



Hiring for the future

GUEST COMMENTARY: His work ethic proved to be a game-changer

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Hiring for the Future is a series from the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board, featuring region employers who provide young people a work opportunity while helping them gain skills and develop a good work ethic to succeed in today's economy.

The Gary Southshore RailCats' head groundskeeper, Noah Simmons, shares how hiring and developing Region youth is a big game win for everyone involved.

When Noah Simmons was still a high school student, he made a series of moves that defined his future in ways he never imagined.

"I worked as a grounds crew member for several local Little League associations," Simmons said. "I always loved baseball, and the idea of making money while staying close to the game

sounded great. I jumped at the chance."

Simmons showed his employers the soft skills that they sought — communication, teamwork, problem solving, time management, honesty. "I was taught the particulars about groundskeeping, but I came to the job with a strong work ethic, and that made the difference."

Simmons began to work for the Schaumburg Flyers, an independent professional baseball team. His combination of groundskeeping knowledge along with solid work ethic/soft skills was noticed by the Gary Southshore RailCats organization. As he approached his 18th birthday, Simmons was offered the job as head groundskeeper at the U.S. Steel Yard.

One way he pays it forward is to hire local youth, ages 16-

24, for as many seasonal jobs as possible. Those who demonstrate the desire to learn and the ability to be part of a team can spend the summer months working as part of a dynamic and exciting professional sports team.

"In addition to hiring grounds crew members, I also hire youth to work cleanup, parking lots, and security," Simmons said. "New team members are always surprised by how many jobs it takes to put on a baseball game."

Those same soft skills or what some call work ethic or success skills that helped Simmons move up the corporate ladder are in great demand within the RailCats organization. "They are critical for so many reasons," he said. "Team members need to understand how important their job is to the total effort. When the gates

open and customers enter, we have to be ready.”

Being ready means greeting fans, helping kids know where they might meet team mascot Rusty the RailCat, concessions ready, bathrooms and ballpark seats that sparkle. “Our fans are the greatest,” said Simmons. “They spend hard-earned money here, and it’s our responsibility to provide them with a memorable experience.”

Simmons feels that the regional Work Ethic Certificate through the Northwest Indiana Workforce

Board and the Center of Workforce Innovations, along with the Governor’s Work Ethic Certificate Program are exactly what youth need to be a megastar at the U.S. Steel Yard.

“A positive attitude, being a team player, being on time and ready to work, listen and follow direction, and show your integrity every day,” he stressed. “The young people who demonstrate those skills do well at the Steel Yard and beyond.”

Employers have indicated that work ethic skills are one of the top characteristics

needed in employees. One of the fundamental goals shared by the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board and the Center of Workforce Innovations is to produce an emerging workforce in the region that has 21st century skills in order to face the challenges of a global marketplace.

Simmons and the Gary Southshore RailCats are a prime example of how solid work ethic/soft skills can lead to a game-winning hit, now and in the future.