors.

Scientists at Penn State and Iowa State Universities designed PROSPER to deliver PROSPER programs through partnerships between schools, communities, and Penn State, which guarantee that communities and schools are supported so prevention programs are high quality, every time. Led by Penn State Extension, PROSPER brings together school districts, parents and youth, community stakeholders and university specialists in 8 to 10 member teams. These teams oversee the implementation of the programs and review their effectiveness in each school district.

The family-focused program is open to all families with youth 10 to 14 year-old in the Western Wayne, Wayne Highlands and Wallenpaupack Area School Districts. The program prepares youth for the challenges of high school by providing both students and parents with tools and skills that can help. It is free, includes a family meal, and there are incentives for attendance as well as childcare for younger children.

During the seven-week program, youngsters learn and practice setting positive goals, ways to resist peer pressure, positive management of emotions and stress, and communication skills.

Parents and caregivers learn how to help their teen transition to high school, practice decision making and life skills like stress management, peer relationships and goal setting. They also learn how to strengthen their teen's ability to resist peer pressure and avoid risky behaviors and substance abuse.

The in-school Life Skills program has a similar focus for students.

Studies show this community effort raises the age of initiation to drugs and alcohol and reduces aggressive behavior. "For every \$1 invested in PROSPER, communities save \$9.60 on alcohol use disorder costs alone," Pulman explained, adding parents who have participated report using more consistent and appropriate discipline, and experiencing more warmth and more family activities after the program.

For information about [PROSPER](#) in Wayne County, call the [Penn State Extension Office](#) in Honesdale at 570-253-5970 ext. 4110.



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