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SEASONAL CAREERS Summer jobs heat up with workers

By Joshua Wilwohl
Special to The Star-Ledger

Summer fun can only last so long. Unless you learn to combine the weather with work.

Seasonal jobs mark the beginning of a much-anticipated winter break as companies, municipalities and organizations search for lifeguards, painters, landscapers and gardeners.

Sam Scaturro, director of operations and safety at Alpine Painting and Sandblasting Contractors in Paterson, said Alpine looks for workers from March to December, with May to

September as the busiest for work.

The company seeks to fill commercial and industrial painting positions.

"This includes painting office buildings, hospitals, schools, bridges, wastewater treatment facilities and so on," Scaturro said.

The work is demanding and the hours are 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. While experience is preferred, it's not required.

"We train for commercial painting on the job," said Scaturro. "We also do about three-fourth of training on safety in the shop."

He said every seasonal employee has to undergo a drug test, background check and hearing tests.

The training process at Alpine's facility can range from two weeks to eight weeks followed by three days of safety training.

"After that, they're cleared to go out and perform field work for the company," he said.

Not all summer jobs are with private companies, however. Townships in the Garden State also are looking for seasonal workers:

George Rague, director of parks, recreation and cultural affairs in Maplewood, said the township's seasonal jobs include lifeguards, patio staff, camp counselors, program aides and summer maintenance.

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Seasonal jobs

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He said, however, that Maplewood is filling the positions faster this year than previous years.

"We have a higher-than-normal return of people coming back," he said. "Because of the economy, some college seniors are coming back because they can't find jobs."

Jennifer Hessberger, director of senior, youth and leisure services in Livingston, said the township is looking to hire camp counselors and lifeguards for the summer.

"We look to see who's applied and we look to see who's coming back from previous years," she said.

Rague said Maplewood has hit capacity for the more than 100 seasonal jobs it has open, with another 75 people on retainer.

"A lot of the people who worked with us before have the opportunity to come back," he said.

Hessberger said Livingston still is accepting applications for the \$15- to \$17-per-hour jobs.

Pay for some seasonal jobs hovers around* minimum wage—depending on the company—but some seasonal work pays more.

Scaturro said four workers made more than six figures each last year while painting during their seasonal work. Alpine said on average its seasonal workers are paid \$15 to \$18 per hour, commensurate with experience.

Both Scaturro and Hessberger said applications for seasonal work are found online at Alpine's and Livingston's respective Web sites. Candidates can fill out the necessary information, submit the form and wait to be called for an interview, Scaturro said, adding that Alpine bases hiring on the interview.

As for the future of seasonal jobs? Scaturro doesn't see them vanishing.

"I don't see any difference in the way we operate going forward," he said. "We try to keep (seasonal workers) employed as many months of the year as we can, but the honest truth is, it's hard to paint outside in the winter." ♦

