

VIRGINIA

WORKFORCE CONNECTION

Virginia Workforce Council Summer 2011

From the Chairman's Perspective

Workforce doesn't observe geographic boundaries

By Huey J. Battle
Chairman, Virginia Workforce Council

I am honored Gov. Bob McDonnell has asked me to continue the important work of the Virginia Workforce Council as your chairman for another term.

Joining me in reappointment as vice chair is my colleague Mark Dreyfus, and members Brett Vassey, Mayor Linda Johnson and Tony Rigali.



Battle

New appointees include Barry DuVal, president and CEO of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce; Sybil Wheatley, director of human resources for W.M. Jordan Co.; Debra Parsons Buchanan, chair of the Henry County Board of Supervisors; Mark Herzog, executive director of the Virginia Biotechnology Association; Jeanne Armentrout, senior vice president of Carillion Clinic; Brian Warner, lead for CCAM, Rolls Royce America; and Mark Frantz, co-founder of Blue Delta Capital. I look forward to our first gathering Oct. 12 as a newly constituted body.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to those members whose terms of service ended on June 30, including Robin Sullenberger, Rita Ricks, Andrea Wooten, Doyle Rasnick and Guillermo Meneses.

In our last newsletter, I discussed the value of building capacity in our local workforce areas by diversifying our funding sources and pursuing not-for-profit status in some instances for sustainability. Over this past summer, I had the privilege of attending the state WIB chairs' meeting of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices held in Kansas City.

As I meet with our state colleagues across the nation, I continue to be reminded that workforce doesn't observe geographic boundaries. We have much to gain from the best practices occurring across the country. One such strategy is that of regional collaboration. We must address the issue of global competition, and one approach is reaching agreement on the various Virginia regions' economic development priorities.

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Congressman Rob Wittman, First Congressional District of Virginia, addresses the attendees of a recent job fair he hosted at the Peninsula Workforce Development Center in Hampton.

750 attend Peninsula Worklink job fair hosted by Rob Wittman

Congressman Rob Wittman held a job fair for the First Congressional District of Virginia at the Peninsula Workforce Development Center in Hampton. The June 7 event, supported by the staff from the Peninsula Worklink, attracted 750-plus jobseekers. More than 40 employers, five educational institutions and two workforce development agencies took part in the fair.

"Our goal was to directly connect folks seeking employment to employers, and I was so pleased to see such a fantastic turnout," Wittman says.

Participating employers included Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News Shipbuilding, Cox Communications, Canon Virginia Inc., Old Point National Bank, Langley Federal Credit Union, Wachovia-Wells Fargo, Casey Auto Group, ITA International, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Top Guard Security, Tysinger Motor Co. Inc., Skanska USA Civil Southeast Inc., Ball Corp., Insignia Technology Services and Lowe's.

"With unemployment continuing at 7.5 percent on the Virginia Peninsula, this event was much needed and eagerly anticipated. We thank Congressman Wittman and his entire staff for their hard work and commitment to the jobseekers in our community," says Matthew James, president and CEO of the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development.



More than 750 people take advantage of a recent job fair supported by Peninsula Worklink and hosted by Congressman Rob Wittman.

VMA provides customized training solutions to expanding business

Presto Products Co., a manufacturer of plastic film and bags, will invest \$6 million to expand its operation in Halifax County. The company—a market-leading supplier of products ranging from private-label food and disposer bags to packaging closures, soil stabilization materials and specialty stretch films—will add five new manufacturing lines, creating 22 new jobs.

In response to this expansion, the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center is coordinating a regional partnership to provide a multifaceted workforce-training program. As part of this partnership, Virginia Manufacturers Association (VMA) created a customized Manufacturing Technology Action Learning Lab to meet Presto's targeted training needs and training schedule. The lab is being used to increase skill levels of incumbent workers in basic pneumatics; basic hydraulics; basic power train; and reading schematics, diagrams and blueprints.

The Virginia Council on Advanced Technology Skills (VCATS), part of VMA's workforce development division, is using its Manufacturing Technician Level 1 Assessment as a pre- and post-assessment to measure skills gains.

A competency-based industry-endorsed workforce training and certification organization in Virginia, VCATS provides a customized, fast-track pathway to key credentials that target employers' specific skill needs. Its programs are designed to help meet Virginia's present and future needs for skilled technical workers.

With valid and portable assessment instruments, VCATS' training and credentialing system can easily be incorporated into traditional credit-based educational programs. VCATS can provide training and assessment at a facility, at home, on the road and in the classroom.

VCATS' training and certification system,

designed and validated by industry partners, is intended to:

- Develop a workforce pipeline.
- Assess technical skills in 12 critical areas and six critical soft skill areas.
- Provide online and instructor-led training to address identified technical skill gaps.
- Provide a pathway to advanced-level training and specialized training based on industry requirements for potential new hires and incumbent workers.
- Educate the public about the benefits of advanced technology careers.
- Reduce hiring and training time by 60 percent.
- Reduce training costs.

For more information, contact Katherine DeRosear, VMA director of workforce development, at kderosear@vamanufacturers.com or (804) 643-7489, ext. 22. 

Hampton Roads teens develop web apps through STEM Camp




Oppportunity Inc.'s Youth Career Center of Hampton Roads hosted a STEM camp at ECPI University for 20 enthusiastic Hampton Roads teens interested in learning more about science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The five-day program in July introduced

students to mobile technology, which included an opportunity to learn and develop web applications.

The camp was part of a national movement to encourage more students to pursue education and careers in STEM fields. The "Change the Equations" national initiative pledges to create literacy in science, technology, engineering and math as an investment in the nation. One of the initiative's goals is to inspire student appreciation and excitement for STEM programs and careers to increase success and achievement in school and opportunities for a college education.

"We were really excited about introducing and reinforcing the STEM initiatives to participating youth," says Paul Dockery, business development specialist for ECPI University. "It was a great partnership to share with the youth the cool aspects of the technology field. These same areas are those that will allow Hampton Roads and beyond to remain the technological leader in the marketplace of the 21st century."

The course, taught by Gerry White, covered beginning mobile web app development. Students learned to design icons and buttons and facilitate the coding to launch their own mobile web app. At the end of the program, students created individual apps to showcase their resumes and writing samples with links to their social networks.

Area businesses that supported the STEM Camp included ECPI University, Stihl and We Are Titans. 



Two STEM Camp participants show off their custom-built apps.

CHAIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

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Two examples of regionalism include the Mid-Atlantic Regional Collaborative (MARC) among the states and the capital region, and Resource in greater Richmond.

Established in 2008, MARC is a regional coalition committed to enhancing the economic vitality of the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. Led by a regional consortium of state workforce leaders from all three political jurisdictions, MARC seeks to build a globally competitive regional workforce to fuel prosperity and proactively address regional economic growth demands.

Resource in greater Richmond works to keep Virginia's capital region working. From Charles City and Chesterfield to Richmond and Powhatan, Resource is the capital region's Workforce Investment Board. It works to supply the community's businesses and jobseekers with the skills and knowledge necessary to fuel economic growth for themselves and the region.

Leaders must explore their region's assets and identify new pathways to prosperity. As resources on this topic, I recommend you consult "A Practitioner's Guide to Economic Development Tools for Regional Competitiveness in a Knowledge-Based Economy" and www.statsamerica.org/innovation/data.html.

The guide, supported by a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, introduces a new set of tools for practitioners and/or community leaders to steer the course for long-term growth. These tools include industry cluster analysis, regional innovation index, occupational cluster analysis, and a framework for regional organization and investment decisions. The tools focus on identifying and developing sources of knowledge and innovation in a regional economy.

Working together we can achieve a greater quality of life for our Commonwealth. As we enjoy a long weekend of rest over the Labor Day holiday, let us be mindful of those who are still searching for their career pathway and continue to find new ways to assist them in that effort. 🌐

Peninsula council receives \$98,000 in grants

The Peninsula Council for Workforce Development has been awarded \$98,000 in grants from Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Cox Charities, Wells Fargo Foundation and the Virginia Workforce Council (VWC). All four grants will be used to support workforce development on the Peninsula.

Starting off the year on the right foot, PCFWD was awarded a \$10,000 Cox Charities grant in January at a presentation at the Cox Communications headquarters in Chesapeake. "There were many organizations applying for grants this year," says Gary McCollum, Cox senior vice president and general manager. "The Advisory Committee had a tough job in choosing the top applicants."

In March, PCFWD received an \$8,000 grant from the Wells Fargo Foundation. According to Jeff Clemons, Wells Fargo market president for the Peninsula and a member of the PCFWD board of directors, "The Wells Fargo Foundation has a strong focus on supporting workforce development among our youth. The Youth Career Café is doing a tremendous job in our community helping underserved students receive life and job skills training to help them succeed in school and to prepare them for the real world. This grant will support their work and ensure the Peninsula youth are well positioned for appropriate employability and technical skills."

This past spring, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation awarded PCFWD a \$5,000 grant to help expand the cafés to underserved populations. Funds will be used to establish satellite programs within communities currently in need of services.

The most recent award came in June when VWC selected PCFWD as a recipient of a \$75,000 WIA Local Coordination Incentive Award. In partnership with Thomas Nelson Community College, the Peninsula council will work to develop a Youth Career Café/Middle College Program in the Historic Triangle with a healthcare career pathway and exploration focus. This will be the first of its kind in the state.

According to Matthew James, president and CEO of PCFWD, "These grants are recognition that the Peninsula workforce development system continues to do an exceptional job supporting the emerging workforce, employers and workers alike in our region." 🌐



Wells Fargo's Jeffrey W. Clemons (second from right), Peninsula market president, and Alexis Swann, senior vice president, present a check to the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development, represented by Matthew James (far right), PCFWD president and CEO, and John Olson, campus president with ECPI University.

Employers can profit by investing in workers with disabilities

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and, according to the U.S. Labor Department's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), this year's theme is "Profit by Investing in Workers with Disabilities." The theme honors the contributions of workers with disabilities and serves to inform the public that they represent a highly skilled talent pool that can help employers compete in today's global economy.

"Return on investment means hiring the right talent," says Kathy Martinez, assistant secretary of labor for disability employment policy. "Workers with disabilities represent all skill sets and are ready to get the job done. This year's theme focuses on improving employment opportunities that lead to good jobs and a secure economic future for people with disabilities and the nation as a whole."

Early announcement of the theme helps communities nationwide to plan a series of announcements, events and meetings to begin in October, some of which will continue throughout the year. Such activities include proclamations,

public awareness programs and job fairs that showcase the assets of workers with disabilities.

As background, Public Law 176, enacted by Congress in 1945, designated the first week in October each year as "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." President Harry S. Truman designated the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities to carry out the observance.

In 1962, the word "physically" was removed from the week's name to acknowledge the employment needs of all Americans with disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed its name to "National Disability Awareness Month," which eventually evolved to its current name.

The Labor Department's ODEP took over responsibility for National Disability Employment Awareness Month in 2001. ODEP's mission is to provide national leadership by developing and influencing disability-related policies and practices to increase and enhance the employment of people with disabilities.

For more information about the 2011 theme, call Carol Dunlap in ODEP at (202) 693-7902. 🌐