

TESTIMONY - MARCH 6, 2012 - AT 11 AM (HIGHER ED)

HELLO, MY NAME IS ROBERT CLAYTON, INVENTORY MANAGER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY, AND I SPEAK BEFORE YOU TODAY AS AN EMPLOYER IN THE STATE'S S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING PROGRAM.

I HAVE PERSONALLY BEEN INVOLVED WITH THIS INITIATIVE FOR 10 YEARS. I AM AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN YOUTH ISSUES - WORKING WITH YOUTH TO POINT THEM IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. I DO THIS IN A NUMBER OF WAYS - THROUGH MENTORING, SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS, AND BRINGING YOUNG PEOPLE INTO "MY" WORKPLACE TO GAIN REAL WORK SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE.

WHAT I TRY TO DO WITH YOUTHS IS TO TEACH THEM HOW THE WORLD OF EMPLOYMENT WORKS - HOW TO BE PROFESSIONAL, HOW TO DRESS, HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER, HOW TO SPEAK AT INTERVIEWS, HOW PRESENT THEMSELVES.

ALSO, HOW TO DEAL WITH ONGOING ISSUES, PERHAPS WHEN WORK ISN'T AVAILABLE - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THERE IS NO JOB - HOW TO USE YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY, HOW TO VOLUNTEER, GET OUT IN THE COMMUNITY AND HELP.

I AM TEACHING THESE YOUNG PEOPLE HOW TO BE YOUNG MEN AND YOUNG WOMEN. - WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE AND WHAT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO GIVE THEM THE BEST CHANCE OF SUCCESS.

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE. I WORKED WITH A STUDENT - DAVID LOPEZ - A SPECIAL ED STUDENT FROM NEW BRITAIN HIGH. WHEN DAVID CAME TO ME, HE HAD ALL THE THINGS NOT WANTED BY AN EMPLOYER. YET, WITH A LITTLE WORK ON BOTH SIDES, - HE BECAME A DESIRABLE WORKER - MATURED, RESPONSIBLE, LEARNED WHAT HE NEEDED TO DO. THE TURNAROUND WAS SO SIGNIFICANT THAT I HIRED HIM AS A PART-TIME STATE EMPLOYEE. BUT THE STORY DOESN'T STOP THERE. DAVID WENT ON TO GOODWIN COLLEGE TO RECEIVE HIS ASSOCIATES DEGREE IN HOMELAND SECURITY.

HE GOT THAT DEGREE, BECAUSE OF MY ONGOING ON-THE-JOB MENTORING. WHILE WORKING FOR ME AT CCSU, HE DROPPED OUT OF CLASSES AT GOODWIN. I TOLD HIM I DIDN'T WANT HIM WORKING FOR ME UNLESS HE CONTINUED HIS EDUCATION, SO HE WENT BACK AND FINISHED HIS DEGREE. DAVID HAS SINCE GONE ON TO WORK AS A MANAGER FOR RENT-A-CENTER. AND THE STORY IS STILL NOT OVER, I AM IN THE

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PROCESS OF RECRUITING HIM BACK FOR A FULL TIME JOB IN ANOTHER DEPARTMENT AT CCSU. DAVID CAME TO ME WITH A LOT OF ISSUES AND IS NOW IS A PROFESSIONAL YOUNG MAN.

YOUTH ARE AN INVESTMENT. I WILL ALWAYS MAKE THAT COMMITMENT. THE STATE SHOULD AS WELL. WE NEED A COMPREHENSIVE WAY OF WORKING WITH YOUTH. WE NEED TO CUT THROUGH THE BUREAUCRACY. WE NEED TO STOP TALKING AND START PUTTING OUR WORDS INTO ACTION. WE NEED TO PROVIDE FUNDING, WHETHER IT BE THROUGH WAGE SUBSIDIES OR TAX CREDITS IN WAYS THAT WILL CONSISTENTLY AND PROPERLY TAKE YOUTH OFF THE STREETS AND HAVE THEM BE RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS. WE NEED TO GIVE THEM JOBS THEY CAN GO TO WHERE THEY CAN LEARN VIABLE SKILLS. WE NEED ACTION NOW. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.