



ITEM PHOTO / OWEN O'ROURKE

Xavier Pixley, 15, of Swampscott, credits the FirstJobs program with teaching him the culture of the business world.

# FIRSTJOBS

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Pixley, 15, of Swampscott, a FirstJobs candidate who took such an opportunity and ran with it. A Revere High freshman, Pixley got his inaugural taste of employment at age 14 as part of a team that designs Web sites at Salem Cyberspace in Salem, run by Linda Saris.

"FirstJobs taught me how to dress, how to act in an interview, how to look for a job," said Pixley. "I went to job fairs, and when I was working, they allowed me to be creative and interact with my colleagues and my supervisors."

Pixley credited the FirstJobs program and the North Shore Career Center with keeping him focused during what might otherwise have been a critical

uncture. "They helped me stay out of trouble," he said, noting that friends would often ask him to join them in a variety of after-school activities. "But I couldn't go. I would tell them, 'I can't because I've got to go to work. I've got a job.' Now I'm glad I did."

Statistics show that many junior high and high school students get into trouble between the time they are dismissed from school and when they finally get home. Having a job cuts short that possibility.

"The website work is over, so I'm looking for other jobs now," Pixley said. "Even without working, I'm busy. I take honors classes at Revere High and I'm in the Student Council and the student newspaper."

Born in Boston, he and his 21-year-old brother, Ramone,

divide their time between living on Coolidge Street in Revere with their mother, Denise Pixley, and on Essex Street Swampscott, with their aunt Diane Pixley, the teenager's legal guardian and an office manager at the career center in Salem. The aunt led the cheering section when the North Shore Chamber of Commerce, the North Shore Workforce Investment Board, and the career center honored the teenager for his accomplishments.

"Xavier's is an uplifting story amid what sometimes seems a blizzard of bad news about teenagers and young people," said Tinti. "He's a wonderful role model of what can be done in terms of shaping the future of the youth of this country and, therefore, shaping the

## Life lessons through 'FirstJobs'

Workforce leader urges business community to reach out to teens.

**SWAMPSCOTT**

By **DAVID LISCIO**  
THE DAILY ITEM

One day last week, Salem lawyer William Tinti, chairman of the North Shore Workforce Investment Board, introduced a remarkable teenager to an audience gathered to hear State Treasurer Tim Cahill talk about finances.

Tinti asked everyone in the room to turn to the person sitting next to them in the Sheraton Ferncroft Hotel in Danvers, and to imagine how that person must have looked as a teenager. His request elicited quite a few chuckles.

The attorney reminded those in the audience that each was once a teenager, most likely confused, and seeking guidance and role models. "Somebody reached down and gave each of us a hand," he said. "That's what FirstJobs is all about. It's putting teenagers on the road to success and there is no more important mission than that."

Tinti then introduced Xavier

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future of this country. There are a lot of young men and women out there like him, and we hope to expand the FirstJobs program to reach them."

The website projects on which Pixley worked were contracted through Salem Cyberspace, a non-profit technology center founded in April 2002 and dedicated to ending the so-called "digital divide."

The organization teaches practical application for technology, which can lead to jobs and social betterment. As its website states, "Our aim is not just to teach people how to use computers but to provide them with opportunities to use these new skills and knowledge in a meaningful way."

As technology becomes increasingly important to eco-

nomics and social success, many people in inner cities and rural areas are failing to acquire the necessary computer skills as rapidly as their more affluent neighbors. The disparity results in a "digital divide" that continues to grow as a problem.

According to Salem Cyberspace, the less fortunate side of the divide means that there is less opportunity to take part in the new information-based economy as it relates to jobs, education, entertainment, and communications opportunities that are available on line.

To lessen the divide, Salem Cyberspace launched CyberCorps, a teen-run web design business, and in 2006 announced the completion of its first major project. The Second Congregational Church,

United Church of Christ in Beverly hired CyberCorps to develop its new web site [www.beverlysecond.com](http://www.beverlysecond.com). CyberCorps team members designed the web banner, logo and navigation and took all the church-based photographs.

The Rev. Alan Froggatt said not only did the congregation get a great web site, the project dovetailed with the church's mission to reach out to economically disadvantaged communities. "Working with these teens to design our church's web site showed us what the next generation can do," he said.

The Web site team also worked on projects such as North Shore Mediation, St. Josephs Food Pantry, Grace Church of Salem and the North Shore Youth Career Center.