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GOT GREEN!



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Mukhtar and Jibril plant some seeds at the Got Green? Earth Day Shout Out!, April 21 at Southside Commons. The event kicked off the new Got Green? website and featured food, spoken word poets Sista Hailstorm and Yirim Seck and a variety of activities for children.

1 in 2 Out of Luck

New graduates are jobless or underemployed

By Hope Yen
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The college class of 2012 is in for a rude welcome to the world of work.

A weak labor market already has left half of young college graduates either jobless or underemployed in positions that don't fully use their skills and knowledge.

Young adults with bachelor's degrees are increasingly scraping by in lower-wage jobs - waiter or waitress, bartender, retail clerk or receptionist, for example - and that's confounding their hopes a degree would pay off despite higher tuition and mounting student loans.

An analysis of government data conducted for The Associated Press lays bare the highly uneven prospects for holders of bachelor's degrees.

Opportunities for college graduates vary widely.

While there's strong demand in science, education and health fields, arts and humanities flounder. Median wages for those with bachelor's degrees are down from 2000, hit by technological changes that are eliminating midlevel jobs such as bank tellers. Most future job openings are projected to be in lower-skilled positions such as home health aides, who can provide personalized attention as the U.S. population ages.

Taking underemployment into consideration, the job prospects for bachelor's degree holders fell last year to the lowest level in more than a decade.

"I don't even know what I'm looking for," says Michael Bledsoe, who described months of fruitless job searches as he served customers at a Seattle coffeehouse. The 23-year-old graduated in 2010 with a creative writing degree.

Initially hopeful that his college education would create opportunities, Bledsoe languished for three months before finally taking a job as a barista, a position he has held

Sen. Murray Pushes Back on VA

Report: Bureau failing to provide timely mental care for veterans

By Kevin Freking
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal investigators reported Monday that nearly half of the veterans who seek mental health care for the first time waited about 50 days before receiving a full evaluation, a much longer lag-time than cited by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The VA has been saying that 95 percent of new patients seeking mental health treatment get a full evaluation within the

department's goal of 14 days. But an inspector general's report said that the department's tracking is flawed and that the VA was overstating its success when it comes to how quickly veterans get care.

The department has greatly beefed up staffing in recent years, but the report also confirmed that many of the VA's doctors and other medical officials don't believe they have the manpower necessary to handle the ever-growing veteran caseload.

"This report confirms what we have long been hearing, that our veterans are waiting far too long to get the mental health care they so desperately need," said Sen. Patty Murray, chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. "It is deeply disturbing and demands action from the VA."

The report comes just days after the administration announced it was increasing its staff of mental health workers by roughly 1,900. The department has been adding staff at a

brisk pace in recent years. Staffing is up 45 percent since 2005, but the increase in patients has gone up by almost that amount. VA officials said the announcement had been months in the making.

In response to the report, the department released a statement saying that it was committed to ensuring that veterans had access to quality mental health care and that it would review the IG's findings.

"We have made strong

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Housing Complaints Against Banks

Discrimination in foreclosures alleged against Wells Fargo, others

By Charlene Crowell
Center for Responsible Lending

In the aftermath of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, Congress enacted the federal Fair Housing Act on April 11, 1968. This historic federal act made it illegal to discriminate in housing and housing related-activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or sex. Fur-

ther, the law applies to marketing and sales of homes, listings, appraisals and maintenance.

Now 44 years later - and not for the first time -two of the nation's largest banks - Wells Fargo and US Bank are accused of serious violations.

Following an undercover investigation of foreclosed single-family homes in eight metropolitan areas, the National Fair Hous-

ing Alliance (NFHA) filed two discrimination complaints with Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The complaints alleges that in handling foreclosed properties in its possession, US Bank and Wells Fargo show distinct and systematic differences in maintenance and marketing of these homes. And once again, according to

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