

kids these days...

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Lazy Days of Summer?

School is out for the summer...the sun is shining...what is not to love? Being a kid in the summer months is the best time ever! For some young people the money bug may be whispering too and that is when they look at the summer job. After all, that is a way to get cash for clothes, hobbies, cars, college, or whatever the heart desires.

I remember one of my first summer jobs as a stock boy in my parent's little convenience store. My wages were 25 cents an hour – and I thought I was rich! On a Saturday I would earn about two dollars, which was a good deal of money since a bottle of pop was only 10 cents.

Of course it wasn't just the money that summer; I also took with me a feeling of pride and accomplishment because of a job well. I began learning that you have to give respect to earn it and the world is not going to just hand you what you want. You have to work for it.

I know that kids these days appreciate the almighty dollar, but do they appreciate what else they may be getting with their summer job?

I am reminded of a story I heard about a young lady who got her first job. When the manager wanted to speak to her about the way she treated customers she simply walked out, went across the street and got hired by a competitor.

While I think it's great that there are sometimes a variety of options available for youth, I am not too sure I agree with the way this particular person utilized those options. After all, what exactly did she learn?

The age at which a youth can get a job has lowered substantially over the past few years. It is common to

see kids as young as 12-years-old, who may even appear to be younger, joining the workforce. And while there are some benefits there can also be some disadvantages. For example, are we teaching our children the importance of hard work, or are we simply teaching them that more is better?

It's true that a job will give a teen a feeling of independence, teach them skills they can use all their lives, learn how to get along with others, and help them to feel more confident and independent – it may even help them learn to manage money and explore potential career paths. Whatever the case may be, when a youth does get that summer job it does help shape the kind of employee they may become.

However, I happen to think kids also need time to just be kids – to really experience some of those carefree days of summer without demanding schedules and onerous obligations. There will be plenty of time for that in the future.

I expect your teenage years were like mine – a little bit of work but also a lot of fun! Let's do our part to encourage all youth in our community to have a balance between those two realities.

For me, a summer job helped to shape my values and define me as a person. Today, despite the current economic challenges in Alberta, many of our youth will be finding similar opportunities this summer. Let's hope they will be wonderful experiences for them.

Any feedback or comments are welcome and can be sent via email to david.rideout@gov.ab.ca