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***Job Club* Prepares Area Youths for Employment**

Brenham, Texas, July 19, 2006 — Mission Brenham, in partnership with Jobs Partnership of Washington County, kicked-off *Job Club* this summer, a new program to prepare junior-high students for becoming excellent employees when they enter the job market.

Job Club is offered to low-income youths, the top candidates for future unemployment. The program teaches them the importance and rewards of faith, self-discipline, hard work and goal-setting, along with practical job experience.

“We have seen great success over the past six years with *Jobs for Life*, our adult job training,” said Suzanne Flammer, program development manager for Jobs Partnership. “Over 80% of our graduates get jobs or better jobs. Some have asked to include their children in the program, to prepare them before they reach employment age. That’s why *Job Club* was created, with curriculum customized for younger people.”

The eight-week program is the first part of a two-year program that will be continued next summer. It is taught and supervised by Mission Brenham counselors Betty Wilson and Derrick Oliver. The comprehensive curriculum includes three training formats: classroom study, job/career “shadowing” tours, and community service work.

In the classroom, students learn to set goals, develop budgets, manage money, understand employers’ expectations, and how to be excellent employees. They also learn Bible lessons on responsibility, diligence and caring for others. Finally, they learn about the specific industries they will visit before each tour.

Led by *Job Club* volunteer instructor, Ilene Dryer, eleven students recently visited the kitchens at Chilis, Whataburger and Bluebonnet Hills Care Center. As potential employees in the Food Service industry, they got a glimpse of kitchen responsibilities, safety skills, and compliance with state and local regulations.

“These students were much more interested in learning than other groups we’ve hosted,” remarked Geraldine Johnson, owner and Director of Bluebonnet Hills Care Center. “You could tell they were here for a purpose. They listened well and asked good questions. While they were here, they helped us deliver meals to residents.”

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Doug Borchardt, CFO at Brenham National Bank, also hosted a group of *Job Club* students for a bank tour and a lesson on banking and budgeting. "I have long felt that students today do not learn in school what they need to know about work ethics," remarked Borchardt, a long-time volunteer JA instructor for BISD, and an enthusiastic supporter of *Job Club*.

Job Club students will tour Blinn College led by recruiter Stephanie Crabtree, who will teach them the importance of education and the direct relationship it has on their future earning ability. While at Blinn, students will also learn about academic employment opportunities and assistance available to them through Blinn programs.

Two days each week, *Job Club* students get practical work experience at local organizations. They sorted clothing and other donations for Higgins Branch under the direction of manager Susan Lempel. They helped Fireman's Park manager, Linda Soeken, with landscaping duties including weeding flower beds and planting trees and shrubs. They will also help with landscaping and ground maintenance for Brenham Housing Authority under the direction of maintenance manager, Ben Menjares.

To teach them about wise money management, students are given a small "stipend" for their community work, but they must put half in savings to receive upon high school graduation. Counselors function like work supervisors, deducting from students' pay for absenteeism and failure to perform assigned duties.

"*Job Club* introduces students to a whole world of opportunities that they didn't know existed," said Marcus Lawhon, Director of Mission Brenham. "The goal of this job-readiness program is to prepare students for vocations or careers that will help them achieve self-reliance and responsible lifestyles. Their success is a success for the whole of Brenham."

Founded in 1995, Mission Brenham is made up of Washington County followers of Jesus Christ, working together to help people in need and turn around destructive social trends for the good of the community. The team of four staff members, and up to 40 volunteers at a given time, specializes in identifying the many problems in our neighborhoods and organizing progressive ministries to resolve them. These ministries include educational and youth programs, spiritual guidance, emotional and family encouragement, and practical workplace solutions. The Mission has helped many individuals find purpose and take responsibility for their lives, their finances and their families – some growing into leadership roles. You can contact Mission Brenham at 979-337-9469.

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