

# VIRGINIA WORKforce

## NETWORK

VIRGINIA WORKFORCE COUNCIL

Spring 2009

### From the Chairman's Perspective



## Meeting the challenge

By Dr. Robert P. Leber  
Chairman, Virginia Workforce Council

As chairman of the Virginia Workforce Council, it's my pleasure to share with you the third edition of the Virginia Workforce Network quarterly newsletter. The council intends to use the newsletter to highlight strategies and stories of success that illustrate the direction and impact of Virginia's workforce development and services delivery system. This edition focuses on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and its impact on the workforce system.

Recently, the Federal Reserve evaluated the country's 19 largest banks – which hold two-thirds of the assets and more than half of the loans in the U.S. banking system – to determine how they would fare in an even weaker economy. The results of these evaluations or "stress tests" were not good with 10 of the 19 banks failing the test.

I reference the Federal Reserve evaluations because the nation's workforce development and delivery system is undergoing a similar set of stress tests.

Over the past decade, the nation's workforce system has experienced significant reductions in funding. These reductions have

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## Virginia youth to benefit from stimulus package

About 4,000 teenagers and young adults across the Commonwealth of Virginia will be employed in a Workforce Investment Act Summer Youth Employment Program with funds provided by the 2009 American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.

Virginia has received \$12.9 million, of which \$11 million will go to local Workforce Investment Boards for the summer youth program. All 15 of the local boards are actively engaged with the program's planning and set-up phase.

From May 1 through Sept. 30, youth ages 14-24 will receive skill training and work experience with public, private and government organizations that will provide a planned, structured learning experience. The work experiences will last from six to eight weeks and pay \$7.25 an hour at 25-30 hours a week.

"It has been at least 10 years (1999) since a summer youth program of this magnitude occurred under the federal job training system," says Raymond Cousins, a consultant for the WIA Programs' workforce development services. "This training program is an invaluable activity for the most vulnerable youth in Virginia. It provides an opportunity for them to gain pre-employment/work maturity and life skills under caring and competent adults."

These skills encompass such things as labor market knowledge, occupational information, career planning, decision making and job-search techniques that cover resumes, interviews,

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(See STIMULUS PACKAGE on page 2)

## Chairman's Perspective

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severely limited the system's ability to fully implement the original intentions of the Workforce Investment Act.

The ARRA, signed Feb. 17 by President Barack Obama, has reversed this trend in funding in order to preserve and create jobs, promote the nation's economic recovery and assist those most impacted by the weak economy. The ARRA brings more than \$39 billion in additional funds to the nation's workforce development and delivery system, with approximately \$41 million to the Commonwealth for job training (\$32 million) and employment-related services (\$9 million).

The guidance accompanying the \$39 billion in additional ARRA funds makes it clear that the new monies are subject to unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability plus a need to quickly implement the associated programs. The immediate focus is on the Summer Youth Employment Program, which is intended to provide youth between the ages of 14 and 24 with summer employment and educational opportunities that provide them with work-readiness skills.

As you read this edition, it appears Summer Youth Employment Programs are being implemented throughout Virginia, and the state's Workforce Investment Boards and their partners have lined up plenty of meaningful jobs that will help these youth increase their work-readiness skills. Additionally, there is plenty of evidence to indicate the Commonwealth's workforce development and services delivery system will pass its stress test with flying colors. To those involved in this effort – *thank you!*

## VCATS awards certificates, kicks off Dream It Do It Virginia campaign

In December 2008 the Virginia Council on Advanced Technology Skills, Virginia's only industry-endorsed workforce training and certification organization, awarded 23 manufacturing technicians their certificates of completion for Level 1 Advanced Manufacturing Technician Training.

Four of the graduates attended instructor-led hands-on training through a pilot program run with the assistance of Thomas Nelson Community College in Hampton.

VCATS partners with both public and private workforce development institutions to implement assessment and training throughout Virginia. It was established to address a mounting need for a skilled workforce in advanced technology jobs. Its curriculum is designed, validated and utilized by industry as well as customized and regularly updated to meet the industry's changing demands. Besides the Manufacturing Technician Level 1 Certification, more certifications are in development.

VCATS also is promoting the awareness of career opportunities in advanced technology industries by launching the 2.0 version of the Dream It Do It Virginia campaign, the regional version of the national campaign developed by the National Association of Manufacturers and the Manufacturing Institute. This campaign uses image marketing as well as a free online career resource to educate people about the benefits of and ways to pursue a career in advanced technology jobs.

Dream It Do It Virginia (version 2.0) was publicly launched at the Dominion Riverrock Festival on Brown's Island in Richmond May 15-16.

Funded in part by the U.S. Department of Labor and matched by private investments, VCATS is co-led by the Virginia Manufacturers Association, Virginia Biotechnology Association, Training and Development Corp. and private-sector partners.

If you are interested in becoming a VCATS training partner or to register participants for assessment and training, contact Sheryl Bryan, VCATS director, at [bryan.sheryl@vacats.org](mailto:bryan.sheryl@vacats.org).

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## VIRGINIA

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## Stimulus package funds Summer Youth Employment Program (Continued from page 1)

applications and follow-up letters. Participants also will learn about daily living skills such as using the phone, telling time, shopping, renting an apartment, opening a bank account and traveling on public transportation.

The program is set up to reinforce positive work habits, attitudes and behaviors such as punctuality, regular attendance, presenting a neat appearance, getting along and working well with others, exhibiting good conduct, following instructions and completing tasks, accepting constructive criticism from supervisors and co-workers, showing initiative and reliability, and assuming the responsibilities involved in maintaining a job.

“At this point it is very evident that Virginia's local Workforce Investment

Boards are ready to provide a value-added and meaningful summer experience for the youth who will be enrolled in this activity,” Cousins says.

Dr. Robert P. Leber, director of education and workforce development at Northrop Grumman Newport News and chairman of the Virginia Workforce Council, agrees. “Summer programs are already in place from Roanoke to the Eastern Shore and from Danville to Northern Virginia. The boards and their partners will have plenty of meaningful jobs that will help these youth increase their work-readiness skills.”

To participate in the summer youth program, youth must be eligible under the Workforce Investment Act. They must meet

certain low-income requirements and be part of one of several “barrier” categories, including being deficient in basic literary skills or requiring additional assistance to complete an educational program or hold a job. Eligible candidates also can be school dropouts, offenders, runaways, pregnant or parenting, or a homeless or foster child. Under the ARRA, special priority will be given to veterans and eligible spouses.

The Department of Labor also encourages states and local areas to develop work experiences and other activities that expose the youth to opportunities in “green” careers, connect them with pre-apprenticeship programs, and integrate work-based and classroom-based learning activities.

# Youth praise WIA for helping them achieve higher education

In a sincere and heartfelt address to the Virginia General Assembly's House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees, Terrell Vereen and Katherine Smith, youth participants of the People Inc. Workforce Investment Act and Commonwealth citizens, enthusiastically advocated continued funding for the WIA youth program.

Addressing legislators at the 2009 regional public hearings, Vereen and Smith discussed their inability to afford an education without WIA services. They stressed the importance of the WIA program in helping them to overcome the barriers that stood in the way of their dreams of achieving an education.

Located approximately 25 miles from Richmond, Virginia State University in Petersburg is where Vereen calls home while he's pursuing his higher education. During his address, Vereen expressed his gratitude not only for WIA's financial assistance but also for the work-readiness



Vereen

and leadership skills he has acquired. He said these skills will make him more competitive in today's tight labor market.

With hard work, dedication and support from WIA, Vereen will earn a bachelor's degree in May 2011 in physical education with a major in sports management. Reflecting upon previous trials in his life, which included living alone during his teenage years, Vereen told legislators, "I am not yet where I want to be in life, but I am not where I used to be either."



Smith

As Vereen exited the platform, Sen. William C. Wampler Jr., R-40th District, assured the young man he would let the president of the college

know how well he was doing.

Discussing the state of the current economy, Smith expressed concern regarding the hope and opportunities that seem to be dwindling fast. Smith, who described herself as smart and hard working, explained she simply didn't have the money to make her dreams come true.

With a deep desire to help people, she didn't know how she could afford training in the field of nursing as she was struggling just to get by on her own. Then, she met with People Inc. WIA staff and regained hope she had lost.

"They held me to a high standard by making sure I made good grades, offering me tutors and giving me the support and confidence I needed," she says.

Smith is expected to graduate in May 2010 from the practical nursing program at William N. Neff Center for Science and Technology in Abingdon. After gaining some experience as a licensed practical nurse, she plans to pursue an associate degree in applied science and become a registered nurse.

Both young people are being trained for market segments that are growing. Labor market information for the Commonwealth of Virginia reflects a growth rate of 2.8 percent for recreation and fitness teachers and 1.6 percent for licensed practical nurses.

"Each of these youth demonstrates an unshakeable conviction regarding their educational goals," says Betty Rowe, workforce development director. "People Inc. WIA is honored to partner with both Vereen and Smith to assist them in the preparation needed to engage the emerging careers of the 21st century." 🌍

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## Report highlights strong health-care partnerships in Northern Virginia

In 2008, the American Association of Community Colleges' Center for Workforce and Economic Development and the National Center on Education and the Economy Workforce Strategies Group developed a seminar titled "Developing and Sustaining Workforce and Economic Development Partnerships." With funding from the MetLife Foundation, AACC issued a recent national publication highlighting those case studies as workforce demonstration models.

Of the eight published case studies, the NoVaHealthFORCE Initiative – championed by Northern Virginia Community College, the SkillSource Group, the Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board (Area #11) and multiple regional health care providers – is highlighted.

NoVaHealthFORCE came about as the result of an increasingly threatening shortage in the region's health-care workforce and recognition that collaborative action by the region's health-care stakeholders was the only solution to this worker shortage crisis.

The three primary goals of NoVa HealthFORCE are to:

- Increase capacity in the health-care education and training system.
- Develop and sustain an ongoing supply of people interested in health-care careers.
- Nurture innovation, specifically in health information technology.

You can read the AACC report online at [webadmin.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/cwed/Documents/sustainingpartnerships.pdf](http://webadmin.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/cwed/Documents/sustainingpartnerships.pdf).

For more information on the NoVa-HealthFORCE initiative, contact Gerri Hoffer of Northern Virginia Community College at [ghoffer@nvcc.edu](mailto:ghoffer@nvcc.edu) or David Hunn of the Northern Virginia Workforce Area #11 at [david.hunn@myskillsource.org](mailto:david.hunn@myskillsource.org). 🌍



## Staff completes curriculum, earns professional development certification

Since July 2007, more than 1,200 One-Stop Career Center staff and mandated partners across the Commonwealth have enrolled in the Virginia Workforce Council's staff certification professional development opportunity. To date, more than 330 have received one of two certifications (or both) from Dynamic Works — Workforce Development Professional and Business and Employer Services Professional.

For more information on these certifications for Virginia Workforce Network staff, read VWC policy number 07-02 or contact Aida Pacheco at [apacheco@vccs.edu](mailto:apacheco@vccs.edu).

*Thirteen employment specialists at the city of Alexandria JobLink One-Stop Career Center show off their newly acquired certificates earned by completing the 60-hour Virginia Workforce Development Professional and/or Business and Employer Services Professional curriculum and passing the certification examination. The employees are (from left, back row) Byron Browder, Octavius Fulton, Peter Piccirilli, Rosalyn Miller, Julia Feaster, John Hyder, Elleni Testaye, Rahim Aziz, Alicia Clark and Lissette Pippy. Seated are Dana Matthews, Maurice Tomdio and Aster Gebremariam. B.A. Sewell, Alia Fulwood and Patrina Rice also received their certificates but were not available for the photo.*



*To plan, deliver and coordinate services to help displaced workers affected by the recession, Gov. Tim Kaine recently deployed the Economic Crisis Strike Force.*

## Governor responds to economic crisis

In response to overwhelming numbers of layoffs in recent months, Gov. Tim Kaine has deployed the Economic Crisis Strike Force to plan and deliver coordinated services to displaced workers. Virginia Code Section 2.2-205.1 authorizes him to establish an Economic Crisis Strike Force based on situations of economic crisis, including rapid rises in unemployment or closure of large businesses in a given region.

The Economic Crisis Strike Force, currently co-chaired by the governor's senior adviser for workforce, Daniel Leblanc, and the secretary of commerce and trade, Patrick Gottschalk, was originally codified in 2006 to coordinate the state and local response to economic downturns in Southwest and Southside Virginia.

Strike Force activities currently include reviewing layoff data, assessing the current service delivery systems and collaborating on changes needed to help record numbers of displaced workers. With the federal stimulus package poised to provide workforce training funds, the Strike Force will work with localities to help coordinate and maximize the use of local,

state and federal resources to provide training and employment services as well as support service to unemployed individuals.

In addition, the Strike Force will help regions affected by severe unemployment implement the model developed as a response to the Ford layoff in various regions across the state. These areas have been affected by extreme rates of unemployment and, in some cases, extreme rates of long-term unemployment.

This model has coordinated economic development services, social services, unemployment insurance services, job-search assistance, and education and training services in a one-stop shopping environment to displaced workers.

The Strike Force facilitated this process with a series of regional meetings held during April and May in seven regions across the state.

For more information call or e-mail Alex Daniel at (804) 225-4520 or [Alex.Daniel@governor.virginia.gov](mailto:Alex.Daniel@governor.virginia.gov) or Beatrice Yarney at (804) 692-0135 or [Beatrice.Yarney@governor.virginia.gov](mailto:Beatrice.Yarney@governor.virginia.gov).

# Peninsula Youth Career Expo connects students to the workplace

The Leadership Institute Class of 2009 — a program of the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development and the six school districts across the Peninsula — hosted a Youth Career Expo Feb. 10 at the Hampton Roads Convention Center in Hampton.

The goal of the Youth Career Expo was to promote the establishment of businesses and schools throughout the Peninsula to provide students with the skills, knowledge and experience necessary for further education and/or successful employment in an ever-changing technologically sophisticated society.

This event 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. Some of the participating businesses included NASA, Ferguson Enterprises, Sentara and Old Point National Bank.

More than 3,000 high school students were exposed to 100-plus businesses and public agencies, all focused on helping students identify career opportunities. Students were able to participate in mock interviews, financial literacy workshops and career readiness activities that included dressing for success.

These mini-workshops included lessons in soft skills such as problem-solving, oral communication, and interpersonal and teamwork skills. Feedback was given to the students in order to provide insight as to what areas of strengths or weaknesses needed to be addressed. Hundreds of local business people volunteered their time to critique resumes and give advice on how to find employment.

Students were asked to dress in business apparel for the interviews and to bring three copies of their resume. During the expo, they were able to learn about volunteer opportunities and gather information pertaining to colleges, scholarships and financial aid. Students also were provided information about internships, job shadowing and educational requirements needed in various career fields.

The Youth Career Expo, which provided resources and valuable knowledge critical to the development of area youth, was made possible through the support of local businesses and individuals. Students who attended the expo gained a sense of confidence and knowledge of what skills are needed in today's challenging job market. 🌐

**In addition to mock interviews, the expo included workshops that focused on financial literacy and career-readiness activities including how to dress for success.**

**More than 3,000 high school students converged Feb. 10 on the Hampton Roads Convention Center in Hampton to attend the Youth Career Expo, sponsored in part by the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development.**

**Representatives of some 100-plus businesses and public agencies participated in the Youth Career Expo, which was designed to help students identify career opportunities.**

