# Salem County Inter Agency Council of Human Services

The Human Services Advisory Council of Salem County ❖ Continuum of Care Lead Agency
Children's Inter Agency Coordinating Council Convener ❖ Youth Services Commission Administrator
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PRESS RELEASE
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## Salem County, NJ Companies Donate $80,000+ to Social Impact Youth Internships

Salem County Inter Agency Council of Human Services (IAC) announces its reception of the Salem Health and Wellness Foundation's debut 2024 Public Health Fellowship grant award of $55,000 as well as a $20,000 donation from Chemours Chamber Works site, and $5,500 from Inspira Health Network Inc.

Funding will support an expansion of the Social Impact Youth Internship initiative IAC piloted for seven weeks last summer with five high school youth from Salem City. In 2023, the pilot resulted in an attendance rate of 97%. Interns scored how well the program strengthened various soft skills, including, their confidence to try new experiences (100%), to value working hard (87.5%), and to bring a positive attitude to the workplace (95%). Interns reported the program exposed and connected them to successful and professional, culturally relevant, community and business leader role models either 'strongly' or 'mostly' (100%).

This year, nine interns representing Salem and Penns Grove cities will receive 12-months (230 hours) of engagement during non-school hours. Engagement includes first-time job training and workforce development through building of soft skills and career exploration in environmental and community health sciences, entrepreneurship, and leadership. Outcomes per intern include an earned stipend up to $2,000, one elective college credit to Salem Community College, a customized resume, and weekly shares of local produce for their households. A professional evaluator is contracted to measure the impact of the program on interns' development of industry-specific hard skills and knowledge, soft skills, food literacy life skills, and career exploration.

The internship is designed to benefit the county as a mechanism for robust community systems and environmental change. It is forging new channels of structured interactions and exchanges between local stakeholders and youth that mutually benefit each other and may lead to sustainable growth of Drivers of Health. For example, involving youth in tours of and discussions with local farm businesses may result in increased workforce opportunities for youth, increased nutrition access, strengthened markets for local farms, and overall improved local food ecosystem resiliency. Situating community planning efforts within a youth workforce development and transformational framework may result in more impactful planning than traditional, transactional planning methods of surveys and focus groups. Structuring youth formation as a paid job experience may succeed in long-term participation during "prime-time-for-crime" non-school hours, leading to decreased youth violence.

Donations support transportation costs, interns' stipends, uniforms, daily lunches, and instruction. The Salem Health and Wellness Foundation grant specifically supports Salem County resident, Michele Montemurno, to serve as the Public Health Fellow charged with developing the sinews between youth, producers, communities, curriculum, and partners towards strengthened food and youth resiliency. Founder of Bushels of Blessings (est. 2011), Montemurno has unique credibility among local farmers, expertise in agriculture and food system logistics, and unwavering passion for Salem County families.

Core Partners include Bushels of Blessings; Sharing Horses with Humans LLC.; TeamHarold Transportation; Star Corner Productions; Salem County Vocational Technical and Career School Agriculture Science Instructor, Carly Chaaple, M.A. Sustainability; Associate Vice President of Rowan College of South Jersey, Candice Racite, EdD Higher Education Leadership and Innovation; and Professional Evaluator, Herbert 'Skip' Garrison.

Follow the adventure on, Facebook and Instagram @SalemCountyInterAgencyCouncil, and stay tuned for a webpage featuring the internship on our website SalemCountyIAC.Org. Inquiries for partnerships, media, and support can be made to Executive Director, Cristina Chillem, at Cristina@SalemCountyIAC.org.