

TO WORK OR NOT TO WORK?

Many students face the pros and cons of picking up a job

BY CARLY PHILPOTT & ALEX GRIBB
 Editor-in-Chief & Jr. Editor-in-Chief

As teens across America go to work every day, the youth population is taking the job market by storm. It can be challenging to balance academic, social, and professional lives, but about 61.7% of students at Creek manage it every day, according to an October poll.

Nationally, that number is similar. According to the Employment and Unemployment Among Youth Summary, as of July 2022, around 60.4% of youth participated in the labor workforce.

For many students, work is a necessity, and has been viewed as a burden to students that feel like they're not getting the necessary payoff from such a demanding part of their lives.

"I feel like I'm working all the time and barely get time to do schoolwork or hang out with people," senior Alexey Aspen said.

In 2021, Aspen worked as a host at Longhorn Steakhouse and said approximately 90% of his fellow hosts were teenagers like him - all finding that the line between earning some extra pocket cash and healthy time management is growing thinner.

Senior Ellie Morris agreed that most of her coworkers were teenagers. She spent most of her time in 2021 working at Crumbl Cookies and earned an hourly wage of \$9.30, despite the minimum wage at the time being \$12.32.

A typical work week for Aspen was around three days a week, with around four to five hours a day, depending on what the weekend looks like.

Schedules like this can be difficult to balance for students with extensive sports, extracurricular, or academic commitments.

For senior Maggie Lee, this is why work only happens in the summer. She's a member of the marching band, which takes up much of her time during the first semester of the school year and makes managing her time almost impossible, even without a job. "In a competition week, I'm doing

band for probably more than 20 hours that week, you know, so it's just a lot," Lee said. "Marching band is the equivalent of a part time job."

Lee makes up the difference between what money she spends and what money she's unable to make during the school year by taking high-paying jobs during the summer. At the Renaissance Fair, where she works weekends, she makes around \$500 a week, she said. The income is from minimum wage plus pooled tips. She says visitors to the fair tip well. "It's not a teenager's job. This is not the amount of money a teenager typically makes," she said.

On Renaissance Fair weekends during the summer, Lee works 12 hours every day. Working long hours, especially back-to-back or immediately after a school day, can be ungratifying and exhausting. It's not easy for teens to dedicate so much time to being socially and physically active behind a counter or in a kitchen.

"It takes a lot off of me physically, because you can't even sit down the whole time," Morris

said. This toll only worsens with the mistreatment of teenage workers by both fellow employees and customers. It can be easy for teens to be taken advantage of in the workplace, simply because they aren't used to speaking up for themselves.

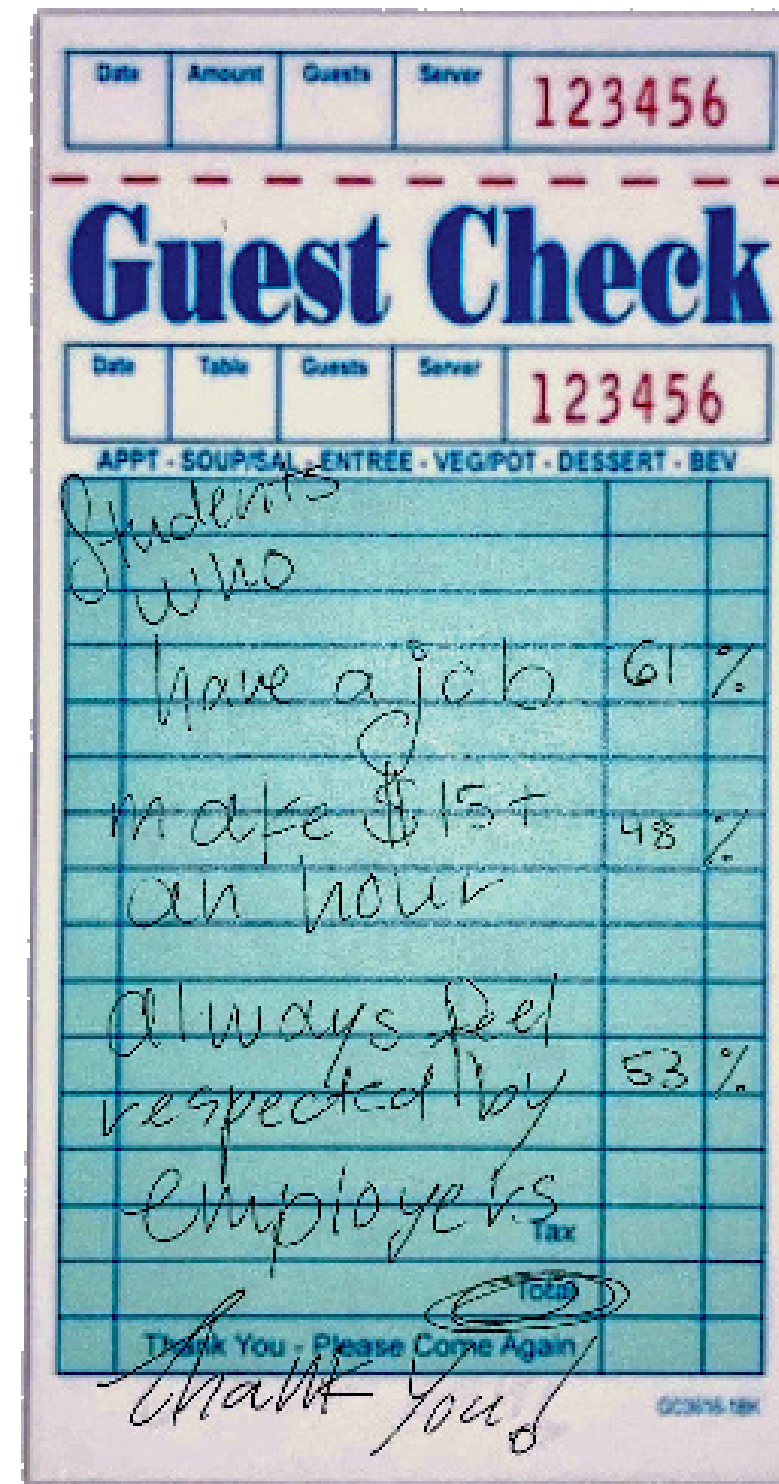
"Teenagers are seen to be dumb and inexperienced," senior Mia Andre, a server and cashier at Tocabe, said. "Teenagers are often forced to work harder and longer hours to 'prove themselves' to their older co-workers."

Healy, who now works as a kids' gymnastics coach, sometimes feels disrespected by older coworkers. "They are all in their 30s, and I feel like they think they know better than I do and that I don't have the responsibility to run a gymnastics class or deal with parents on my own," she said.

Adams said that similar problems can come from teenagers not knowing how to stick up for themselves. "I

"Teenagers are often forced to work harder and longer hours to 'prove themselves' to their older co-workers."

Senior Mia Andre



The USJ surveyed 175 Creek students in October about their job status and experiences. Here is what some of the results were. INFOGRAPHIC BY ALEX GRIBB