

Expert: Job hunting emotional for teens

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By MATTHEW CROWLEY

Even if the job market is tough, recent survey results show teenagers want to work this summer. And an official from an online teen job board says landing work is emotionally critical for teenagers who are beginning to form their impressions of the working world.

A nationwide poll of 736 teenagers released earlier this month by Junior Achievement, a national nonprofit group teaching young people about business and economics, showed 81 percent of respondents want paying jobs this summer.

Most teens polled (21 percent) said they expected to work in fast food, up from 16.3 percent a year earlier. Office work was the second-most popular choice, picked by 20 percent of respondents.

Renee Ward, the executive director of teens4hire.com, an online job board, said the experience of trying, and failing to land work, a reality this summer for many teens, may breed long-lasting discouragement.

"Sixteen and 17 are critical ages, when people first start thinking of the world of work and first have that desire to work. Then to have all the doors shut on them can be devastating," she said. "Work experience at this stage in life is critical, and people who spend a large share of their young adult years unemployed have a hard time finding and keeping a job later in life."

Ward acknowledged teens who want jobs may have to work hard to get them. But she said rejection shouldn't stop them.

"I tell teen job seekers not to get down, but to get busy," she said. "Because a `no' now doesn't necessarily mean never. If someone puts forth the effort and truly wants to work and doesn't give up, someone will give them an opportunity."

Many businesses expect teenagers to come looking for work, Ward said, and therefore may not advertise jobs. So, having the courage, and the tenacity, to knock on doors and ask for work matters.

Teens4hire lists places job-seeking teens might look: fast food restaurants and other eateries; amusement parks; grocery stores; hardware and building supply stores; hotels; golf courses; gasoline and service stations; clothing and accessory stores; movie theaters; parks and recreational areas; day and summer camps; child-care providers; museums; construction companies and health care offices.

Ward advises teens to go job hunting clean, professionally dressed and with résumés in hand.

"Speak intelligently and look people in the eye," she said.