



Futures for Kids set to expand

Online service offers career assistance for students.

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By [Todd Cohen](#)

RALEIGH, N.C. -- In October, a high school counselor in Wake County logged onto the website of Futures For Kids at www.f4k.org to report that a 12th grader was interested in work involving heavy equipment.

The next day, an official at Gregory Poole Equipment Co. in Raleigh responded, and now is talking to the student about a two-year internship.

"Our overall goal is to connect kids with real people to create opportunities for them," says Susan Milliken, executive director of Raleigh-based Futures for Kids.

Formed in 2001, the organization works with 22 school systems serving 40,000 students throughout North Carolina, and aims to expand in the 2007-08 school year to all 115 school systems in the state.

Futures for Kids, which received \$1.6 million from corporations in its first three years, plus a total of \$800,000 in state funds last year and this year, trains school counselors and career-development coordinators to use its website.

The site provides tools to help students identify their career interests, learn about careers, talk to career coaches, connect with real employers and create and, based on their career interests, maintain an online version of the four-year graduation plan the state requires them to develop.

Educators also can use the site for access to students' career information, career coaches can use it to answer students' questions and employers can use it to send targeted messages to students about career opportunities.

Roughly 200 companies and 300 career coaches throughout the state work with the website, says Milliken.

With an annual budget of \$400,000 and a staff of four people working full-time and one working half-time, Futures for Kids aims to raise \$300,000 from corporate sponsors over the next year.

Once the organization expands to the entire state, its annual operating budget should total \$500,000, Milliken says.

The main corporate sponsors so far are Cisco System, GlaxoSmithKline, John Deere, Progress Energy and RBC Centura.