

YES put woman on career path

CSIU program aids young adults with job skills

By Justin Strawser
The Daily Item

SUNBURY — The Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit's YES to the Future Program helped Alexis Miller find her passion as she worked at the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way this past summer.

The 23-year-old originally from Scranton is now moving back to Scranton to be an assistant manager at Long John Silvers, but Miller will be using the experience and lessons learned from her paid work experience to start searching for a career in health care, human services or a job where she can help others. Her last day at the United Way is Sept. 29.

"I was confused about what I wanted to do," Miller said. "I like to help people, but being here I realized



Justin Strawser/The Daily Item

Alexis Miller, 23, worked at the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way in Sunbury over the summer through the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit's YES to the Future program.

that this is what I want to do. I want to wake up and be happy with what I do every day. I am happy to be here. This is what I want."

Miller said she doesn't want to de-

vote her life to employment in fast food.

"I don't want this to be my stopping

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YES to the Future program put woman on career path

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ping point," she said. "I have to figure out my next step."

YES to the Future, a program designed to develop the potential of young adults by improving educational achievement, helping them prepare for and succeed in employment and providing 12 months of follow-up services, is available for young adults ages 16 to 24 who are not enrolled in school and reside in Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder and Union counties. The program pays the wages of the job.

Miller learned of the program in April through Pennsylvania CareerLink when she came to find another job. She earned her high school diploma with the assistance of the adult education program in the Scranton area.

Through the program, Miller was able to purchase clothing for a job, earn a driver's license, participate in opportunities to network with other young adults and develop employability and leadership skills. She volunteered during United Way programs and events. She did mainly administrative work, such as answering and placing phone calls, filing, word processing, email and customer service.

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— Joanne Troutman, Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way president and CEO

The staff at United Way are excited to help everyone, Miller said.

Cheryl Mertz, who supervised Miller, said Miller's personality was a "perfect fit" for the agency.

"She has a heart the size of Texas," Mertz said. "She was a

big help to me, and a big help to this office."

Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way president and CEO Joanne Troutman said, "We need more people like Alexis."

The United Way and Miller may not have found each other without YES to the Future,

Troutman said.

"We fall too quickly in looking at a degree," she said. "The education is easy, but what's not easy is finding that level of compassion and level of motivation to do this work. That's what Yes to the Future does for employers."

To qualify for the program, applicants must meet one of certain criteria, including low-income, lack of work experience, not being enrolled in school, is a parent or expecting, have physical or mental disabilities, have difficulty finding a job due to a criminal record or lacking transportation. If a participant needs certain skills

for the job being applied for, the CSIU can negotiate a deal with the employer in which CSIU will reimburse the company for 50 percent of eight weeks of wages while the applicant is trained for the job.

The program offers tutoring, study skills training, paid and unpaid work experience, occupational skills training, integrated education and training, supportive services, leadership development opportunities, employer-based adult mentoring, financial literacy education and entrepreneurial skills development. Individuals can also work toward their GED through the program.

The YES to the Future program is funded by the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation (CPWDC) through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014 (WIOA).

Those interested in participating in YES to the Future as a recipient, employer or sponsor, call 570-989-1363, send an email to jestothefuture@csiu.org; or visit www.csiu.org/YES and complete an online interest form.

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