

BUSINESS

If you're not too picky, there are still plenty of summer jobs for the taking in the Twin Cities

Employers are looking for hundreds of young workers around the state.

By [Dee DePass](#) Star Tribune

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GLEN STUBBE, STAR TRIBUNE

Emmanuel Gbelawoe packages cotton candy Friday at the Maud Borup candy plant in Plymouth. Gbelawoe was just hired at the plant this summer.

If you waited until school was over to start looking for a summer job, plenty of opportunities are still out there. However, you can't be too picky.

Coveted corporate summer internships and higher-paid seasonal jobs are mostly filled, but the continued worker shortage — with two openings for every job seeker — means there are plenty of positions remaining.

"Entering the summer of 2024, the market appears strong for young workers," said Oriane Casale, assistant director of the Minnesota Labor Market Information Office.

Minnesota's unemployment rate for teens and other young workers "is low" at 5.5% as of April. Young job seekers are gaining jobs at levels higher than before the pandemic. It all "suggests a good summer for teens seeking to enter the labor force, as employers are motivated to hire [them] to fill out their payrolls," Casale said.

But it pays to know where to look.

"Fast food places have turnover. In Greater Minnesota, many resorts and businesses are still looking for workers. Lifeguards seem to still be in high demand in many places and some of those employers indicate they will train," said Mary Haugen, spokeswoman at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

Last week, the Minnesota CareerForce office in north Minneapolis held a health care job fair for a dozen clinics and hospitals looking for new staffers.

Next week, Ramsey County is hosting the Midway Area Job Fair on June 26 at Allianz Field in St. Paul with headhunters from 28 employers. Recruiters include janitorial firm Marsden, University of Minnesota Dining and Food Services, Mississippi Market Coop, Minnesota State Fair, Regions Hospital, ACR Homes/ACR Healthcare and Best Crowd Management.

Separately, candy company Maud Borup is scrambling to find 130 new hires in the next two weeks to fill rush orders of cotton candy and chocolate at its Plymouth and Le Center plants. "Are we hiring? You better believe we are!" said Maud Borup spokeswoman Karen Edwards.

Temporary candy technician jobs start at \$16 an hour with flexible schedules. They are often scooped up by students from Minnesota State University, Mankato, Gustavus Adolphus College and Dunwoody College of Technology.

"We welcome high school students, too," Edwards said. The company's summer workers help build the huge inventory needed for the crazy busy Halloween and Christmas seasons.

On Friday, new hire Emmanuel Gbelawoe, was busy boxing up freshly spun cotton candy for one of Maud Borup's major retail customers that needs the product on shelves this fall. It's a perfect short-term gig for Gbelawoe, who will head back to North Hennepin Community College in September where he's studying engineering.

The appeal of similar seasonal jobs spans many industries including hospitality, noted Adam Duininck, CEO of the Minneapolis Downtown Council.

With the onset of summer, families are taking vacations and companies are gearing up for conventions.

That means "a handful of hotels have been busier and so have been hiring. I know Hyatt Centric, AC Hotel and the Hilton Garden Inn had positions posted. And I just saw on LinkedIn this morning that Marquette Hotel is hiring too," Duininck said.

Across town in Bloomington, Mall of America tenants such as Build a Bear, Rocky Mountain Chocolate, Peloton, Macy's, DSW Shoes and Rainbow all need sales associates — now. The mall's management team needs workers, too.

"We are always hiring for summer, seasonal, permanent full-time and part-time positions," mall communications associate Kate Witte said in an email.

Hillary Benson, Bloomington projects and community development facilitator, said the city works closely with the mall but also has its own summer jobs for the taking. The city needs ticket takers and concession stand operators at its Ice Garden and part-time Zamboni drivers, jobs that pay \$15 and \$16 an hour. There are support staff administrator openings in the city's Port Authority and Housing/redevelopment.

"Those are jobs where we are not going to discourage anybody from applying. We won't say, 'You are too young,' Benson said. "It's an open opportunity."

It's one of many job opportunities for students and young adults looking to gain experience and contacts that can lead to new careers. Determined to stop losing talent to the larger cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, the city created a "Bloom in Bloomington" career development program last year. It started with 13 interns.

But this month Benson is placing 17 "Bloom" interns in jobs at the Mall of America, the Larkin Hoffman law firm and the city's police, housing and redevelopment and port authority departments. All of them are students.

"We believe fresh eyes and young minds bring change for the better and may be more technologically advanced in spaces we had not thought about," Benson said. Many are computer savvy and know how to use and share paperless documents. "So we constantly encourage aspiring young professionals to join us and help us stay with the times."

At the Bloomington law firm Larkin Hoffman, "Normally we have maybe two or three interns. This year we have eight so it's a bumper crop," said Business Development Director Gregory Wolsky.

The newcomers include two students from Norway, one from Ireland, three law clerks and Emmanuel Ayelomi — a college student and "Bloom In Bloomington" intern who will spend his

summer helping Larkin Hoffman remove discriminatory, race-based covenants from residential real estate deeds.

Alex Risdall also starts this month in the new government affairs company Larkin Hoffman opened May 30 in St. Paul. Risdall is the first of what is expected to be many future summer interns inside the new company, Wolsky said.



Larkin Hoffman hired eight summer interns this year; usually two are hired. They start their jobs next week in Bloomington and St. Paul. Shown here, left to right, are U.S.-based interns Alex Risdall and Emmanuel Ayelomi and summer law clerks Ahmed Nasman, Sarah Baalson and Maddie Volk. Not shown are two interns from Norway and one from Ireland.

Wolsky advised future candidates to apply early for the summer jobs. "Most of our intern positions were finalized in the fall" even though students don't start until June. The law firm searches early to snatch the best talent from the competition. Summer jobs "are just a great way for an organization like ours to meet great students and bring them in. We always start with the intent to hire them if there is a good match" which helps them launch careers.

Counties and other employers offer youth training programs designed to teach much younger job seekers how to work.

On June 20, 15-year-old Lakeville North High School student Jackson Bohlman starts work at Tree Trust Career Pathways.

He's joining 244 other young trainees learning landscaping or construction jobs at 16 employers around the Twin Cities such as Rainbow Tree Care, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the city of Plymouth, YTS Tree Care and Habitat For Humanity.

The 10-week program has 102 more trainees than last year due to a bump in state funds and more recruiting muscle, said Tree Trust's Career Pathways Director Cindy Booker.

"For many participants, this is their first job," Booker said. Trainees earn \$12 to \$15 an hour and are picked up at schools and bused daily to worksites overseen by 24 crew leaders who are mostly college students and teachers.

Applications for the summer session are now closed, but slots open soon for fall and winter training, Brooker said.

Bohlman, who loves art class and Dungeons and Dragons, learned about the Tree Trust job from a teacher who knew Ramsey County's Learn and Earn program and Minneapolis's Step Up Youth Program were looking for student trainees.

Soon Bohlman will be building large garden installations at Cobble Park in Apple Valley.

"It's pretty cool," he said. "I like working outdoors. It's good exercise and a nice work environment. And you get decent money from it."

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