



Workforce News Around the State

This page recognizes the innovative concepts, exemplary programs and diverse achievements of The Texas Workforce Commission's 28 workforce development boards. It showcases practices and procedures that have proven successful and that other workforce boards may want to replicate to promote and support a workforce system that offers employers, individuals and communities the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity. Learn more about these results-driven initiatives and success stories by clicking on any of the following links:

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Capital-Area Initiative Addresses Benefits from Hiring Disabled

In an effort to inform Austin-area employers about the financial and business advantages of hiring workers with disabilities, Workforce Solutions – Capital Area partnered with the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) recently to hold a series of activities encouraging employers to hire from that talent pool.

Activities included a board-hosted employer forum, a job readiness workshop and a job fair to increase the number of disabled persons in the Capital-area workforce.

A Walgreens representative said the normal turnover rate at the company's Logistics Centers is 20 percent, but the turnover rate for DARS clients there is five percent. Turnover and related human resources costs outweighed minor costs in making accommodations for a disabled worker, she said.

Workshops provided job-readiness instruction for job seekers with disabilities. Board staff provided instruction on resume writing, interviewing strategy and appropriate wardrobe. Employers and others identified through DARS and the Workforce Solutions – Capital Area Business Services Team conducted interviews.



Coastal Bend Education Partnership Addresses Port Demands in Region

WorkSource of the Coastal Bend recently served as a catalyst for an industry outreach program to help employers find future skilled workers and increase awareness about its region's highest-paying, in-demand occupations.

Along with industry employers like the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce and the Port Industries Council, a roundtable discussion was held with school superintendents in which Industry professionals expressed a dire shortage of trade occupations, including welders, pipefitters, engineers, process technicians and other crafts. The objective was to encourage the highly receptive education professionals to gain insight about what their middle schools and high schools needed to broaden workforce-based curriculum.

Among employers who participated were industry leaders from Citgo, Valero, Lyondell Bassell, DuPont, OxyChem and Kiewitt Offshore Services. Occupations such as process technicians, whose average annual salaries range between \$55,000 and \$70,000 and require an associate's degree, were among crafts targeted.

Another component of the initiative was a "*Learn More, Earn More*" calendar and a DVD, which highlights 12 real life tradesmen and women in targeted occupations, a gauge of occupation salary ranges and the importance of avoiding drugs, studying hard and enjoying lucrative professions. Marketing components were distributed to 265 area schools.

The endeavor has reached as far as the Texas Association of School Boards, which may include the initiative in the statewide strategic plan, which lays a framework for future curriculum programs.



Gulf Coast Board Earns National Urban One-Stop Excellence Honor

The Gulf Coast Workforce Development Board's efforts to achieve more competitive employers, a better-educated workforce, more and better jobs, higher incomes and a positive rate of return through its work was honored recently with the 2007 National Workforce Association Award for Urban One-Stop Excellence.

Honored at the National Workforce Association (NWA) Legislative Conference in St. Petersburg, Fla, the board was recognized for its work to ensure that employers in its service region have an adequate supply of well-educated and well-trained workers who will enable them to compete in today's global economy.

To do so, the board has created a single integrated workforce system that provides solutions to workforce challenges by partnering with various industries that drive the regional economy.

Among the board's successes include harnessing more than \$25 million from various public and private funding sources during the last six years to address the health care industry's nursing shortage. The board launched a major health care initiative in 2000. Within six years, enrollment in area nursing schools had climbed 43 percent.

The board also is partnering with energy and construction entities to address similar workers shortages in those industries.



Expo Facilitates Skilled Workforce, Promotes Career Exploration

Members of the North Central Texas Workforce participated in a Career Expo sponsored by the Weatherford College Tech Prep Consortium, which helped employers facilitate the path to a skilled workforce by sharing with future workers in their industries how to best prepare for various occupations, helping ensure that future jobs are filled with applicants most appropriately prepared and qualified.

The event gave 450 high school seniors the chance to explore a variety of career options. It offered students the opportunity to explore careers by asking questions and developing relationships with professionals in their fields of interest.

Employers and professionals in the fields of accounting, architecture, child life specialists, engineering, physician, pharmacy, nursing and law enforcement were among those who received helpful input from participants and provided valuable information on various industries.

Local workforce center staff offered job application assistance, details about the WorkinTexas.com online job-matching web site and valuable labor market information.

Three 24-minute sessions on the college's main campus included presenters providing information on job prospects, potential earnings, educational requirements, overall job responsibilities, and an overview of a typical day on the job.



Upper Rio Board Holds Summit to Accommodate BRAC Impact

A first-of-its-kind summit initiated by the Upper Rio Grande Workforce Development Board with the assistance of military installations and the City of El Paso recently provided critical information to employers about Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC).

The free summit, which positioned the region for a huge increase of more than 65,000 military members and their families, allowed employers to address any current workforce shortages or training needs, and advised them of the services the local workforce board could provide. Results were also revealed from a recent survey about the level of BRAC's impact on the business community.

The event provided the opportunity to network for more than 400 employers, regional key stakeholders, educators, training providers, wholesale suppliers and industry professionals in the health care, construction, engineering/sciences, transportation and financial industries. Helpful information about hiring military spouses was also provided.

Also attending were officials from the Texas Workforce Commission, Fort Bliss, Holloman Air Force Base, White Sands Missile Range, the U.S. Department of Labor and other local, state and federal officials from both Texas and New Mexico.



Heart of Texas Initiative Spurs Rural Community Development Projects

Heart of Texas Workforce and the planning group Community Strategies LLC recently partnered on a new initiative to help small communities learn how to plan, budget and seek grant funding for local economic development projects.

Community Strategies hosted the workshop, culminating with each team pitching a community proposal to judges. The highest scoring proposal was from the city of Groesbeck, which received \$4,995 for downtown revitalization efforts. In a surprise move, the other four communities also received board funding for their respective projects, which ranged from city beautification projects to an event organized to raise scholarship money for local students. The board will fund each of minigrant.

STEWARD consists of six communities, Aquilla, Groesbeck, Marlin, Meridian, Moody, and Wortham, which represent each county in the region. To kick off the initiative, each community sent five-person teams, including city officials and economic development board members, to a workshop in Waco.

Organizers plan to host another STEWARD (Solutions To Encourage Widespread Action for Rural Development) event next year to include everything from economic and business opportunity development to education and training development.

For more information, visit www.stewardforgrowth.com.



West Central Board, Employers Help Laid-Off Workers Find Jobs

Within days of announced layoffs by an Abilene area boat manufacturer, the Workforce Center of West Central Texas helped 21 of the nearly 50 affected workers find new jobs with other employers who attended the event.

Workers from Tigé Boats had worked with fiberglass to craft boat shells, and layoffs were necessary after the company's production declined 30 percent because of a drop in boat sales. Most participating companies sought to fill manufacturing jobs with applicants who possessed similar skills.

The event provided information on resume preparation assistance and interviewing skills, and 10 participating area manufacturers, ranging from cookie bakers to boilermakers, met potential hires. The job fair was open to all area job seekers.