Massive Success at Butte County Job Fair

On June 13, 2018 Alliance for Workforce Development hosted the first ever Butte County Job Fair. The event took place at Chico’s Silver Dollar Fairgrounds Harvest Hall. With 40 Butte County Employers and over 700 job seekers in attendance, this was the premier employment and networking opportunity for 2018.

Employers in attendance included some of the top names in Butte county’s business community, representing a wide array of employment opportunities and career goals. Just a few of the companies among them were:

- Build.com
- Lulu’s
- Tri Counties Bank
- Raley’s
- Feather River Hospital
- Oroville Hospital
- Butte College
- Orchard Hospital
- Northern Valley Indian Health
- Sierra Pacific Industries
- ThirdLove
- Norfield Inc.
- Weiss McNair
- Stapleton Pence

Of the 40 total employers present, a wide range of industries and sectors were represented, including healthcare, manufacturing, construction, retail, hospitality and service, education, and public sector employment. Positions ranged from entry level, to credentialed/skilled trades, to executive and management.

The six-hour event featured many on-the-spot successful matches between employers and job seekers, as well as hundreds of opportunities for future hires. For example, TJ Maxx received over 200 applications. Orchard Hospital found new Registered Nurses to add to their candidate pool. Lulu’s clothing distribution is currently moving several candidates they met at the fair, through their interview process. Chico Unified School District has already hired an employee they met at the fair, as a member of their district Health Aide pool.

Preparedness was the key success factor for attending job seekers. To that end, AFWD offered two “How to Prepare for a Job Fair” workshops in our Chico and Oroville One Stops prior to the event. Social media, including Facebook and LinkedIn played a key role in inviting interested job seekers into the One Stops for resume help and networking tips. Many jobseekers both during and after the event commented on how much they appreciated the assistance they received prior to the fair.

Alliance for Workforce Development appreciates the attendance, professionalism, and enthusiasm of our Employer Partners and jobseeker community members. We look forward to more events like this one with our Butte County Community.
Rapid Response is a pro-active, business-focused, and flexible strategy designed to respond to announcements of layoffs and business closures. The Rapid Response process consists of quick coordination of services and providing immediate aid to companies and their affected workers to ensure rapid reemployment and to minimize the negative impact of the layoff and/or closure.

Unfortunately, the last quarter of the 17/18 fiscal year has kept the Butte AFWD Rapid Response team busy with outreach and workshops to support the dislocated workers affected by a business closure or significant layoff. It is an unfortunate fact in the business world that things change, businesses move or companies close their doors due to finances. Whatever the reason, Business Service Representatives with AFWD, like Wendy Sweeney are happy to be a part of the conduit to the soon to be unemployed workers. Wendy personally has been in this situation as have many of the RR team members and they know full well the emotional impact job loss can have on people.

Layoffs...

- Are generally due to circumstances beyond the employee’s control. Usually the employee’s effectiveness is not the determining factor. It is the company’s effectiveness that leads to the layoff.
- Typically occurs because companies have to adapt to the rapidly changing needs of the marketplace.
- Can be a drain on your emotional strength, your physical and economic well-being and your relationships with others. Be prepared to do everything you can to protect yourself in all these areas.

When the team starts a Rapid Response workshop the reception from the worksite and employees is skeptical and there is a sense of foreboding that is palpable. Rapid Response efforts usually start with a short lead in from AFWD business services, a lengthier Q&A period with a rep from the Employment Development Department (EDD) and then closes with a Career Center Advisor making the individual connection for effected employees to reemployment services. By the end of the workshop the statements are from a depth of emotional relief and frequently begin with, “I am so glad you came and shared these services, I had no idea all of the things you guys can do to help.”

We will end our workshops with the attestation that we are available to support and advise as they begin the next chapter of their career path!

This last month we held 4 onsite Rapid Response workshops during a 2 week period with a Butte county cracker manufacturer - Mary’s Gone Crackers as they announced they were closing their Gridley plant. This closure affected 137 employees. We were able to meet with 105 dislocated workers and we have Career Center Advisors assigned to enroll and follow up with the dislocated workers for further services.

An additional Rapid Response Workshop was held with the well known and loved Chico Toys R Us store. Their closure is affecting 27 employees, some who have been there since it opened in 1990. The RR team then met with the employees at Aaron Brothers’ Art & Framing which will close its doors June 30th. This closure meant that 9 people will lose their jobs.

All impacted employees throughout the Butte area that were affected by the layoffs and/or closures above were also invited to attend our Butte County Job Fair in hopes of connecting them with other local employers that had positions to fill immediately.
Hiring Event - New Store Opening in Oroville

Such good news! Harbor Freight Tools is opening a new store in Oroville, with a tentative opening date of May 15, 2018.

Our Business Service Team were excited to provide assistance to Harbor Freight Tools with their Hiring Events throughout March and April. Harbor Freight Tools was proactive with respect to advertising this event well in advance and AFWD staff doubled down with massive social media postings. As BSR (Business Service Rep) Wendy Sweeney says, “The power of social media” ... resulted in 140 job applicants attending the first hiring event on March 23rd which included a prescreen and interviewing session. The Regional Manager and 5 local/regional store managers were on hand to get the job of interviewing all 140 applicants done. The second hiring event was held on April 5th, with hearty participation nearly as robust as the first event.

Wendy Sweeney was also able to provide training space for the new Harbor Freight Tools store manager in the Oroville One Stop. On April 16th, The Oroville Resource Center’s computer ‘quiet’ room was reserved that allowed Harbor Freight to conduct online orientation and system training for the newly hired staff.

Harbor Freight Tools was well pleased with the job seeker turnout, resulting in 34 part-time and full-time job seekers being hired. Our One Stop service are an ideal location, that allows hiring events to be well organized with the assistance of knowledgeable and experienced AFWD staff ready to help.
During the Chapman Town Family Wellness Fair at Chapman Elementary School in Chico, families received information from more than 30 community organizations and AFWD was proud to be a part of it. Organized by the Love Chapmantown Community Coalition, Enloe Medical Center and other partners, this free even featured an assortment of interactive activities to help families live well.

The event that took place late April, was open to the public and all who attended enjoyed free entertainment, health education and screenings, information on free community events, nutrition, healthy choices as well as employment opportunities and other resources available. In addition, attendees received bags of fresh vegetables, fruit, dried goods and paper products as well as children's books donated by the local library.

Alliance For Workforce Development Career Center Advisors and a Business Service Representative provided information on education and job training resources, resume assistance, financial aid as well as youth services. Many who stopped by our table were unaware of everything we do so it was exciting to share the variety of work based trainings and classroom trainings available as well as the partnerships amongst the schools and employers in the community.

Families throughout Chico who attended this event had fun and learned how to live healthy lifestyles and where to go for additional information or assistance.
For several years, Norfield Inc. in Chico has utilized AFWD as a resource for labor market data, including employment numbers and wage growth. However, the growing manufacturer had never considered utilizing AFWD as a recruiter, talent pipeline, and training resource.

When Norfield’s HR Director, Rose, contacted Business Service team this year for an up-to-date labor market assessment, we compiled the requested data, as always. However, our Business Service Rep Gary couldn’t help but notice a trend in the fields Norfield was inquiring about: they were all jobs with a high level of growth in demand, but relatively small number of qualified workers. This prompted us to ask Rose, “Are these positions you’re currently trying to fill? And if so, how long have you been looking?”

This simple question spurred a conversation where Rose related the difficulty in finding skilled workers for the manufacturing field, and how competitive it had become to attract skilled welders, machinists, and support staff. Hearing Rose’s concern prompted another response from BSR Gary: “If you can’t find the skilled workers you need, why not create them?” Rose and Gary had a series of conversations over the next few days, outlining what Norfield was looking for in potential candidates, and what ways they were and were not equipped to train new hires in job specific skills. It quickly became apparent that the On the Job Training program was a perfect fit for Norfield Inc. They have trained experts in the manufacturing field. AFWD has a pool of motivated, teachable job seekers, and the resources to make a training program efficient and feasible.

The OJT program has proven to be a huge success for Norfield. From a simple conversation on how to handle a skilled labor shortage, Norfield’s local workforce of 60 employees has been increased with six OJT participants training into career level positions.

These include:

1) A BCOE (Butte County Office of Ed) Youth Welding Boot Camp graduate training to become a skilled fabricator.
2) A Navy Veteran training to become a Master Machinist/Assembler
3) A 2018 Chico State Computer Science graduate training to become a Specialized Manufacturing IT Programmer
4) A dislocated worker, previously working seasonally preparing income taxes, now training to become a Client Accounts Receivable Specialist
5) An unemployed construction worker training to become a Facilities Mechanic
6) A 2018 Chico State Engineering Graduate training to become a Lead Manufacturing Design Engineer.

Norfield’s newly reinvigorated relationship with AFWD, and the new career opportunities for AFWD clients that have resulted from it, are perfect examples of how the relationships we build with our employer partners can have a ripple effect that positively impacts our entire community. On June 13, Norfield attended AFWD’s Butte County Job Fair, where they were introduced to hundreds of more potential candidates. Candidates, who, with AFWD’s help, can become the next generation of highly skilled workers fueling Norfield’s positive contributions to our local economy.
AFWD Business Service Representative Gary Besser recently provided a seminar on Work-Life-Balance and Employee-Employer Relationships to the staff at United States Thermoelectric Consortium (USTC), in Chico. Owner Sheryl Kerner also attended the onsite training.

Topics covered included:

- Positive workplace habits: personal cell phone usage, punctuality, proper procedures for calling in sick, State of California requirements for meal and break times.
- Work-Life Balance and Employee Satisfaction: Tools included “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs”, SHRM Human Resource literature, and an open discussion facilitated by Mr. Besser, where Ms. Kerner and the staff discussed the value of open communication between management and staff.
- The value of self-care at home as related to productivity at work.
- A refresher presentation of USTC company policies regarding call-ins, absences, cell phone usage at work, and other topics.
- Workplace relationships: “Team” mentality.

Employees were engaged with the material, and offered excellent feedback on the value of communication. One employee gave his feelings on communicating with his employer: “Communication is key. If you let the boss know what’s going on, they want to make it work for you.” Sheryl Kerner closed the session with a reminder that her employees are an asset: “We’re like a family here (at USTC). Everyone here is valuable and adds something important to the mix.”
Assigned to the Northwest SPCA through the county’s Work Experience Program, Lisa Egger, STEP candidate (Skills Training Employment Program) has found herself in a ‘pawfect’ assignment. The folks at the NWSPCA found Lisa to be a conscientious team player; always going the extra mile and ensuring follow through on assignments.

Since NWSPCA were so impressed with Lisa’s contribution as an unpaid volunteer through Work Experience, they immediately took advantage of the subsidized job training program through STEP and hired her on as a paid employee. Lisa is very happy with her position as a Kennel Attendant at NWSPCA. One of the things she likes best (other than caring for the dogs and cats) is the slower pace of the operation and the healing and calming effect the environment provides for her.

Lisa is happy to report to work each day; she’s learned to groom the lucky dogs and cats who are going to their ‘forever homes.’ The challenge she is looking forward to is caring for the feral cats. Sitting at a desk or working on a computer for several hours does not necessarily suit her personality, the animal interaction is the ‘pawfect’ job opportunity for Lisa. Now that she has completed the STEP assignment and is being retained by the NWSPCA as a long term employee, Lisa hopes she’ll be at the NWSPCA forever. Maybe someday – continued schooling in a Vet Tech program.
Have you ever wondered if the advice you gave someone was, either worth it, or that they actually listened and took it to heart? I have.

AFWD offers Universal Services to Job Seekers. The Resource Specialists are available and accessible to Job Seekers in the Resource area and provide services ranging from orientation of services, assisting with Employment Bulletins recruiting for positions to specific help with resumes. Often, a lot of time is spent with a client to provide them with in-depth assistance in creating, critiquing and printing resumes. It is often wondered if this was in vain, or if the client “really got it” and will carry on this understanding of what a resume is and how it can help in the job search and application process.

Recently AFWD helped to facilitate a Job Fair for the Laborer’s Local 185, where 15 different employers in the construction trade were available to job seekers. In the weeks leading up to this event, the Resource staff were kept busy in assisting Job Seekers with preparing resumes. This service includes providing the client with a Resume Worksheet, reviewing the information and conducting an interview with the client to make sure all skills and previous work history is presented; setting the client up on the computer to enter the information; printing and critiquing the resume, and then copying the finished product onto colored Resume Paper.

Upon leaving the Job Fair, there were two attendees in the Parking Lot speaking to another man in his vehicle. Their conversation was quite a “Positive Affirmation” to the resume and resource assistance AFWD provides. The men standing were speaking to the one in the vehicle, telling him “Dude, you need a resume. You can to the One Stop, and they will help you there”. “Employers will spend more time talking to you and take you more seriously if you have a resume”.

YES! They got it!
WORKSHOPS, WORK!

- 21st Century New World of Work
- Resume Building
- Interview for Success

Stacy W. had recently moved to Oroville. She had completed her Phlebotomy Training program from an accredited facility in Southern California and was job searching. Stacy came into America’s Job Center/One Stop for job search assistance. She was very diligent in coming in every day, for over 2 ½ months, to use the computers and to reach out to staff. She was waiting for the California Department of Health to post her certification. But rather than sit and wait for what could be a lengthy process, Stacy was proactive and starting reaching out to employers.

During this time, Stacy attended the Resume Building Workshop, the Interview for Success Workshop and 3 of the 21st Century New World of Work workshops: Self Awareness, Communication and Adaptability. Right after attending the Resume Building workshop, Stacy updated her resume and submitted it to the CCA for review, which she “got it” and did a a great job. While working on her job search with the CCA, Stacy received many job hunting tips to assist her in getting noticed.

Today, once week after Stacy attended her last workshop, she came into the One Stop to let everyone know that she got her job! She was hired full time by Quest Diagnostics. She will need to travel for some of her training, but she will be housed, mileage reimbursed and received meal credits.

She credits attending the workshops to helping her feel confident and prepared in presenting her information, as well as herself.

The workshops are designed to help people to get their information out to employers, to feel confident in their interviewing and to brush up on their employability skills. They work!
The Partnership between Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) and Butte County Probation have been extremely successful. Through the National Dislocated Worker Grant funding, a cleanup project began at Teichert Ponds.

The Job Readiness Workshop offered by AFWD, Inc., are held bi-monthly at Butte County Probation in Chico. The workshop prepare the participants to start their job search after incarceration. The participants learn to complete an application, create a Resume and how to Interview.

Through the application and resume process several participants were chosen to participate in the National Dislocated Worker Grant Flood 2017 Cleanup Project. Butte Environmental Council (BEC) is a leading non-profit environmental organization based here in Chico. BEC protects the land, air and water of Butte County and the surrounding region.

A crew of three will start the clean-up efforts related to the storm damaged areas protected by BEC within Butte County. Several Probation clients were offer Temporary part-time employment to assist with the Flood 2017 Storm cleanup.

These clients have been incarcerated, upon being released reality hit and securing employment has been a struggle partly due to their employment gap. This partnership between Butte Probation, AFWD and BEC has afforded these participants the opportunity to rebuild their resume, increase their skills level and fill their employment gaps. The Restoration Crew will demonstrate their ability to complete tasks with little supervision, and utilize hand-tools (trimmer, weed-eater, shovel, rake, pick, turf-cutter, posthole digger and wheelbarrow) to remove and clear all obstructions from waterways; in addition to other duties associated with storm related projects.
Ready for Success

Alliance for Workforce Development Inc. (AFWD Inc.) Chico has provided Job Readiness Classes to Butte County residents who are on probation or living at Tri-County Treatment in Oroville on a regular basis. AFWD Inc. Career Advisors, Lisa Scott and Mark Alvidrez have worked closely with Butte County Probation to ensure the participants acquire the job readiness skills necessary to obtain full-time employment. In May 2018, CCAs Scott and Alvidrez attended a two day course to acquire the skills and strategies to facilitate the Ascend curriculum designed to reduce recidivism. The two day course was facilitated by Ascend founders and creators, Christine Morse and Toni White.

The Job Readiness participants are most likely long term unemployed, lack a GED or any formal training that would benefit them in obtaining full-time employment. They often lack a pro-social network to lower the risk of committing another crime. The participants living at Tri-County Treatment are considered incarcerated and have limited access to internet job search. Their background is a barrier to employment, but the Job Readiness classes offers many strategies to address this barrier in order to be successful. At times, these participants violate probation or parole and may find themselves incarcerated again. The new goal of the Job Readiness curriculum is to provide strategies to combat recidivism in Butte County.

The Job Readiness class instills the idea of creating personal, short-term and long-term goals that may include goals such as writing a new resume, apply for five jobs a week and changing their living environment. These types of goals can lead to living a life free from incarceration. The participants must identify the areas of their lives that need improvement and identify the barriers that keep them from improving. The 21st Century Skills curriculum and the Ascend curriculum provide the strategies to create their new goals.

Once the participants graduate from the Job Readiness class, they leave with cover letters, resume, master applications, interview skills, goals, career assessments, adaptability skills and resilience. These tools will make them ready for success!
Kimberly initially came to AFWD in October of 2014 and was enrolled as a Dislocated Worker from her Medical Assistant job of 14 years. She had been recently accepted into the Butte RN program and had an original graduation date in May of 2016. Due to her past income, Kimberly did not qualify for grant money beyond a Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver, which paid her tuition. After an assessment, she received AFWD assistance with required scrubs, shoes and textbooks. Midway through her second semester, Kimberly was diagnosed with a life-threatening medical condition and was forced to resign from the program. She discussed re-entry with Butte College and they stated she would be welcome to re-enter when she was well enough.

In December of 2017, Kimberly returned to the Butte RN program to resume her studies. She was re-assessed and received AFWD assistance with only her final semester expenses consisting of Kaplan Required Testing, Live scan, and her state board NCLEX application and exam fees. She graduated in May 2018 and is now busi-ly reviewing for her NCLEX exam that will allow her to work as a Registered Nurse earning anywhere from $42-48 per hour with full benefits. Once Kimberly successfully passes her NCLEX, she will submit a revised resume to be reviewed by her Career Center Advisor. She will then be added to the applicant pool, and her resume will be forwarded to all Business Service Representatives to increase her chances of securing full time employment.

Kimberly fought hard to return, stating it was a struggle, but well worth it. She will soon reap the benefits of all her hard work once she begins employment as an RN.
Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc.’s (AFWD) Chico Business and Career Network’s (BCN) Youth Program hosted their two week summer youth boot camp, getting our enrolled participants ready for employment in the workforce. Our summer boot camp focused on the soft skills needed to obtain and keep employment. While many of our participants are able to obtain employment; some of the trouble they are encountering is not being able to keep it.

During the boot camp, we covered many basics: from breaks on the job, use of cell phones while at work, appropriate reasons to call in when an individual cannot make it to work, and the like. Many of these items covered were basic common courtesies and common workplace etiquette. Also covered with our youth were the differences in AFWD’s Internship program vs On-the-Job (OJT) trainings; programs that Boot Camp attendees may be able to participate in.

Recently, AFWD was able to collaborate with Fifth Sun in Chico, CA, a local manufacturing company. Fifth Sun was looking to hire 80 at-risk youth within a three year period. This was a great opportunity for many of the participants as many have barriers preventing them from obtaining and retaining employment. The partnership with Fifth Sun allowed participants to tour the company, giving them a first-hand view of the facility’s operations. Fifth Sun has many openings, from warehouse work to graphic design. It was an excellent opportunity for the participants to be considered for employment by a major employer that offers upward mobility. AFWD proudly partners with other organizations in our community to assist these young adults in finding a purpose and an employment path, enabling them to be successful and beat those obstacles!
Recently, I had the opportunity to share with a teacher at Chico High School all the benefits and services provided by the Alliance for Workforce Development (AFWD) youth program. Shortly thereafter, this teacher shared our program with another staff member who immediately referred one of her students, Rauny Green. Rauny left home at the age of 16 due to an unhealthy home environment. Two weeks ago, at the age of 18, he walked across the stage and received his high school diploma. Rauny is temporarily staying with a friend so he will not be homeless. He recently attended the Summer Youth Employment Boot Camp where he learned to write a resume, complete a master application and participate in a mock interview – all to help him prepare for employment. Rauny has never held a job and had never had an interview prior to his mock interview. If you met Rauny, you would find him to be shy and quiet but after attending the Boot Camp, staff saw a transformation taking place; Rauny started talking to other youth and actively participating in the activities. Also during Boot Camp, Rauny attended a job fair hosted by AFWD at the Silver Dollar Fairgrounds. Rauny made contact with Build.com and learned about a possible job opening which would utilize his computer skills. He also made contact with Butte County Office of Education and was instructed on how to apply for a part-time library assistant position which he intends to do as he also has excellent office skills. Rauny is anxious to begin working, and with the help from his Youth Career Center Advisor and Business Service Representative, he looks forward to working very soon.
Rennell Bohanon came to Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) through Butte County’s Transitional-At-Risk Youth (TAY) Program. TAY is a 1 year diversion program that, once completed and successful, the criminal charges are removed from a participant’s record. Aiming for success for these individuals, AFWD is happy to work in collaboration with the probation department and the TAY program.

As one of the requirements for completion of the program is for them to be employed, AFWD’s Career Center Advisors (CCA) help with teaching them pre-employment skills to facilitate gaining work experience. Rennell is a high school graduate who, at this time, does not wish to go to college but prefers to get right in and find a job. Currently working less than part-time at a local barbeque restaurant with a valid food handler’s card, he commented, “This is not what I want to do for the rest of my life.”

After much discussion and various career assessments, he found that a career path working outdoors really appealed to him. Rennell and his CCA sat down and brainstormed the different options that are present in Oroville, CA. Together, they found a path working for the State Parks system. AFWD was able to facilitate getting him a paid internship where he could get hands-on experience. Way to go for Rennell, in starting down a career path to gainful employment!
AFWD America’s Job Center of California
Statistics
PY 2017 -2018

Butte County
Total Visitors
58,578

Butte County
Business Services
Businesses Served 683
Services Provided 3,061

AFWD
Total Clients Enrolled 941

Unemployment Rate
(As of: May 2018)
Butte 4.3% Nevada 3.2%
Lassen 4.1% Plumas 6.7%
Modoc 6.1% Sierra 4.8%