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Amanda Crow, 18, of West Mifflin helps Cameron Durnich, 2, of North Huntingdon onto the swings at Kennywood on Friday. Crow works at Kennywood while she is home from school for the summer.

## Summer job market competition heats up

*Unskilled jobs often are taken by older workers affected by recession*

BY ADAM WAGNER  
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Teenagers are losing out to older workers and even recent college graduates in their hunt for seasonal jobs this summer.

The number of Pittsburgh-area teens with summer jobs fell from 31,480 in 2000 to 14,065 in 2011 — a decline of more than 50 percent — according to the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board's Youth Employment Report.

"Many older workers saw their retirement accounts decimated by the recession and were forced to work longer," said Kurt Rankin, an assistant vice president and economist at PNC. "And if they lost jobs, even if they had experience, they couldn't get skill jobs back and had to take lower, unskilled jobs that might be taken by teens."

Not learning time management and other basic skills taught by

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summer jobs could have a long-term effect on teenagers, creating patterns that lead to habitual unemployment, said Denise Rousseau, a professor of organization behavior and public policy at Carnegie Mellon University.

"When the hardcore unemployed become adults and look for work, they don't have a track record or basic set of skills that would allow them to stand out against a different candidate," she said.

And teenage employment may never return to pre-recession levels, a recent Bureau of Labor Sta-

tistics projection said, citing teens' desire to prepare for college over the summer and more older people and college graduates taking work requiring fewer skills.

Amanda Crow, 18, of West Mifflin managed to get a summer job at Kennywood amusement park. She attends classes four days a week at the Community College of Allegheny County's South Campus.

"It's tough, but you have to pay for school somehow," said Crow, a rising sophomore at Case Western Reserve University who is working for her second summer as a ride operator.

"You have to buy your books, you have to pay your tuition. It's something I think anybody can make work as long as they have time-management skills," she said.

Kennywood employs 1,200 seasonal employees each summer, including 900 teens. Each season, the park receives from 2,500 to 3,000 applications, said spokesman Jeff Fillicko, who added that the pool of applicants has become older,

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including many people of retirement age, and more travel longer distances to work in the park.

This year, Fillicko said, about 20 percent of the park's applicants were retirement age, a number that has doubled over the past few seasons.

The labor force participation rate for older workers has been climbing gradually since the 1990s,

a trend that could be attributable in part to people living longer, Rankin said.

The summer job market could be experiencing the recession's lingering effects, as many younger, educated workers have difficulty keeping their jobs and are forced to take unskilled labor jobs.

"The educated individual filling that position just to get by is unlikely to keep that job for more than a couple of years," Rankin

said. "The U.S. economy is going to improve, albeit slowly. Eventually, the individual with the degree is going to put that degree to use."

Teens have increasingly been spending more of their summers in school, according to numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In 1989, 19 percent of teens spent some time enrolled in class; in 2009, the latest numbers available, 53 percent did so.

Chris Briem, a regional economist at the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Social and Urban Research, said teen participation in the labor force has been declining for much of the past decade, even before the recession. "Kids have been staying in school over the summer more. It's not necessarily that they're trying to find jobs and getting kicked out by the old folks," he said.

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