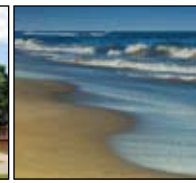


VIRGINIA



WORKFORCE CONNECTION

Virginia Workforce Council Spring 2011

From the Chairman's Perspective

We must work together to strengthen WIBs

By Huey J. Battle
Chairman, Virginia Workforce Council

I am pleased to share with you the 2011 spring issue of the Virginia Workforce Council newsletter.

In the most recent appropriations bill, the federal government has taken action

to reduce discretionary spending. Affected programs include the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) adult, youth and dislocated worker grant awards.

While the full short- and long-term impacts of this action are unknown at this time, it is safe to say there is an environment around government spending that will require innovative solutions to replenish lost resources. The expiration of WIA grant awards funded by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act reinforces this need for innovation, creative ideas and practices, and collaborative and cooperative efforts including best practices.

One such practice is the formation of local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), or partner organizations, as nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations. Creating these entities locally constitutes an additional support mechanism to seek

and provide necessary local resources. Establishing these boards has resulted in significant

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At the National Association of Workforce Boards' website, www.nawb.org, you can share any development and fundraising plans you have created, particularly for 501(c)3 organizations.



OppInc has committed resources to help operate a transition center in Suffolk for dislocated workers and area businesses impacted by the disestablishment of the U.S. Joint Forces Command in Hampton Roads.

OppInc and partners open center to help displaced JFCOM workers

Opportunity Inc.'s newest One-Stop Career Center—the Virginia Regional Center for USJFCOM Workforce Transition and Business Development—officially opened its doors April 28. Located in Bridgeway Technology Center I in Suffolk, the special transition center is on a mission to help individuals and businesses impacted by the impending closure of the U.S. Joint Forces Command in Norfolk and Suffolk.

In January 2011, President Barack Obama accepted the recommendation of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and approved the disestablishment of JFCOM, which employed 5,650 military, civilian and contract employees, many in Hampton Roads, and was responsible for an additional 5,150 indirect and induced jobs in the local economy.

Although some JFCOM functions will shift to different commands, retaining some of its jobs in the region, almost 2,000 jobs, most of them occupied by defense contractors, will no longer exist when the command completely dissolves come August. In addition, the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission estimates an additional 1,800 more jobs throughout the region will be lost due to indirect and induced repercussions of the closure.

Jobseekers will be able to receive a full range of services including career guidance, job placement and training assistance. An array of business services is also available for impacted employers.

Funding for the center was made possible through a \$500,000 grant from the Department

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CHAIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

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additional resources to maintain and to expand the capacity of local workforce development systems and to improve the provision of resources.

This type of innovation, in addition to its value on its own merits, also will better enable us to secure access to federal funds even in a constrained appropriations environment. Based on the latest federal appropriations bill, \$125 million is available for workforce innovation funds at the state and local area level through the Department of Labor. The ability of areas such as Northern Virginia (Area 11), Bay Consortium (Area 13) and Greater Peninsula (Area 14) will be enhanced when they compete for these funds and grant awards, based on the creation of the 501(c)3.

I would like to encourage the leaders of local WIBs to share their innovations and practices. At the National Association of Workforce Boards' website, www.nawb.org, you can share any development and fundraising plans you have created, particularly for 501(c)3 organizations.

As our local organizations form stronger regional and statewide ties to share ideas, best practices and resources, we will become better equipped to sustain and enhance the service delivery capacity of the workforce development system in the Commonwealth. 🌍

JFCOM

(Continued from page 1)

of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment which was received by the city of Suffolk. The center's primary functions are to prepare those who have been displaced from USJFCOM for future employment, to connect job opportunities with those searching for jobs, to assist the small business community and to aid with business development.

Opplnc representatives will be on site to provide core, intensive and training assistance along with its partners from Tidewater Community College, the Hampton Roads Small Business Development Center, the Virginia Employment Commission and others. The city of Suffolk is focusing on business development assistance.

For more information about the new transition center, visit <http://jfcomtransition.com>, email info@jfcomtransition.com or call (757) 514-4450, ext. 350. 🌍

WIA job-training programs help jobseekers help themselves

by Laurie S. Moran

Earlier this year when CBS News asked a representative sample of Americans what was the most important problem facing this country, 48 percent identified "the economy and jobs" as the top issue. While there have been signs of economic improvement, there still is only one open job for every four applicants.

And yet, it could be much worse. America's system of job-training programs has prevented even more widespread job loss. Over the past two years, more than 8.5 million jobseekers have utilized WIB services. More than half—4.3 million—found jobs through WIBs during that time. Since 2008, enrollment in WIA programs has increased by 234 percent while funding has remained virtually unchanged.



Moran

WIBs across the country—and right here in Virginia—have led by innovation and example.

Take, for example, Sandra Hale. With the increasing threat of a shortage of health care workers, Hale decided it was time to further her education and upgrade her skills from Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse. A single mother who worked full time, she had been attending classes at Southwest Virginia Community College to complete general education requirements. Although she was elated when she received her acceptance letter

for the RN program, she knew tuition would further strain her limited income.

Hale contacted the Clinch Valley Community Action Inc. WIA staff in Tazewell to see if they could help her financially so she could reach her goal of becoming an RN.

"I knew if I could get some assistance with the cost, I could put the time and effort needed into the program to succeed," she says. "I appreciate all the help I received from the WIA to help me gain the education I needed to obtain employment, become financially stable and provide for my family. Not only did they provide the financial assistance I needed, but I had a strong support system and encouragement along the way."

Hale worked part time and attended SWCC full time to accomplish her career goal. She is now working as a home health care nurse and has doubled her hourly wage. In the future, she plans to pursue her bachelor's degree in nursing but, for now, she's focusing on acquiring experience as an RN.

Sharon Holloway is another great example. "Five months ago I was homeless, living in a temporary shelter and thinking to myself: 'Is this the end of the line for me?'" she says. Ending homelessness has been a large challenge for Arlington County and preparing the homeless to enter the workforce is a crucial component of finding a solution. Holloway needed housing and skills to enter the job market.

The Arlington Employment Center's Culinary Skills Training Program was a 10-week pilot initiative designed to teach homeless individuals, or those at risk of becoming homeless, the skills necessary to begin careers in the culinary arts. The program also helps to provide individuals with permanent housing through Arlington County's Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program. After a rigorous screening and assessment process, Holloway was accepted into the program.

She successfully completed the program and passed the ServSafe certification exam. "Now I have a job I love, a future and a secure place to live—all due to this program," Holloway says.

These are just two of the many compelling stories about how Virginia's system has impacted lives.

There are also compelling stories across our Commonwealth about how our workforce systems are impacting businesses and regional economic development efforts. Whether it's recruitment efforts for skilled positions or assistance with the recruitment of new businesses by offering employment and training incentives, our WIBs are partners with our economic development offices by helping employers recruit, retain and train a world-class workforce.

As Congress debates the budget and the potential reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, we must continue to show the value, through measurable results, that our programs are achieving.

When we give Virginians the chance to work, they'll provide the economic power this country needs. Just ask Sandra Hale and Sharon Holloway.

(Laurie S. Moran is the president of the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce and newly elected chair of the National Association of Workforce Boards.) 🌍

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Youth Career Expo 2011 draws 2,500 area students

The Peninsula Council for Workforce Development, in partnership with the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce and the six Peninsula school divisions, hosted the Youth Career Expo 2011 at the Hampton Roads Convention Center. The March 15 event brought together more than 250 professionals from business, education and industry to meet with the more than 2,500 students who attended.

School divisions participating were Newport News, Hampton, Williamsburg-James City County, York County, Poquoson and Gloucester County. The expo included mock interviews, various workshops and almost 60 business exhibitors.

Students partook in interactive workshops ranging from financial literacy to being a success in the workplace. Mini workshops included lessons in soft skills such as problem-solving, oral communication, and interpersonal and teamwork skills.

"Perhaps nothing involved the students more than the mock interviews," says Shawn Avery, vice president of the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development. Students were encouraged to dress in business apparel for the interviews, he adds, and to bring their resumes. With help from more than 250 volunteers, the Youth Career Expo gave students the chance to practice their interviewing skills and receive constructive feedback.

The Youth Career Expo, which was made pos-



Students put on their best business faces during mock interviews held at the Youth Career Expo, sponsored in part by the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development.

sible through the support of local businesses and individuals, strengthened the Virginia Peninsula by promoting meaningful collaboration between business, industry, government and education in order to produce a more skilled and highly trained workforce in an ever-changing technologically sophisticated society.

Sponsors for the event included Ferguson Enterprises Inc., C&F Bank/Peninsula Commercial Lending, BOSH Global Services, Liebherr Mining & Construction Equipment, Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding, Saint Leo University, Langley Center, Sentara Healthcare, Spectrum and Thomas Nelson Community College. 🌐

Program helps parents prepare teens for life after high school

When it comes to parenting, nobody has all the answers. That's particularly true for parents of adolescents who are facing important issues such as what to do after high school. Often decisions are made without any meaningful discussion between parent and child and many could use expert help.

Opportunity Inc. is working to change that with "A Call to Parents," a brown-bag lunch program for employees of area businesses that's delivered by a small team of business and education volunteers. It provides parents with helpful tips on how to talk with teenagers about life after high school.

Most employers offer it as a two-part program and it has proven to be a great way for them to show workers they care about their home lives. Each participant receives a Parent Resource Manual with information on how to reduce the time and money spent on post-secondary education. Host companies receive program posters, paycheck stuffers and a prewritten newsletter article to help spread the word.

The program starts by reminding parents things have changed since they were

teenagers. For example, most employers look for applicants with some kind of job-specific education and no longer accept almost any college degree. Many grads have

learned this painful lesson after spending thousands of dollars on a degree. With this in mind, A Call to Parents promotes the notion of keeping the student's interests, skills and abilities at the forefront while exploring post-secondary options.

"I never would have thought of doing a simple inventory of what my child likes to do and what she's good at," wrote one parent in her program evaluation. This parent was surprised—and delighted—to learn about her daughter's well-hidden interests. She also realized the advantage in discovering them before the child enrolled in a college where there was no degree path in that subject area.

A Call to Parents doesn't pretend to have all the answers, but instead offers a method to get parents and

teens together and talking. Most participants say they wish the program could be longer, and virtually everyone says they would recommend it to others.

For more information about A Call to Parents, contact Lisa Peterson of Opportunity Inc. at (757) 314-2370 or e-mail lpeterson@oihr.org. 🌐



ECPI provides cyber center for robotic competition in Richmond

Staff and students of ECPI College of Technology in Richmond gathered April 7-9 to support local high school students in the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) at Virginia Commonwealth University's Stuart C. Siegel Center.

The event was sponsored by VirginiaFIRST, the local affiliate of FIRST, an international nonprofit mentoring organization. FIRST's goal is to excite young people about science and technology, prepare them today to enter the advanced technology-based

workplace of tomorrow and teach students skills that will prove valuable throughout their lives.

Promoters approached Kenton Searce, ECPI's regional director of graduate services and a member of the Greater Richmond Technology Council, to help support the event on behalf of the school. "ECPI sponsored

the morning breakfasts for the business community which included over 60 representatives from the information technology sector," he says. "We also provided a cyber center on Technology Row in which participants and visitors could access and use our computers."

Pattie Cook, executive director of VirginiaFIRST, praised ECPI's involvement, which allowed everyone access to computers and the Internet over the course of the event. "The cyber center was exceptionally helpful in leveling the playing field for students," she notes. "Many students from rural or inner-city schools didn't have the luxury of portable computers."

FRC is recognized as the premier high school engineering challenge. Teams of students, working closely with teachers and volunteer mentors, have six weeks to conceptualize, design, build, program, modify and test a robot to participate in a competition that changes each year. Following the six-week design and build phase, teams enter regional competitions, like the one in Richmond. There more than 60 teams tested their skills for a chance to advance to the world championship. 🌐

In addition to monetary and in-kind contributions, ECPI staff helped mentor local teams and student volunteers helped set up the FIRST Robotics Competition, which attracted more than 60 teams.



New workforce scholarship founded in Northern Virginia

The SkillSource Group Inc., the nonprofit arm of the Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Area #11, has collaborated with the Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) Educational Foundation to create the SkillSource Regional Workforce Scholarship.

In its first year, the \$10,000 scholarship fund will be used to award three scholarships of \$3,333 for tuition, books and supplies to students studying various fields including health care, information technology and business administration. These academic degree programs represent the top three industry groups in job growth in Northern Virginia.

Eligible Workforce Investment Act customers from the Northern Virginia SkillSource Centers will be referred to NOVA, along with WIA-eligible students at NOVA being referred to the SkillSource Centers to assure eligibility. This partnership between a local workforce area and a Virginia community college is reflective of a strong collaboration between both organizations to support students and jobseekers.

It is expected the SkillSource Regional Workforce Scholarship fund will continue to expand in future years. 🌐

OJT Re-employment Program is a lifesaver for the long-term unemployed



The New River/Mount Rogers WIB recently began participating in the NEG-funded OJT Re-employment Program. It eventually hopes to assist 20 long-term unemployed individuals with on-the-job training.

In December 2010, the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board began participating in the National Emergency Grant-funded OJT Re-employment Program. The WIB contracted with Goodwill Industries of the Valleys to operate this program which aims to involve 20 long-term unemployed individuals with on-the-job training. As of April 2011, 14 workers have benefited from OJT, with more soon to follow.

The program is designed to encourage employers to hire applicants who have been unemployed for six months or longer by reimbursing a portion of the wages while the worker is in training. Benefiting both employee and employer, the OJT program allows employers to tap into a pool of skilled workers who are good candidates but may need additional training to perform required duties.

Currently, 10 formerly dislocated workers are employed at Phoenix Packaging Operations, a new plant in Dublin that's involved with rigid thermoforming packaging for consumer products. Considered excellent candidates for the OJT program because of their work ethic and desire, these men and women are "earning while learning" the job. When the training is complete, they will remain regular full-time employees of the company.

The OJT Re-employment Program has created several success stories and has changed the destiny of many.

Take "Jimmy" for instance. He worked for the same company for 28 years until the bottom fell out of the economy and he was left jobless and unemployed for three years. Just as his job search seemed hopeless, the management at Woodgrain Millworks in Atkins decided to take a chance on him, even though he needed to be retrained to get up-to-date certifications and up to speed to operate the machinery.

Thanks to OJT reimbursement, the company hired someone who had been "out of the field for a long period of time" and who other companies were passing over due to his need for retraining. The funding helped offset the company's extraordinary costs of sending Jimmy to welding school and programmable logic controller classes.

When asked what this OJT opportunity has meant to him, Jimmy says, "It means everything and has been a lifesaver for me and my family." Two years ago, he interviewed with this same company and was passed over. Today, it is a "win-win story," he says. He plans to remain working at Woodgrain until he retires. 🌟

VMA names DeRosear director of new Workforce Development Division

Katherine DeRosear was recently appointed director of the Virginia Manufacturers Association (VMA) Workforce Development Division. The newly created division centralizes VMA's educational and job-related programs and services, including the manufacturing specialist and manufacturing technician certifications, World-Class Manufacturing Certificate, VCATS soft skills assessment, VMA Certified Industrial Energy Auditor and 40 different skills-based modules for closing skills gaps in production workers.

The new division also coordinates the statewide Dream It Do It Virginia network that promotes careers in advanced technology industries, and serves as VMA's workforce development, secondary education and higher education policy arm.

"We will continue our strategic investments in VCATS Assessment Centers across the Commonwealth and Mid-Atlantic. These centers are essential to the development of critical skills in individuals seeking opportunities in advanced technology industries. Katherine is exactly the right person to build out this network, serve our members and continue our public policy initiatives," says Brett Vassey, VMA president and CEO.

Since 2007, DeRosear was a private sector consultant for Worldwide Interactive Network (WIN), where she established work-readiness skill assessment and training resources in community colleges, workforce development boards and other educational facilities within Virginia and throughout the country. Prior to WIN, she spent five years in key positions within state government, most notably the deputy senior adviser for workforce development in the governor's office, deputy director for the Council on Virginia's Future, and director for workforce policy within the Workforce Development Services Division of the Virginia Community College System.

Before her state involvement, DeRosear was director of research and communications with the Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia. She also has association experience, having served as vice president for the Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"The VMA is a model and best practice for aligning workforce education and training with the needs of industry. It recognizes and reinforces the need to build strategic partnerships that connect learning with earning, and leads to employment opportunities within advanced technology industries," explains DeRosear. "I am honored to be part of the VMA enterprise and look forward to reducing the cycle time for creating a manufacturing work 'ready' workforce."

A native of Nebraska, DeRosear lives in Chesterfield County with her husband and son. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

She may be reached at (804) 643-7489, ext. 18, or kderosear@vmanufacturers.com. For more information, visit www.vmanufacturers.com. 🌟