

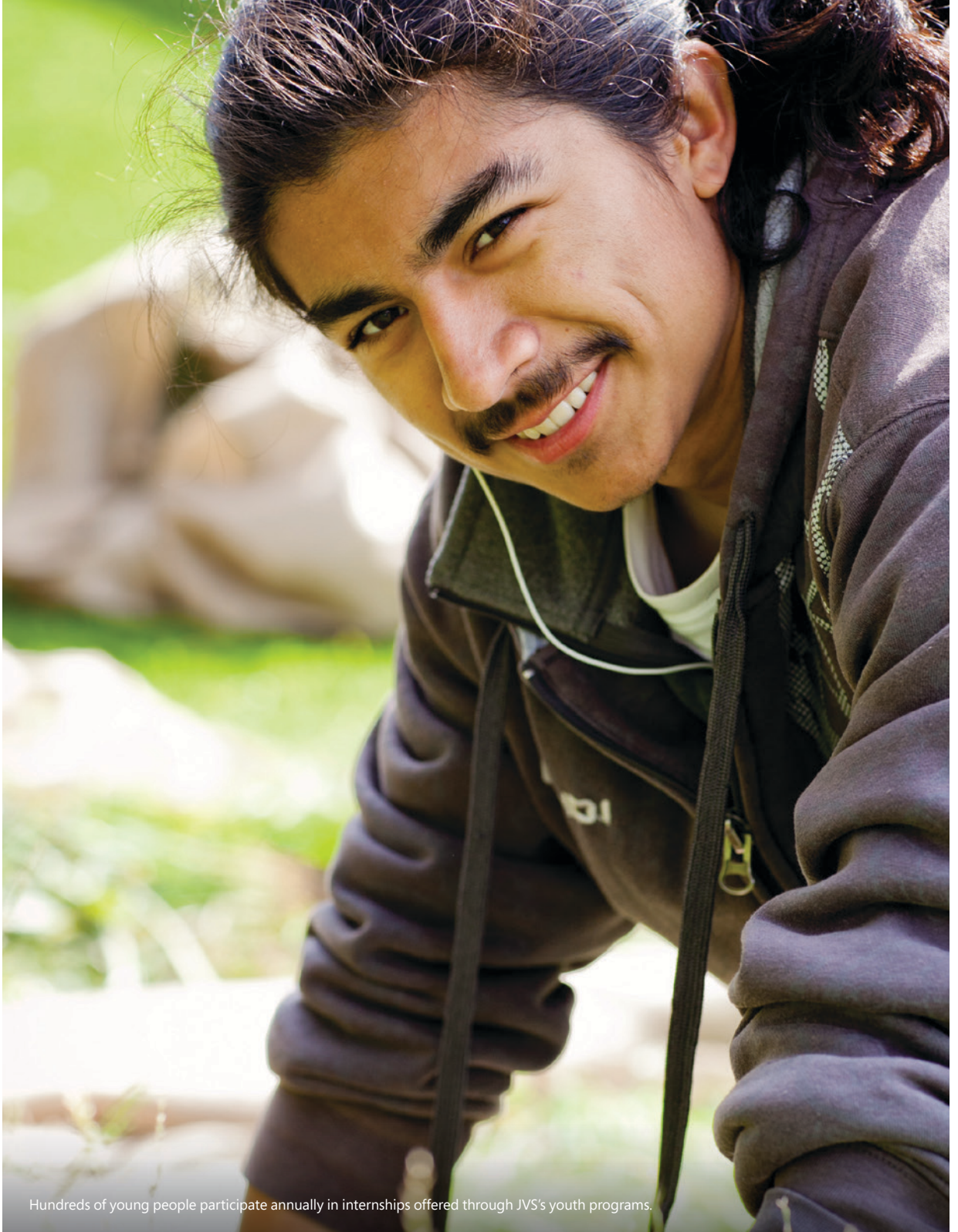
Empowering youth

Catalyst

Growing future employees

Partnerships forged between schools and industry yield results

JVS



Hundreds of young people participate annually in internships offered through JVS's youth programs.

Finding a career that's a good fit between interests and talents can be a challenge. Even when you know what you'd like to do, learning the needed skills and finding a job that sets you on your path can be daunting. That's never been more true for young people than it is now, when youth unemployment is more than double the adult rate. Jobs that used to go to young people and gave them experience building workplace skills now go to adults. Employers prefer to hire people with work experience, but younger people don't have it.

"Particularly for the young people JVS cares the most about—people of color, low income, people with disabilities, foster youth, youth who have been involved in the justice system—the employment rate is just abysmal," says Kevin Hickey, senior manager for high-school bridge programs at JVS (Jewish Vocational Service). "If you're an African American male without a high-school diploma, the chance of having a job is 5 percent."

For more than 40 years, JVS has helped people of all ages find work. Their original focus was in the Jewish community, and they have expanded to serve all people looking for employment. In recent years, their support for young people has deepened, and includes placements in about 300 internships and jobs annually. "We're trying to give kids early exposure to work, let them feel some success in the workplace, let them learn those skills that kids can only learn while they're actually on the job," says Abby Snay, JVS executive director.

Employers can engage with JVS in short- or long-term ways to help establish the next generation of workers. Microsoft backs JVS's efforts with software donations, training, and employee volunteer collaboration.

School meets work

To help young people who have challenges get on the path to meaningful employment, JVS works with public high schools across San Francisco. At 10 schools, JVS offers job readiness training throughout the school year to about 400 special-education students, and helps them find afterschool and summer jobs. The organization also coaches supervisors and employers about how to work with young people with disabilities and other challenges so they can be successful—without compromising the employer's standards.

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At three continuation high schools, JVS is taking an active role across the entire student body to bring work to school and school to work. "We are embedding ourselves more during the school day to help students graduate from high school," explains Hickey, about their participation in work-based learning efforts. At John O'Connell High School, for example, classes are co-taught by academic teachers and industry professionals, such as a culinary entrepreneurship course taught by a chef and an economist, or a math class taught by a geometry teacher and a construction professional. JVS helps out with work-based learning and supports schools with academic, college, and career counseling.

Hickey explains that "We're working with supervisors in designing internship and job experiences that more specifically call out reading, literacy, or math skills so that those are reinforced at the workplace. For example, students studying habitat restoration who intern at San Francisco's Recreation and Parks Department may be given the geometry challenge of calculating the amount of sod required to turf a field at a park."

John O'Connell High School Principal Mark Alvarado describes the goal of the collaboration with JVS as creating authentic onramps to get at-risk kids into careers: "JVS is helping us build an infrastructure that will make us a bridge into industry... We're moving in a super-positive direction with JVS helping us design the program, and we're figuring this out together. They're our resident career workforce experts and we lean on them heavily."



A partnership between JVS and the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department gives students work experience in habitat restoration.

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JVS works with job seekers and employers to transform lives



75,000 clients served
since 1973



1,001 jobs found
in 2013



\$11 million in wages earned
by JVS clients in 2013

JVS staff help at O'Connell in many ways, by finding speakers for classrooms, organizing field trips, and developing internships that fit each individual's interests, such as with the SPCA for students who like animals. According to Alvarado, this level of attention has helped turn some youth who were not serious about school into committed students.

Social consciousness applied

"I think increasingly people in the business community are concerned about social issues, concerned about inequality, concerned about unemployment, and want to do something," observes Snay. She describes hiring a young person as both a rewarding and easy way to help out, and notes that often there is a wage subsidy available through public funding to offset the cost. "So many of these kids come from families where there isn't a solid history of employment, and so the exposure the kids get to the workplace is invaluable."

"I think Microsoft really extends itself to be a community institution and a community partner," states Snay. "Microsoft has been incredibly generous with the latest versions of its programs, which is very critical for us so we can train our clients on the software that's actually used in the workplace. And when Microsoft opened up their store at the Westfield Centre, they offered classes specifically developed for the needs of JVS clients and staff." Microsoft's donations also include infrastructure software and servers.

JVS's adult clients benefit from employer visits to the JVS offices to talk about what it's like to work for a company or organization and its hiring practices. "When people are looking for work," explains Snay, "the exposure is so critical because they can be so isolated. To be able to go to an office or have someone come here for interview practice, or have someone from the industry actually critique a résumé, could just make all the difference to someone who's looking for work."

Microsoft has hosted JVS clients for mock interview sessions at its offices. In a recent session, youth who were exiting the foster care system participated. The experience yielded comments from them such as, "I really enjoyed the Microsoft Office mock interviews! It gave me confidence and excitement to do an interview for real!"

JVS urges employers to partner with them to find candidates for open positions, volunteer to support their job seekers, and make a donation of any size. There's lots of information about how to do that at jvs.org.