The Chico Heat baseball team is back and ready to play ball! The Heat is an independent baseball team that will be returning to play in the newly formed Great West League, a collegiate wood-bat league. They will play thirty home games this summer at Nettleton Stadium located on the Chico State campus. Top collegiate players from all over the country will be joining the team and making Chico home for the hot summer months.

AFWD was asked to facilitate a hiring event to bring in local talent to make sure the staffing needs were met. AFWD quickly jumped in and started recruiting from all areas of Chico with our main focus on the High Schools. In no time a list of pre-scheduled interviews quickly reached over a hundred and the excitement began brewing.

On Friday May 13th, the Chico Heat management team came prepared with five interviewers and with AFWD staff, the event went flawlessly. One by one the applicants went in nervous as for some of them, this was the first real job interview they had experienced but left with a smile and a hopeful attitude. With a huge hiring need, a second session was scheduled for Monday May 16th with another full afternoon of interviews. Staff positions range from concessions, ticket takers, merchandise sales and entertainers. A total of 88 staff members were offered positions and attended orientation also held at our Chico America’s Job Center.

For some, the beloved mascot Heater the dragon will be the highlight of the season. Heater is always eager to play silly games with young fans and to sign autographs. Come on out to the stadium for some affordable family fun and a chance to see not only young talented baseball players but also those new hires who are expanding their work skills. AFWD hopes to assist with the fielding of staff for many years to come.
Chico Convening Session

NoRTEC partnered with Thomas P. Miller & Associates to bring businesses together and conduct a convening session titled, “Building our Communities Workforce Discussion.” The main focus of this meeting was to bring businesses and members of the Chico community together, to discuss the state of the workforce in Butte County. Over 50 employers from Chico showed up to join in this discussion.

Some of the topics covered were; what the most significant economic opportunities were, or challenges impacting business, how businesses are addressing workforce challenges, types of employer support available, education and training requirements, and access to general labor market data.

This discussion was helpful for creating a strategy to meet the needs of businesses in the area. A large amount of input from business leaders was obtained in regards to what is currently working for their business and what areas are in need of improvement. This information will be used to create a strategy to respond to the needs of businesses by providing services, programs and assistance. Those in attendance shared valuable insight on their hiring needs as well as other challenges they face with bringing in new employees. Some of the highlights included teaching soft skills to younger workers and providing technical skills for more specialized jobs.

The high attendance and participation in this event identified that employers are eager to discuss how to create a better workforce for their community. Overall, it was a very helpful meeting for the consultants running the session and those in attendance, as everyone was able to share ideas and areas of concern, in order to bring positive suggestions and resolutions in a follow up session coming up in the fall.
Two of Oroville’s groups dedicated to economic growth are unifying under a single banner.

The Oroville Area Chamber of Commerce and the Oroville Economic Development Corp. are combining their business promotion operations under the name of the Oroville Economic Alliance, according to Chamber Chief Executive Officer Sandy Linville.

Instead of the groups working separately, people will be able to work together, use resources wisely and take things to the next level, she said.

The Alliance will promote attracting new businesses and growing existing ones, while the chamber will continue to act as a membership arm and conduct services traditionally associated with a chamber.

As part of the partnership, the Chamber and the corporation’s boards have combined. Linville will head both the Chamber and the Alliance, while corporation leader Mike Phulps of Metal Works will act as Chairman of both the Chamber and Alliance boards.

The Inaugural Dinner ....

Gold Country Casino & Hotel was transformed into a visual representation of California’s Business Oasis on Thursday night, May 12, 2016 at the OEA Inaugural Gala! All 270 attendees to Oroville’s largest and most inspiring business event of the year were treated to an Island Oasis theme for the evening. From Sandy Linville, Oroville Area Chamber of Commerce CEO, “We are excited to see so many supporting our efforts to position Oroville as California’s Business Oasis.”
Creating Pathways to Success

James came to AFWD for assistance with his job search, after having been laid off and not finding employment for two years. He initially received assistance from his Career Center Advisor (CCA) by reviewing and updating his resume. James also attended the three Job Seeker Workshops developed by AFWD staff to assist job seekers with resume building and filling out applications, interviewing for success, and job searching and networking. Part of the services offered to enrolled job seekers is provide them with job leads and job referrals, assist the client and Business Service Representative (BSR) with job development and to offer job coaching and guidance.

Through the recent Temporary Job Creation Program (TJC), James was referred by his CCA and was able to interview with the company Terra Fuego for a Fuels Crew Worker position. He was hired, and even though this was a temporary position, James worked full time for 9 months which allowed him to gain recent work experience and gather transferable skills. His employer was very appreciative and pleased with James and his strong work ethics.

When the TJC Program came to an end, James found himself unemployed once again. He immediately went to work with his CCA to upgrade his resume with his new skills and employment history. He re-attended the Job Seeker Workshops and went on several interviews. Through one of the interviews with Firestorm, James reached out to the employer about AFWD and our On the Job Training program (OJT). James contacted his CCA with this information, who then contacted the Business Service Representative (BSR). The BSR was able to successfully work with the employer to develop an OJT for James as an Operator/Maintenance Technician. Firestorm is a wildland fire suppression company. They assist in keeping forestry brush and trees clean as to minimize fire hazards as well as assist in fighting fires.

James is happily employed again! It has taken some time, but it shows that if you work all the steps, take advantage of all the programs and workshops, you can achieve full-time, self-sufficient employment.
Deborah Coffey came to AFWD a few months after she was laid off from her Office/Medical Assistant position of nearly 2 years for North State Imaging due to a department closure. Her responsibilities included back office duties including greeting patients after they had been roomed, taking vitals, instructing patients on attire for specific imaging needs, documenting and charting patient information, and proficiency in *Meaningful Use* electronic records. Prior to that, Deborah worked in back office temp position and was also employed as a back office Medical Assistant for 2 years. Deborah was actively collecting unemployment insurance and searching for employment in a qualifying sector (Medical Office Worker) making her eligible to access National Emergency (NEG) Grant funding. In addition, Deborah was also eligible for the Multiple Closures, Layoffs, and Unemployment Services (MCLAUS) Grant due to being a victim of a department closure at North Valley Imaging. Deborah completed the Institute of Technology Professional Medical Assistant Program in July 2010, but had only worked in a back office capacity. She was never certified by the state of California as a Medical Assistant as she never took the exam for state certification. Deborah had been unable to secure full time self-sufficient work unassisted when she came to us. AFWD was then contacted by BrightStar, a local franchise for home health staffing, regarding an open position they needed to fill. We referred Deborah to the position and she was interviewed. BrightStar contacted AFWD indicating their interest in hiring Deborah for their open Medical Secretary position, but shared their concerns about her lack of “front office” experience and knowledge of BrightStar’s proprietary software. After discussing our options, an On the Job Training (OJT) was agreed upon as an acceptable career pathway for Deborah to get back into the workforce. Deborah was then assessed for compatibility to help ensure the placement had a high potential for success. Deborah had never worked in a front office capacity as a Medical Secretary, and was not certified as an MA or CNA even though the majority of her experience dealt with direct patient contact. At Deborah’s last review, she was doing well with the employer reporting that she was learning quickly and they were extremely happy with her progress.
Four Different Directions: One Ending Path

Tanya Wygant had found herself in the role of being a single mother while she began her first semester in the RN program at Butte College. She accepted her new role and persevered in the RN program. Nearly 25 years ago, Tanya was a Flight Attendant for Delta Airlines until she discovered her passion for healthcare. She obtained her Paramedic training and licensure at Butte College. She received her Associates Degree in Paramedicine and obtained employment at Enloe Medical Center. This experience had paved her career path and she instantly knew she would one day become a Registered Nurse. Tanya was very dedicated to her training and to her future profession. She was able to earn straight “A’s” in her classes and was a model student to her fellow classmates. AFWD was able to assist Tanya in her training required needs to become successful.

Oziel Nassif-Rico had been on the RN waiting list at Butte College for over five years. She was a single mother raising two children in Chico. She often stated she persevered to benefit her children. Oziel, a Lebanese-Russian immigrant from Mexico once received a scholarship from UC Davis to study chemistry. She got married and unfortunately didn’t complete her education. Her passion for chemistry had led to her interest in healthcare. Oziel didn’t own a desktop computer, laptop or tablet. She only owned a smart phone and insisted on purchasing e-textbooks for her training, as she was used to stretching her resources. She successfully completed the RN program utilizing her smartphone to read her textbooks, had lost two pair of glasses during the program, and spent her holidays studying for two years. Oziel was extremely grateful for the one-on-one help she received from her Case Manager, the financial assistance of her training related needs, and has developed an interest in becoming an RN-Caseworker. She stated she wants to be an advocate for patients during their medical hardships.
Jessica Gamez had just completed her RN prerequisites two and a half months before she was accepted to the RN Program at Butte College. She was accepted to the program less than a week before the semester began. She was living in the East Bay and had to rent shelter, buy textbooks, complete her immunizations and background check in less than a week’s time. She said it was very hectic, but was able to start the training successfully. Jessica had been able to make contact and enroll into the AFWD program to receive training assistance, in order to have this successful start. She quickly acclimated to Butte County and wanted to begin her career at a local hospital. Jessica was a full-time nanny and had developed an interest in assisting people of all ages. She especially enjoys children due to her profession as a nanny. Jessica attended nursing conferences in order to emerge herself in the healthcare culture. Jessica grew professionally in the RN program and has accepted Butte County as her permanent home.

Bao Xiong has been an active helper and volunteer since before starting her RN training at Butte College. Bao started out as a very young student who assisted her parents in selling produce and flowers at the local Farmer’s Market. In 2014, Bao participated in the International Student Volunteer (ISV) program, where she participated in the Children’s Programs and provided assistance to education and development for underprivileged children from Thailand. She is fluent in Hmong and English and has flourished in both cultures. She said this will allow her to bring compassion and care to patients from different cultures. Bao was also a paraprofessional for Butte County Office of Education and thus nurtured her interest in helping others. She wants to continue her volunteer work abroad and will bring compassion to all of her patients in her new career as an RN. Bao is thankful she was able to participate and receive assistance to complete her RN training with the help of AFWD.
Tyler Weist was referred to the AFWD, Inc. Youth Program in October, 2014. Tyler was in and out of the juvenile justice system and resided in the small, remote town of Magalia. He was unsure as to whether or not he could finish high school while juggling his daily barriers and struggles. He was co-enrolled in the youth program and the Workforce Accelerator program. The Workforce Accelerator program provides opportunities to gain workforce skills, complete secondary education requirements, earn occupational certificates, and receive assistance with the legal processes necessary for them to succeed in the local labor market, including sealing a juvenile record and working with the court system to pay fines and restitution. Tyler was required to check in with probation weekly, and with his AFWD case manager daily.

Tyler persevered and earned his high school diploma within the first year of his enrollment with AFWD, as well as earning occupational certificates with OSHA, Hunter Irrigation Services, and Wildfire Suppression. There were days that Tyler didn’t have a roof over his head but he managed to attend school because he wanted a better life. Along Tyler’s journey he participated in work experiences and on the job trainings to help support himself while going to school.

Tyler accompanied his Youth Career Advisor, and Youth Program Manager to the Accelerator Statewide convening session in Sacramento. Always a strong advocate for himself and others in need of assistance, he asked all of the attendees to remember the importance of addressing the barriers of participants with disabilities. Tyler moved to Ventura County to live with a positive role model and family member, where he is currently completing his probation requirements, on time, and is working full time for Lowes. He obtained his driver’s license and bought a vehicle of his own! We are so proud of Tyler and his dedication to bettering his himself and his future!!
The Alliance for Workforce Development’s Youth Program has assisted their first truck driver in Butte County! Joseph Iannazzo came to the Chico office, hoping to get help with truck driving training. Being a husband and a father, he knew he had to make a tough decision: to keep his full time job as a shift manager or follow his dream of becoming a truck driver.

In order to be able to continue with his goal, he was researching options for any kind of help he could get. AFWD Inc.’s Youth Program was able to get him close to his dream job by helping him finance his training. Joseph had to travel 93 miles one way, five days a week for four weeks to make it to class and complete the training.

All of his hard work and dedication paid off! Joseph completed his training and graduated from Western Truck School. He then successfully completed the Commercial Class A application with the DMV and obtained his Commercial Driver’s License. Joseph is currently employed full time doing what he loves with May Trucking out of Salem, OR and can now continue to provide for his family.
Johnny Osby and Kyle Mills have been part of a crew working for the City of Chico. The crew has been clearing invasive plants and clearing trails in several areas of Bidwell Park. They have had the opportunity to work with a variety of park staff and different volunteer organizations that are working on improving the park and creating new paths and areas for park visitors to use.

This project has given both Kyle and Johnny the opportunity to gain work skills that they can carry to future employment. Kyle has been able to bring his landscaping experience to the job, and has been able to broaden his skills, applying them to park renovation and building on them through work with the project leaders in path design and construction. Johnny has gained skills in renovation, team work, and time management. Both have been great representatives of our organization, taking the opportunity to speak with the public when asked questions about the various projects they have been working on.

As they head into the summer months, Johnny and Kyle will have new obstacles to overcome. So far, they have been able to manage the heat and follow their training to take breaks, keep hydrated, and try to stay cool. As there is an infinite amount of work that needs to be done for the park restoration and renovation projects, they will have many more opportunities to build on their growing skill set and learn new things.
Fighting the Good Fight

Katlin, 19 years old, had applied to AFWD for assistance as she was accepted to attend the Fire Training Academy at Butte College. When Katlin first met with her Youth Career Center Advisor, it was clear all of the paperwork for her financial aid had not been completed. Katlin contacted the financial aid office at the college and was told repeatedly she was not eligible for financial aid. Katlin’s father had passed away and Katlin was being raised by her mother’s ex-boyfriend. She had no family support. Her CCA knew the information Katlin had been given was not correct and arranged a three way meeting with the Dean of Financial Aid. At that meeting, Katlin presented a letter to the Dean from another county agency. Based on the contents of that letter, the Dean determined Katlin was eligible for financial aid and would receive the maximum amount, including additional monies based on her original application date.

Katlin’s long term goal is to become a Firefighter/EMT/Police Officer. Katlin, with the assistance of her CCA, obtained the necessary books and gear required for participation in the Fire Academy. Katlin started the academy full of enthusiasm. This was shortly replaced with determination to get through all the studying and testing. Katlin was selected Captain in her class by the instructor. As her training progressed, Katlin later failed a test, was given the opportunity to retake it, and did not earn a passing score, resulting in her being dropped from the Fire Training Academy. She did not let this setback change her course.

Katlin returned home, contacted her Volunteer Fire Captain and the very next day she was sent out to work on the Butte Fire (2015). Katlin worked at the Butte Fire for about two weeks. At the end of that assignment, she returned home to continue working as a Volunteer Fire Fighter with the San Andreas Fire Protection District, where she also enrolled in the EMT class at Columbia College. Katlin has now completed the EMT class and is preparing for the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) exam which she will be taking this summer. She already has a job lined up in Sacramento pending her successfully passing this exam.

Katlin, when asked about her experience with Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. and the role it played in assisting her, wrote the following:

“I came to Alliance for Workforce Development for assistance in my schooling. I didn’t know what the company did, or what they could do for me, but I took a chance and made an appointment. The day of my appointment I met this wonderful woman who then became my advisor. She doesn’t know it, but she has made a huge impact on my life. We talked and she got to know my story in life, like where I’m from and where I’m going. My advisor goes above and beyond for me, she always makes sure I have everything I need, and she checks in on me on a regular basis. She truly is an amazing person to work with and I am eternally grateful that I was lucky enough to have her as my advisor. She has been there for me through some tough times, and I couldn’t ask for more. When I was going through my academy I ended up failing out because I missed two more questions than I was supposed to and my advisor always believed in me and when she talked to me I felt like I could do anything I wanted. She is not just my advisor, but she is also a person who I hold very close to my heart. I will never forget everything she has done for me. Thank you for helping me make my dreams come true!”
In May of 2015 Tyler exited the Youth Program with Alliance for Workforce Development as a successful exit. She had entered the program as a student at Prospect High School working to complete her high school diploma. Tyler graduated the following June and immediately enrolled in Butte ROP’s Veterinary Assistant Program. Tyler had always wanted to work with animals, but she and her family had no means to pay for the fees for the program so AFWD stepped in to assist her with the entry to the program.

Tyler worked hard and graduated from the program the following May, almost one year after she enrolled with AFWD. At the time, she said she was accomplishing a goal she set for herself when she was five. She was immediately hired by All About Pets & Equine Veterinary Service in Chico, working 34 hours a week. Determined to continue to further her educational and professional goals, AFWD assisted Tyler with enrolling into classes at Butte College. Tyler started attending college in August of 2015, enrolled in 9 units while working 32 hours a week at the Veterinary hospital.

Now, a year after exiting from AFWD’s Youth Program, Tyler is still advancing towards her goals. She has since received several raises from her employers for her exceptional performance and continues to work full time in the field that she loves. As a Certified Veterinary Assistant, Tyler has been able to pursue helping animals including cats, dogs and rabbits, but has also had the opportunity to work with a number of exotic species. Recently she assisted with work involving a young bear, and has also worked with several species of big cats including a tiger cub. Though she successfully completed her classes with Butte College, she elected not to enroll in classes this year, instead focusing on her job and ongoing career. Soon to complete twelve months of follow up, Tyler represents the success and growth that AFWD seeks to support in each of their clients.
Butte County Visitors
64,064

AFWD Business Services

Business Served 1,567
Service Provided 9,982
Positions Filled 2,394
Training Assistance 197

Program Services
Total enrollments

Adult 168
Dislocated Worker 147
Youth 72
Employed 319

Unemployment Rate
Butte 5.9% Plumas 8.1%
Lassen 6.0% Sierra 7.0%
Modoc 6.7% Nevada 4.3%