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### **INTERNS WORK CLOSE TO HOME AND DAYCARE AT BETA CENTER**

Orlando, FL - The reality of being a single mom, going to school and holding a job looks brighter on paper than in real life. Ask any of the teenagers at the BETA Center how they juggle all their responsibilities and you won't hear easy in the answer.

That's why Workforce Central Florida and BETA have partnered in a unique internship program called Project CoNEXTion, where young mothers gain valuable work experience at the nonprofit, which strengthens families through education and support. Two of the three teenagers working in the eight-week internships can walk to work and daycare from their residential homes at BETA in Orlando.

"This is a real-world work experience with a full support system," said Ruth Patrick, president/CEO of BETA Center. "Project CoNEXTion gives our interns an opportunity to earn money, understand the responsibilities of holding and keeping a job and acquire the skills to get them to the next step in their career plan."

Workforce Central Florida provides employability training and meets with the interns weekly to chart their progress and tweak behaviors that will lead to job retention. Aja Smith, case manager at BETA, said the internships for the three teens, who became pregnant in high school, are "an opportunity to gain job and life skills."

Smith said she has watched the women become more poised, assertive and better organized since they started working July 1st assisting with donations, childcare and community events. They work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday and are paid \$8 an hour through funds from the Workforce Investment Act.

"I've learned something new every day," said Desiree Funchess, a 19-year-old who is working during her summer break from Valencia College. She plans to become a nurse so her seven-month-old son, Desmond, "can have the best life I never had."

Amandah Rivers, 19, said the internship has been a “real eye-opener” about balancing work and family life. She lives with her mother now after having her son, Sean, 2, while living at BETA. “This pushes me into being an adult.”

Project CoNEXTion is a year-round program that helps participants prepare a resume, practice their interviewing skills and acquire valuable on-the-job training.

“Many of our participants, who range in age from 16 to 21, experience their first job during the program,” said Joyce Hinton, director of programs at Workforce Central Florida. “Project CoNEXTion gives them the opportunity to learn new skills that will lead to full-time employment. The collaboration with BETA is one of several we hope to continue throughout the community.”

Workforce Central Florida offers tools for residents of Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole and Sumter counties to find a job and advance in their careers. On average, WCF provides more than 9,000 job seekers each month with services such as an online job bank, career counseling, recruitment events, training, financial aid, career assessments and internships. WCF also assists an average of 1,300 employers each month with recruitment, retention and training. For more information, visit [www.workforcecentralflorida.com](http://www.workforcecentralflorida.com).

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