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Scholarships aim to keep youth in area

By JIM DIINO
Staff Writer

Young people who plan to pursue technological or medical training - and want to work in the Hazleton area - are eligible for the Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership's scholarship.

The partnership is offering \$6,000 - \$3,000 a year for two years - to any local student who wants to pursue an education that will match a job need in the area.

Jack St. Pierre, chairman of the partnership's scholarship committee, said there is a continuing need by local industry for people with technical training.

"The jobs available in this area 10 years ago are the same ones you see today and will be the same ones you'll be seeing 10 years from now," St. Pierre said. "They (local industry) just can't get

enough people with industrial maintenance technology backgrounds."

The scholarship is open to people who want to pursue a one-, two- or four-year program.

Typical one-year programs include industrial maintenance technician, manufacturing technology, electronics technology, computer technology and industrial technology.

Two-year programs that are applicable include computer engineering, manufacturing engineering and production technology.

Typical job functions would include service, troubleshooting, and repair of sophisticated manufacturing machinery and systems; installing manufacturing systems, many of which are computer-operated, and overall preventive maintenance.

Candidates with strong hands and mechanical aptitude with good analytical problem-solving skills would be ideally suited for these careers, St. Pierre said.

Last year, the scholarship committee expanded the eligible careers to the medical field, recognizing the dire need for all types of medical personnel, especially nurses. Any kind of medical training program is eligible for the scholarship.

Other jobs added to the list are those available at the Tobyhanna Army Depot in Monroe County.

Bob Skulsky, the partnership's executive director and a former depot employee, said there are many opportunities there aside from electronics, the depot's mission.

"It's like a small city," said Skulsky. "There are positions for policemen, firemen and many others."

St. Pierre said earning potential in the Greater Hazleton area manufacturing community can be between \$25,000 and \$70,000, depending upon knowledge and experience.

The partnership began offering the scholarship to help prevent local young people from leaving the area to work and live after earning their degree.

Scholarship recipients have to sign a contract with the partnership to remain employed in the Hazleton area for a minimum of three years.

Candidates must also live within the boundaries of the Hazleton Area School District, MVL Preparatory School, Weatherly Area School District and Marian High School in Homelton. They must be in good academic standing and must achieve a 2.75 or equivalent grade-point average to renew the scholarship. If they fall below 2.75, they have one semester to catch up.

Applications are due for May 15, with an anticipated June 1 notification.

Those who apply will have to write an essay on why they should get the scholarship and list their employment and civic involvement.

Those interested can apply by contacting Skulsky at the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, 466-1609, or online at www.hazletonchamber.org, or www.civicpartnership.com.

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