

EDITORIAL

Youth jobs

Local employers should support and train the next generation.

Summer jobs were once a rite of passage, a way of figuring out what you did or didn't want to do with your life. But in 2014 only about a third of young people could find a summer job, according to Chronicle business columnist Chris Tomlinson.

For many Texas youth who live in economically disadvantaged households, the barriers to finding a summer job, especially a meaningful one, are formidable. Their families may lack a tradition of higher education or professional employment. Students may not know how to put together a résumé, how to locate internships or how to apply.

Mayor Sylvester Turner and the Greater Houston Partnership have created a program that seeks to remedy this situation. The Hire Houston Youth Program encourages employers to post internship opportunities and trains students on the application process.

While accepting applications from all youth, the program focuses on students in some of the most disadvantaged parts of the city. To buttress interns' future employment success, the mayor and the partnership have recruited 40 community groups to train the new employees on how they should conduct themselves in a professional work environment before they start work in jobs many have never heard of.

The program aims to place around 5,000 interns this summer — five times more than it did last year. But the business and philanthropic communities should go even higher and adopt the goal that every young Houstonian who wants a job this summer and is willing to work hard should have that chance.

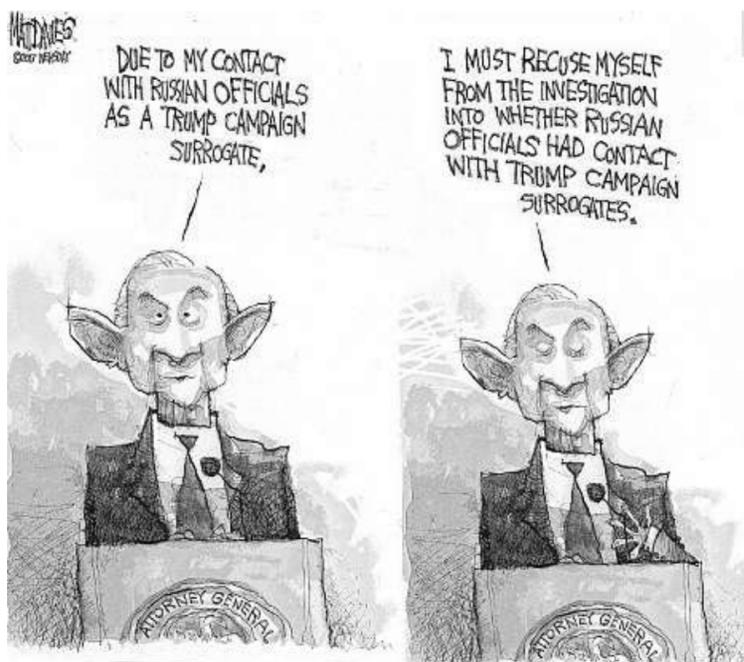
Summer jobs foster a sense of responsibility while allowing students to earn much-needed income and to help families struggling to get by. They give children of poverty hope, but also a life goal.

A robust youth jobs program broadens the horizons of the participants and meets workforce needs, as well. "If we fundamentally believe that the people of this region are our most important asset, then we should spend the time to make sure they are developed effectively," Peter Beard, the partnership's senior vice president of workforce development, told Tomlinson.

Private individuals can help with this effort, too. For a \$2,500 tax-deductible donation, Hire Houston Youth will place a young person in a paid internship with a non-profit organization that needs the extra hands.

The alternative is bleak. People who fail to find work early in their lives run a risk of being unemployed and underemployed into early adulthood and beyond, according to researchers. That's needless lost potential.

Let's don't let Houston's youth languish during summer's dog days. Put them to work.



Recent executive orders hurt public health

By Andrea Caracostis

Founded as a safe haven for the oppressed and built by generations of immigrants, the United States has a proud tradition of promoting diversity and compassion, which has made our country more prosperous and vibrant. All Americans benefit when we have policies that seek the highest level of health for all people. Our country's shared well-being is stronger with our immigrant and refugee communities who fuel innovation and contribute to our economic growth.

Recent executive actions on refugees and immigration contradict this healthier, stronger and more inclusive vision of America. The orders to withhold federal funding from "sanctuary" cities, begin construction of a wall on the Mexican border, pause the refugee program and ban entry from seven Muslim-majority countries are not only contrary to American values of diversity and compassion — but also pose a threat to our overall public health.

As a community leader working to provide health care to some of Houston's most diverse and underserved communities, I am concerned about the impact these orders will have on the health and wellbeing of America's families, children and workers. Along with other health-care providers across the country, I am concerned that these orders

could harm America's health and resilience. Families thrive when they can live without fear of deportations and other discriminatory policies; they deteriorate when marginalized and are targeted.

As a first-generation immigrant, I am grateful for the opportunities this country has given me, including the opportunity to work at HOPE Clinic — a community health center that employs over 130 individuals from over 25 different countries, and provides much needed care to over 15,000 people in the Greater Houston area. America has given me the opportunity to build healthier communities for my children and for all future generations, including new immigrants, like me, who come to this country with a desire to contribute and build a better future.

These executive orders not only affect people from the targeted countries, it also affects you and me. We live in a world that is interconnected and inclusion makes us richer — hope and compassion build bridges not walls. Like me, so many in our health-care workforce are foreign-born and dedicate their lives to improving the health of all communities. Policies that segregate and discriminate will not make America healthier or stronger.

Internationally trained physicians often help address physician shortages in the United States, and meet the critical demands of providing care to underserved

populations like those served by our clinic. Policies that block the immigration of these medical professionals will not only set our country back as a world leader in health care, but will also impact the health of Americans most in need.

With roots in the civil rights movement, community health centers like HOPE Clinic, serve anyone who walks through their doors. Serving nearly 25 million patients each year and providing \$24 billion in annual health system savings, America's health centers serve as a leading model of quality health care. It is from this public health lens that I look at the impact of these executive orders.

We know that our health-care system benefits from the contributions of immigrants from around the world, and a diverse health workforce is necessary for our nations' health. As a health-care provider promoting a diverse and culturally competent workforce that supports innovations in health care and improved health for all of our patients, I reject discriminatory policies that target individuals based on ethnicity, religion, country of origin, or any other grounds. I stand committed to the Hippocratic oath to provide care to all those in need. I stand to defend the American Dream.

Caracostis, a medical doctor, is CEO of Hope Clinic in Houston.

LETTERS

Bigger issues

Regarding "Trump's fuss in transgender case is misplaced" (Page A32, Feb. 26), any data source you choose will show that the transgender population of the United States is less than 1 percent. Why are we spending so much emotional time, political capital, legal fees, etc. to work on a problem that affects fewer than 1 percent of our population?

We have a multitude of issues that are more pressing than transgender rights. For starters we have the lack of educational rights that are due for special-needs students; we have a state-wide educational system that is rated in the bottom

third of the U.S.; we have a health care dilemma that is unraveling before our eyes, and we have an immigration issue that seems to be in our face each day.

Why not force our congressional and state representatives to focus on the really tough issues that affect tens of millions of us instead of the emotional issue surrounding 1 percent of our citizens that arouse voters but do little to fix our pressing needs?

There are only so many days the Texas Legislature is in session. It is a lot easier for legislators to spend those days talking about transgender people than working an overall immigration bill that will stand the test of time.

Curt Anderson, Woodlands

Property taxes

Regarding "Montgomery County backs 'meaningful' tax relief, not SB2" (Feb. 24, Page A3), while some lawmakers in Austin are pushing the envelope on providing property tax relief to Texas residents and businesses, local municipalities are fighting tooth and nail to keep money in their pockets and keep with the status quo.

Senate Bill 2, The Texas Property Tax Reform and Relief Act of 2017, would require cities and counties to ask for voter approval for any property tax hike greater than 4 percent, the previous threshold was 8 percent, and would not affect school district taxes.

SB 2 provides much-needed relief to Texas home and business owners watching their property taxes increase year after year with little recourse. However, instead of advocating for a bill that would benefit all residents and businesses, local governments are lobbying state legislators to vote down SB 2.

The Texas Municipal League and Texas Association of Counties are working diligently to keep Texans' hard-earned money in the coffers of local governments, instead of giving them an avenue to fight increasing property taxes.

We urge state leaders to make true appraisal district reform, as well as mandatory tax rate rollbacks, a priority this legislative session.

Tammy K. Betancourt, board member, Texas Building Owners & Managers Association

Just imagine

I don't pay taxes to the Katy ISD so one could claim I have no standing to weigh in on this issue, but I had trouble keeping my blood from boiling when I read "Katy stadium name reflects district's 'Legacy'" (Page A5, Thursday). I did some back-of-the-envelope calculations and concluded that \$72 million could:

- Hire more than 1,000 teachers (full or part-time).
- Purchase roughly 2,300,000 library books.
- Buy 120,000 laptop computers.
- Put 500 new school buses on the road.

Were I parent of a Katy ISD student, this is one "Legacy" I wouldn't be proud of.

Bill Wilson, Houston

BIBLE VERSE

He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

Proverbs 10:5

Teens exposed to more alcohol-related ads



Esther J. Cepeda says parents need to know that kids are being increasingly exposed to alcohol-related marketing.

Moms and dads: Do you know what your teen is doing on the internet right now?

It's never easy to tell with kids always on their phones and plugged in to the newest social media platforms, but they could be tuned in to alcohol advertising.

According to a new study from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, which surveyed both over-21 adults and people younger, almost one in three youngsters said they saw alcohol-related content online in the previous month. And, chillingly, children as young as 13 were nearly twice as likely to recall seeing alcohol marketing on the internet than were adults.

This is not to say that kids aren't exposed offline as well — researchers found that kids were more likely (69 percent vs. 62 percent) than adults to recall exposure to alcohol advertising on television, on radio (25 percent of kids vs. 17 of adults) and on billboards (55 percent of youth vs. 35 percent of adults).

But when it comes to online alcohol-related content in general, the disparity in the experience of kids and adults is more pronounced.

Of those under 20 years old, 30 percent recall seeing alcoholic images or themes compared with 17 percent of adults. And they were likelier (36 percent vs. 21 percent) than adults to recall seeing advertisements and pictures of celebrities using alcohol.

Young people were also likelier than adults (28 percent vs. 16 per-

cent) to remember seeing pictures of celebrities wearing clothing or other items with an alcohol brand's logo, and to actively respond (i.e., like, share or post) to alcohol-related content online.

These rates of interaction with alcohol-related ads, images and messages are especially worrying in the context of how drinking and screen time intersect for young people.

By some estimates, teens 13 to 18 spend almost nine hours per day — not including time spent online for school or homework — on the internet looking at entertainment media like YouTube videos and Snapchat stories, listening to music and playing video games.

This is more time than most adults get to sleep every night.

Worse, an analysis of 12 international long-term studies published since 2008 has established a link between exposure to alcohol marketing and drinking behavior in young people. The review, also by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg school, found that exposure to alcohol-related ads was even more strongly associated with the progression to binge and hazardous drinking than with just the initiation of alcohol use.

According to Dr. David H. Jernigan, the lead author on the ad-recall study, not only are alcohol companies targeting young people on less well-known (and therefore less regulated) social media networks that parents are unlikely to understand or know about, but even familiar platforms like Facebook, which offer safeguards, are risky.

"Even though Facebook pages for alcohol brands are inaccessible by people with profiles that state they are under 21, we know that young people are likelier than adults to lie about their age when they set up their account," Jernigan told me. "And these kids are getting plenty of access to content [like memes, branded and unbranded images and off-site videos] that is shared by adults and peers in their networks."

In truth, there's little to be done about what kids can see when they are on the internet, without the safety net of parental restriction software or network settings. And, Jernigan said, the alcohol industry is unlike the tobacco industry, which at least gives a nod toward respecting kids with its voluntary guidelines to keep marketing activities from reaching or appealing to young people (not that they've been so successful, anyway).

Sure, parents can (and should) contact their local legislators about putting pressure on alcohol companies to do more to stay away from kids. But, at this point, dialogue at home is probably the best line of defense.

"Parents just aren't talking to their children about drinking as much as they could — a lot of times they don't know what to say," Jernigan said. "But lots of conversations can center about how these images and advertisements don't show the whole story and let's talk about what they don't show."

For a guide to starting these conversations, visit the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (<http://ow.ly/rbCu309w7yv>), and dive in as soon as possible.

Cepeda's column is distributed by The Washington Post Writers Group. Her email address is estherjcepeda@washpost.com.