COVID-19 Virtual Rapid Response

The workplace as we know it has changed. As the Rural North State adapts to the “new normal,” Alliance for Workforce Development’s essential services are a lifeline to regional businesses and workers struggling to find footing in an uncertain labor market. Among these critical services is the Rapid Response program.

Rapid Response is a proactive, business-focused program to assist companies and workers facing potential layoffs or plant closures. Rapid Response teams provide early intervention assistance to avert potential layoffs, and immediate on-site services to assist workers facing job losses. This process is normally triggered when a business issues a WARN (Workforce Adjustment and Retraining Notification) notice. The California WARN Act is a regulation that requires employers to provide workers and local government officials with at least 60 days notice before a mass layoff, plant closure or a major relocation. Normally, this notice gives our Rapid Response team time to conduct an on-site visit to assist both the business and employees. However, due to the unprecedented scale of the lay-offs, and the prohibitions of the isolation order, AFWD management sought a solution that was both virtually accessible and broadly available.

AFWD staff developed a virtual presentation to provide affected workers information and guidance on navigating a lay-off. We leveraged our relationships with county Social Service providers and the EDD, to provide information on resources and programs available in each of the counties we serve. In an effort to reach as many people as possible, invitations were sent to local employers, emailed to all job seekers in our applicant pool and advertised on all of our social media channels.

In addition to providing information on AFWD services and current job leads, the Virtual Rapid Response webinars included an overview of the Unemployment Benefits Application process, and information on county assistance programs such as CalFresh, CalWorks, MediCal, and General Relief. AFWD staff also provided information on various local resources for housing, utility payments and food assistance. All attendees were provided with a list of local resources complete with phone numbers and websites. The webinars for each of our service counties are now posted to our website, as are the links to state, county, and nonprofit assistance programs at www.afwd.org.

“Thank you AFWD for this webinar and for answering my questions. The information was very helpful.” – David, webinar attendee.
AFWD Responds to Community Needs

Across the nation, service providers in the public and nonprofit sectors are working to help communities weather the social, economic, and public health impacts of COVID-19. In Butte County, Alliance for Workforce Development is proud to assist this effort by providing labor to local government agencies and nonprofits in their pandemic mitigation efforts.

At the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, AFWD applied for a regional grant from the $17.8 million in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds authorized by Governor Newsom for COVID-19 workforce recovery purposes. This Additional Assistance funding allows AFWD to support Dislocated Workers in gaining temporary wages and work experience in jobs that serve the added function of benefiting the community response to the pandemic. As a requirement of the grant, the placements were to be limited to jobs that aided the community response to the pandemic, and were within a governmental agency or registered nonprofit.

In April, AFWD Business Service Staff began reaching out to local government agencies and nonprofits, to develop worksites for our enrolled Work Experience participants. Using our strong network of government and nonprofit partners, we were able to identify worksites with the City of Chico, the County of Butte, True North Housing Alliance, and the Chico Area Recreation District (CARD). At these sites, workers enrolled in our COVID-19 Additional Assistance Work Experience (WEX) Program will be providing a variety of services including sanitation of public spaces and government buildings, providing public health and other information to the public at call centers, and reorganizing public spaces to allow for social distancing guidelines. In addition to providing these invaluable services, the participants will be earning a sustainable wage for the duration of the placement, and gaining valuable work experience that will help them transition to their next job.

As Shane Romain, City of Chico site supervisor stated, “The Alliance for Workforce Development Covid-19, sanitation temporary workers are an amazing help to the City of Chico, Parks Division's efforts in keeping park facilities disinfected during this challenging time. The workers have been diligent in supplementing park staff in cleaning and disinfecting surfaces such as tables, benches, BBQs, water fountains, bathrooms fixtures, railings and much more. The workers are gaining valuable experience in park sanitation, maintenance and working with the public in a high use recreational setting.”
Rising from the Ashes

Courtney Vargas came to AFWD after losing her house and job in the Camp Fire. Courtney had worked at the Paradise Boys and Girls club as a Recreation Counselor for five years, and was in desperate need of a new job. Courtney had been job searching for sustainable full time employment within the Administrative field where she could learn new skills. She had applied for administrative work in Butte County, but due to her lack of experience she was unsuccessful. An evaluation by an AFWD Career Adviser of Courtney’s existing skills, aptitude, and abilities confirmed that Courtney had the potential for success within this industry. Courtney was selected for an Internship with Butte College as an Administrative Assistant. This Internship helped her to gain the necessary skills within and administrative office setting. Upon completion of Courtney’s Internship, she was offered a full-time position as an Administrative Assistant with Dawson & Son Co., who had been teaching the Hazwoper classes at Butte College. Courtney is now working within her chosen field with a self-sustaining wage that will help her to get back on her feet thanks to the help received from AFWD.

SafePath to Success

Zack was referred to Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. in December 2019 by the Torres Shelter where he was living. His main barrier to employment was homelessness. Zack refused to let this barrier get in the way of obtaining full time employment. When Zack met with his Career Center Advisor (CCA) he was unsure of what type of work he wanted to do. He was given multiple career assessments to help him find out what type of employment he would like to pursue. Zack received assistance with creating his resume, and job search assistance. He found that he enjoys being creative and working with his hands. Zack was interested in warehouse work, where he could best utilize his current skills. Zack’s resume was forwarded to SafePath Products by a Business Service Representative, and he was given an interview. To prepare, he met with his CCA for a mock interview. After his interview for SafePath, he was offered the job. Having little experience performing the work expected, Zack was put into an On-The-Job-Training (OJT). Facing job uncertainty with the onset of COVID-19, Zack was relieved to hear that he was considered an essential worker and would continue his OJT. Zack completed his OJT in May and continues to thrive at SafePath Products.
Lash’s Glass Makes Effective Use of AFWD Services

AFWD Business Services contacted Lash’s Glass after seeing a Help Wanted ad on Indeed. Lash’s, a Chico Window and Auto Glass company, was looking for entry level labor. Business Service Representative Sandra Wangberg contacted owner Lori Lash and gave a presentation on AFWD Business Services, including recruitment services and On-The-Job-Training. Lori was eager to make use of our services as she was having difficulty finding job seekers interested in learning the window and auto glass installation trade.

Wangberg sent Lash several entry level candidates from the AFWD applicant pool. Lash interviewed and hired two AFWD clients who were classified as Dislocated Workers, as they had been laid off from their last job and were collecting unemployment benefits. The two individuals met with a Career Center Advisor (CCA) who established eligibility and enrolled them into the WIOA program. The BSR assisted Lori Lash with designing a training plan that would allow the clients to progress in their ability so they could graduate to working independently at the end of their contract. Lori Lash stated, “Your (AFWD)’s program is wonderful, and I will recommend you to any business that I come in contact with so they can also participate in this valuable program.”

Overcoming Obstacles

Amy Lockwood was enrolled into the AFWD WIOA Program on November 27th 2019. She worked at Lifetouch, a business that edited and printed photos for Schools and photography companies. The business was closing, and AFWD went to the worksite and conducted a Rapid Response. Amy was in attendance and found that AFWD could assist her in finding new employment. She submitted her resume, and patiently waited to be contacted while she sought out other employment. She was contacted to participate in an On-the-Job-Training and decided that she would take this opportunity to further her career. Her OJT started on the 4th of December at Fifth Sun.

Amy enjoyed working at Fifth Sun right away. She stated that the staff was awesome and that she really had a blast with them all. During her training she was educated on many aspects of the company and enjoyed learning new tasks every day. AFWD monitored her throughout her training period, and when it came time for the training to end, she completed the OJT successfully. She was now proficient in her role at Fifth Sun. Her supervisor stated that she was a pleasure to work with and was excited to have her on the team. Shortly after she ended her OJT, the COVID-19 Pandemic happened. She was temporarily laid off and was not sure when she would be able to return to work. Fifth Sun liked her work ethic so much that she was back at work two days after her layoff, and remains there today in her regular position. Without AFWD Amy would have never found the position at Fifth Sun and she is grateful for the help she received.
Collaborating with CSUC

In light of the global pandemic, CSU, Chico has decided to host the fall 2020 semester online. For the Chico State Career Center this prohibits the annual Fall Local Job Fair. Wanting to find alternatives to connect students and alumni to local jobs, Career Center Advisor Ken Naas reached out to the Alliance for Workforce Development to see if we could assist them.

Ken reached out to AFWD to inquire about the status of local employers and to suggest co-hosting a workshop for local job seekers. With the COVID-19 public health social distance guidelines in mind, a webinar seemed to be the best platform.

The webinar provided an overview of services offered to job seekers both through the Chico State Career Center and AFWD. Business Service Representative Lori Caywood provided information on the regional job market, as well as several active job leads the AFWD was offering on behalf of local employers. The recruitments Lori shared with attendees ranged from part time jobs for students, to career pathways for recent graduates.

The Zoom webinar was a success with many attendees participating and asking questions about AFWD services during and after the presentation. Several of the attendees have contacted AFWD in the following days, thanking us for the information provided and requesting to be placed in the AFWD Job Seeker Resume Pool.

Ken Naas had this to say of the event: “This has been great. Thank you so much for your help. We definitely need to collaborate more often in the future.”

A Positive Attitude Pays Off

Lester Barker was referred to Alliance for Workforce Development Inc. (AFWD) through Butte County Probation. Lester was in need of assistance to obtain employment.

When Lester met with his Career Center Advisor (CCA) he had no prior work experience and was unsure what he wanted to do for employment. However, Lester knew he wanted to work outdoors. After taking some assessments, Lester found an interest in the landscaping industry.

Lester received assistance with creating a resume, interview skills, interview clothing and job search assistance. He participated in weekly workshops with his CCA and was always positive. Lester completed a week-long Youth Employment Boot Camp and was able to obtain a paid internship with the City of Chico.

Lester is currently working at the City of Chico as a groundskeeper. He has applied the information that he learned in Boot Camp; this has allowed him to be very successful. He is thankful for the opportunity that both AFWD and City of Chico have provided him.
On the Road to Recovery

Honey Run Road is an integral connection between the Paradise Ridge and the Chico area. This historic route included the famed Honey Run Covered Bridge, which was destroyed during the Camp Fire. The road right-of-ways were also destroyed or severely damaged by the fire.

The Town of Paradise Public Works Department was aware of the need to repair the damaged caused by the Camp Fire. Alliance for Workforce Development (AFWD) worked with the town to provide work crews to aid in the repair of the public right-of-way along Honey Run Road. AFWD utilized a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) Temporary Job Creation Program (TJC) to provide the Town of Paradise with this vital labor.

The National Disaster TJC program is designed to assist individuals by providing temporary employment, and an opportunity to gain new skills to supplement their work history. The program has a dual affect in that it also supplies a disaster ravaged community with the manpower necessary to rebuild. The Honey Run work crews performed a variety of tasks, from clearing out burned brush, replacing burned out culverts, removing debris and properly repairing drainage beds.

The quality of work being done by these crews has not gone unnoticed by the town residents who live along Honey Run Road. Public Works Director Marc Mattox has expressed praise for the quality and speed of the work performed. Alliance for Workforce Development is proud to be a partner to the Town of Paradise as it travels the road to recovery.

When One Door Closes

Edward Philippi was enrolled in the Megafire National Dislocated Worker Grant after he was laid off from Sierra School of Butte County. Due to the Campfire several schools were closed and there were limited opportunities available in education.

After meeting with his Career Center Advisor, it was determined that his transferable skills were a great fit for a work experience position at the Butte County Right of Entry (ROE) office for the Tree Removal Program. Edward was excited about the opportunity to help his community recover after the Camp Fire.

Edward made a great impression on the first day of his work, and has continued to be an asset to the Butte County ROE Tree Removal Program.
The Grow Manufacturing Initiative (GMI) is an industry-driven collaborative of manufacturers, suppliers, and support professionals joined in a common mission to advance the North State’s manufacturing sector. GMI is a Next Generation Industry Sector Partnership created by the Northern Rural Training & Employment Collaborative (NoRTEC). It offers manufacturers in the Rural Northern Region a platform to address their recruitment, supply chain, upskilling, and networking needs.

Alliance for Workforce Development is a proud GMI member. We leverage our talent pipelines to recruit talent for GMI member businesses, and the relationships we’ve built in GMI have created opportunities for our job seeking clientele with companies like Lundberg Farms, Fifth Sun, Airspray USA, Roplast Industries, Safepath Products, Sel-Tech, Stapleton-Spence, Norfield Industries, and Weiss McNair. Each fall we attend the Grow Manufacturing Expo, at CSU, Chico. This event is an opportunity for local students of every age to meet regional manufacturing professionals and learn about manufacturing careers right here in the North State. Business Service Supervisor, Gary Besser, currently sits on the GMI Recruitment & Retention Committee. As part of this committee, he collaborates, listens, and shares ideas with local sector leaders on the challenges, solutions, and strategies involved with growing, recruiting, and retaining talent.

In May 2020 NoRTEC was fortunate to make a successful recruitment of its own. Liz Pankhurst, a veteran of the local manufacturing sector, was hired on as the new GMI Coordinator. Liz worked at local fuel-tank manufacturer Transfer Flow for six years prior to joining GMI. She began her career in the accounting department, before transitioning to the position of Project Coordinator, and finally to Project Manager. Simultaneous to this upward career trajectory, Liz completed a Project Management degree program from CSU, Chico, and obtained her Project Management Professional certification. Liz’s experience in local manufacturing, and status as a “locally grown” manufacturing professional, is a boon for GMI. Transfer Flow is one of the region’s premier manufacturers, selling fuel systems for a variety of vehicles worldwide, and employing over 100 individuals. Founder Bill Gaines has been an invaluable leader in GMI initiatives including the Annual Manufacturing Expo at Chico State, and countless other programs to help young people explore careers in local manufacturing, thereby investing in future talent pools.

Coming from this prestigious manufacturing background, with education and credentials gained and practiced in our local region, Liz has insight into the local manufacturing climate that few could match. She brings an insider’s view of what North State Manufacturers need for success. In her own words, “Over the six years at Transfer Flow, I had the incredible opportunity to work with colleagues and customers with a variety of expertise. In May, I began working at GMI. Our current focus is supporting GMI members in their recruitment and retention needs. For Manufacturing Day in October, we have big plans to reach students in a new way and connect them to careers in manufacturing.”

AFWD looks forward to our continued collaboration with Liz and Grow Manufacturing. Leveraging our shared resources and expertise, and directed by sector driven goals, we are confident that we can provide local manufacturers with the tools they need to “grow” in the North State.
Ramping Up Production

SafePath Products is more than a ramp manufacturer. They solve vertical rises from ½” to 6” high with hundreds of product solutions, including Entry LevelLandings™, SafeResidential™ Ramps, and CourtEdge™ Reducers. The ramps, risers, and landings they manufacture help businesses meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. SafePath Products has been instrumental in solving ADA compliance issues for restaurants, theaters, parks, schools, hospitals, retailers, and many other businesses.

On March 16th, SafePath found themselves in a similar circumstance to many California Businesses: how to respond to the Stay at Home Order caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. The week after the shutdown order, business dropped off dramatically and Safepath was forced to furlough half of the warehouse and production crew, and two office personnel. However, by late March SafePath’s phone began to ring again many schools, government buildings, and businesses took the break in traffic to perform renovation and remodel work. This increased production allowed SafePath to bring back the furloughed workers. They redesigned the warehouse and production space, to accommodate public health safety guidelines for social distancing. Office staff alternated between coming to the office and working from home, so they would remain in compliance with social distancing guidelines as well.

As of June, SafePath has brought back all previously furloughed warehouse/production workers and plans to bring the office staff working from home back to the office in July. Furthermore, they have recently contacted AFWD with need for two additional production workers, to meet ongoing demand.

SafePath is an excellent example of a team that works together, to meet the challenges and uncertainties of difficult times. As Marcos Silva, Sales Manager put it, “I am fortunate to work with a group of people who are like a family, and would do pretty much anything to help each other and keep one anther healthy!”

Essential Employee

Michael was referred to AFWD in January 2020. He had trouble overcoming a barrier that kept him from obtaining and retaining employment. Michael met with a Career Center Advisor (CCA) looking for advice. He received help creating his resume along with transportation assistance to better assist him with his job search. Through his persistence efforts, Michael received an interview with Chico Electric. He then met with his CCA for interview training. Due to his hard work and preparation, Michael was offered a position with Chico Electric as a Laborer. Michael received assistance with work clothing, along with tools for his new job. In March, he received notice that he would not be laid off work due to Covid 19, like many others. He became an “essential employee” to America’s economy and continued to work following the CDC’s social distancing guidelines. Michael’s success is a testament to his hard work and determination to reach his goals.
AFWD Assists the Chico Fire Department with a New Hire

Jacob Saduddin moved to Chico from Huntington Beach, California for an opportunity to become a City of Chico Firefighter through an On-the-Job-Training (OJT). The City of Chico Fire Department has been a long-time partner with Alliance for Workforce Development, in utilizing the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) OJT to train new firefighters in the rigorous and highly technical skills they need for success.

Prior to coming to Chico, Jacob was a Life Guard for the California State Park Service. He had always desired to become a municipal fire fighter. Jacob was enrolled into the WIOA Program on February 19th, 2020. He started the academy February 24th for an eight-week training course. Due to the pandemic of COVID-19 his training was accelerated, and he completed it in seven weeks. His final day at the academy was April 10th.

Jacob learned a lot in the Academy, assisted by the training program designed by the City Fire Training Division Chief and an AFWD Business Service Representative. Training included: how to respond to different types of alarms and emergency calls, the specific equipment needed for various types of emergencies, how to analyze fire patterns, and how to rescue victims from burning buildings in the safest manner possible.

Jacob is now out of the academy and working in a City of Chico Fire Station. His supervisor has stated that Jacob improves every shift and is right where he should be. He goes above and beyond to help others. Jacob will continue to learn and grow with his new career. He would like to become a Captain one day and lead a crew of his own. With his skills and dedication, we predict he will go a long way in this profession.

A Long Way Toward Success

Jason Scott came to AFWD in 2019 after hearing about our services through a reentry Job Readiness Workshop. Jason was justice involved, and seeking work as part of the rehabilitation process.

On his own, Jason was having trouble finding work, due in part to the large gaps in his employment history from incarceration. AFWD assisted him in creating a functional resume that highlighted his skills and offered extensive practice in interview skills. Jason worked hard to follow up on the job leads provided him by his Career Center Advisor, and after a few weeks of effort, he landed a job with Rodriguez Landscaping.

Rodriguez Landscapes is a local professional landscaping company that serves Oroville and surrounding communities. Jason’s transferrable skills were perfect for the Landscaper occupation. Despite the gaps in his work history, Rodriguez Landscapes gave Jason an opportunity, as they have had many hiring successes with AFWD.

Jason is excelling at his job and loves coming to work every morning. He has begun working on heavy equipment maintenance projects for Rodriguez Landscaping, expanding his skill set. We are very proud of Jason’s hard work and dedication. He has come a long way toward success.
NO TIME FOR PANIC

Ashley is a recent graduate of the Butte Community College Registered Nurse program. Her positive, can-do attitude helped her throughout her training, and was an inspiration to those around her.

Ashley has a lengthy background in the Healthcare Sector, and her long-term goal has always been to become an RN. She was enrolled as a Dislocated Worker (DW), when she was laid off from her Med Tech position. She had been accepted into the Butte Community College RN training program, but she needed assistance with her required training items such as books and her Kaplan Review.

During her training she was able to secure a part-time position as a Care Giver with Team Risk Management. When COVID-19, forced the state of California into Shelter in Place orders, Ashley was laid off, as the family of her client was now able to provide the care themselves.

Ashley wasted no time in working with her AFWD Career Center Advisor to update her resume. Her CCA provided her with a list of facilities in the North State that were facing shortages of qualified Healthcare Professionals. Ashley applied to Oroville Hospital, received her interviewed and was hired, all within one week. The new position provides valuable primary care experience and provided Ashley with a significant increase in pay. It Just goes to show, don’t panic and make every moment matter! Congratulations Ashley.

Delivering the Goods

Magalia Community Church continues to serve Camp Fire survivors as a designated USDA Humanitarian Aid Distribution Center. Due to COVID-19, the process of distributing items has changed significantly and survivors are no longer able to enter the building to obtain the items they need. Instead, a new process was created to take orders from vehicles and runners would then retrieve the items for survivors and deliver them to their vehicles. As effective as the new system was, it created a need for additional workers to be able to serve Camp Fire survivors in an efficient manner.

Through the National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) and the Temporary Job Creation Program, Alliance for Workforce Development was able to provide the Humanitarian Aid workers needed to assist with the new process. The TJC workers are all survivors themselves currently trying to rebuild their lives on the Ridge. Being able to serve others while earning an income has made a major impact on the resiliency of the TJC workers, allowing them to move faster towards their own personal recovery after the Camp Fire.
Meeting Adversity with Resilience

Resiliency: The ability to keep going despite obstacles. This is certainly a skill that Spring 2020 Butte College Registered Nursing Graduates can add to their resumes.

Over 45 students were in the Spring 2020 graduating class. Several of these nursing students received assistance from AFWD for books, materials, and registration fees. Even with this additional support, these newly credentialed nurses faced a lot of adversity in the two years it took to meet their goal.

This class started the RN training program in August 2018, just months before the Camp Fire fundamentally changed the community and day-to-day life at Butte College. Classes were suspended for several weeks in November and December while Butte College re-grouped and adapted to the new reality. The Nursing Students, including those receiving assistance from AFWD, and some who lived in the fire affected area, felt the stress and trauma like the rest of Butte County. When classes resumed they buckled down and got back to work.

In March of 2020, as the students were in their last semester, the COVID-19 Pandemic once again shook their scholastic life, as it shook the world around them. In the final stretch of schooling, they were forced to adjust to the challenges of online learning and computer simulated patient care, as Butte College took measures to complete training, while complying with public health guidelines. With the goals of completing their training, receiving their RN PIN, and getting to take their NCLEX Exam to become employed as a Registered Nurse looming so close, they persevered and held on. Not a single one dropped out!

Due to social distancing requirements, graduation was not the traditional ceremony filled with family and comradery that students and faculty had planned for. However, the newly graduated Nurses did participate in a drive-by ceremony and received their PINS. We at AFWD are certain that with the determination, perseverance and resiliency these nurses have shown, they will do great things in the future. We are proud to have assisted some of them in completing their goals.

TAY Program Success

Tristian Geary came to AFWD through Butte County’s Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Program. TAY is a one-year diversion program that once completed, removes criminal charges from a participant’s record. AFWD collaborates with the Butte County Department of Probation in helping participants find sustainable employment. Participants receive pre-employment skills training, and assistance in gaining work experience. Tristian participated in weekly workshops with his Career Advisor and was always positive. Tristian expressed his desire to work on cars. AFWD was able to place Tristian in an On-The-Job-Training (OJT) at B&R Auto Wrecking. Tristian has applied the information he learned in the workshops and has become very successful. Tristian successfully completed his OJT at B&R Auto Wrecking and continues to work full-time. He is thankful for the opportunity that AFWD and B&R Auto Wrecking provided him. He particularly enjoyed all of the financial workshops and was able to put the knowledge to use when he bought all the parts to rebuild his first truck.
Understanding the COVID-19 Economy

In April and May Alliance for Workforce Development, in partnership with Chabin Concepts, hosted Robert Eyler, Ph.D. for a series of webinars to help businesses, local officials, and community members gain an understanding of the local and regional economy in light of the global pandemic.

Dr. Eyler is an Economist and Director of the Center for Regional Analysis at CSU, Sonoma and President of Economic Forensics & Analytics, Inc. in Petaluma, CA. Dr. Eyler previously assisted our region with economic analysis of the Camp Fire and Carr Fire, and as a featured speaker at the CSU Chico Center for Economic Development (CED) North State Economic Forecasts Conferences for the past several years.

While Dr. Eyler pointed to the social and financial policies developed by Federal, State, and Local governments as both timely and at least marginally effective, he also offered several warnings for the short-and-long term future:

- Municipal revenue losses from hotel occupancy and sales tax will likely have long term impacts on budgets for development projects and local services.
- Micro businesses, especially those that cannot pivot to an online platform will likely not be able to weather continued or renewed isolation orders.
- Inability to produce a vaccine, or unwillingness of the public to comply with measures to curb contagion, will lengthen the economic downturn or recession.

Dr. Eyler expressed three possible scenarios for economic recovery:

- A reduction in new cases by vaccine or social policy leads to a quick recovery, with signs of recovery visible as early as 2021.
- A “deeper dive” brought about by renewed rise in COVID-19 cases that slows any real recovery to 2022.
- A long-term recession caused by widespread business closure, unemployment, and spread of disease, that takes years to rebound from.

Dr. Eyler warns businesses and local governments to prepare for a lean few years and encouraged businesses to explore funding from the Small Business Administration to keep afloat until the pandemic subsides. “Please talk to your banker about a U.S. Small Business Administration loan. Some are forgivable, some not, but make sure they’re good plans for you. Know that the money is there.”

As North State communities, businesses, and local governments try to weather the next uncertain months and years, AFWD will continue to bring expertise like that of Dr. Eyler, to help us make informed decisions as a community. AFWD Business Service Representatives can be reached any time for assistance with HR consultation, financial incentives to hire local workers, and access to government resources, at www.afwd.org.
Friendly Smile

Cammeelyn “Catt” Ashby came to the Alliance for Workforce Development Youth program for assistance in obtaining her high school diploma. Catt, like many Youth Program participants, didn’t have much trust in people’s ability to follow through on their word, and she didn’t believe this program would be different.

There were some miscommunications and missed appointments which resulted in a meeting with program management to get things back on track. Catt’s Youth Career Center Advisor (CCA) didn’t let that deter her, and she followed through on every agreement with Catt, contacting her on a regular basis. Catt discussed her progress, and the Youth CCA offered assistance with any challenges she was experiencing. Over time Catt came to realize the AFWD Youth program was here to support her. Catt invested in herself, committed to the work, and in December of 2019 she obtained her high school diploma. In February of 2020 she completed the Youth Program’s On-the-Job-Training Boot Camp, and earned an incentive for completion.

Because of her hard work and achievements, Catt was recommended for an On-the-Job-Training (OJT) placement with the Torres Shelter in Chico. Catt was excited about the opportunity. She interviewed using the techniques she learned in Boot Camp, and was selected for the position. She started her OJT in March. She loves her job and it shows. With every work evaluation she’s earned a higher score. The Torres Shelter couldn’t be happier with Catt’s work and look forward to having her a part of their team after the OJT.

Catt is now focused on her next endeavor – saving money. She hopes to buy a new car. From what she’s accomplished in the short time she’s been involved in the AFWD Youth Program, we have no doubt that she will succeed.

Opportunities

Nick Kenkel was enrolled into the Megafire National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG). He was laid off from his previous job and had been unemployed for several months. Nick visited the Camp Fire Workforce Recovery Center and requested assistance to find full time employment.

Nick is a Butte County resident and wanted to help with the Camp Fire Recovery efforts but did not have experience in performing clean-up and repair work. Nick was selected to participate in a Temporary Job Creation (TJC) with the Town of Paradise working as a Crew Laborer.

This temporary position has allowed Nick to earn an income while increasing his experience and adding to his skillset for future employment opportunities. He is proud to be helping his community rebuild after the Camp Fire. Nick has received praise from co-workers and his supervisor for regularly demonstrating a strong work ethic, initiative and having a positive attitude. Nick is gaining the skills necessary to be successful in the future.
The Future Starts Here

Alliance for Workforce Development Inc. (AFWD) provides Job Readiness classes for individuals that are on probation and/or residing in Tri-Counties Treatment. AFWD works closely with Butte County Probation to assist in getting the participants necessary skills that they may need to obtain full time employment.

Many of the participants lack work experience or have large gaps in work history. Some do not have a high school diploma or GED. Having these barriers to employment can increase their risk of reoffending. With the help of the Job Readiness class, the participants learn many ways to work through their barriers and increase their hiring potential. Resiliency and adaptability skills are a large portion of the curriculum in the class. The goal is to help teach them strategies to continue to excel and not re-offend.

The Job Readiness class assists with focusing on realistic, achievable goals. Participants learn about “soft skills”—the social and communication traits needed to be successful members of the working community. They are given an opportunity to learn how to navigate the job market, and how they can increase their potential as workers.

Through the weeklong class, they complete a master application, resume, and cover letter. They also take career assessments and compile a list of future goals. They have an opportunity to dress for success and complete a mock interview. These opportunities help them come out of the class with tools they can utilize for a productive future.

Rebuilding

John was enrolled into the Mega-Fire National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG). He was laid off from his previous job and had been unemployed for many months. It was challenging to secure full time employment and he requested assistance.

John lives in Magalia and wanted to assist his community and surrounding areas affected by the disaster. He was chosen to participate in the Temporary Job Creation (TJC) program with the Town of Paradise working as a Crew Laborer performing work related to clean up and repair after the Camp Fire.

This temporary job has enabled John to earn an income while increasing his experience and adding to his skillset making him more marketable for future employment opportunities. John is grateful to be working in Paradise because he can help his community and give back to the people he considers part of his life.

Since the beginning of this TJC, John has been diligent in his efforts and has received outstanding evaluations from his supervisor.

Without a doubt, John is gaining the necessary skills to be successful.
Building a Better Future

Victor Thomas was born and raised in Butte County and wanted to help with rebuilding after the Camp Fire. Having been unemployed for three years, he was reviewing courses at Butte College to help him train for a new career. Staff at Butte College referred Victor to AFWD, to explore Work Based Learning programs that might benefit him.

Victor is certified in Fire Science, EMT and has experience as a Certified Paralegal. He had some experience working construction but needed further training and to work in the hazardous conditions of the burn scar.

AFWD assisted Victor with the coursework necessary to prepare for a role in rebuilding and clean up. He completed an Industrial Trades and Construction Course where he had the opportunity to participate in “Hands On” performance labs which qualify as part of the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) core curriculum. After the Construction Course Victor went on to complete the Hazwoper and OSHA-10 classes offered at The Butte College Training Place. Completion of the Hazwoper safety certifications meets the Federal OSHA Hazwoper training requirements for General Industry and Construction.

AFWD recommended Victor participate in a Temporary Job Creation placement with the Town of Paradise. He was selected as a Lead Crew Laborer, utilizing some of the skills he obtained through his construction and safety courses. At that job site he was able to make connections and learn about other opportunities available within Paradise. Victor applied for a Building Inspector position and after several interviews was offered the job. He will be working in the new Building Resiliency Center (BRC) in Paradise assisting home owners with the rebuilding process.

Humanitarian at Heart

Christopher Wilson came to the Camp Fire Workforce Recovery Center after he was laid from his previous employment after the Camp Fire. He had heard about the AFWD Temporary Job Creation Program and was interested in doing his part to help in the recovery efforts in his community.

Christopher was selected for a Humanitarian Aid position at Magalia Pines Baptist Church distributing water to survivors of the Camp Fire. As a Camp Fire survivor himself, helping others while earning an income has made a significant impact in his personal growth. He has gained skills operate and manage a disaster related water distribution facility. Christopher works hard and adapts to challenges. He has been recognized as a valuable team player and is dedicated to helping others while providing exceptional customer service.

AFWD has been providing Temporary Job Creation (TJC) through a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) to assist with clean up and repair as a result of the 2018 Campfire disaster. This grant also allows for Humanitarian Aid Relief within the burn scar. These positions provide individuals a work opportunity to learn new skills, close gaps in unemployment as well as earn a wage while helping their community. In some situations, certifications can be obtained to further their career.
A Camp Fire Success Story

Josiah first encountered Alliance for Workforce Development at the FEMA Disaster Relief Center (DRC) in Chico, immediately after the 2018 Camp Fire. He received assistance with the Unemployment Benefits Application from AFWD staff. Prior to the Camp Fire he had been working at Little Caesar’s in Paradise as a Manager. Due to the Camp Fire, the business closed with no reopen date set. He was also now homeless.

Josiah was referred to the AFWD Youth Program by staff at the DRC. When he first met his Youth Career Center Advisor (CCA) he was temporarily housed with friends in Corning, CA. His eligibility was completed and within a few weeks Josiah was able to secure temporary employment but needed assistance obtaining a lunch box, gloves and knee pads. A request was put forward and approved and his CCA purchased these items for him.

A couple of months later, Josiah and three of his friends found an apartment to rent in Chico. AFWD was able to assist Josiah with his portion of rent for a month since his temporary job had ended. Josiah also participated in the Youth Employment Boot Camp which covered labor market information, financial literacy, and budgeting. For completing the Boot Camp, Josiah earned a $100 cash incentive.

Josiah and his CCA teamed up with a Business Service Representative to assist in his job search. Josiah was referred to several employers for an interview: Fifth Sun, Norfield, and Recognition Products. He was also referred to the Chico Elks Lodge, where he had an interview and was hired as a server. Josiah’s CCA was able to help him purchase required clothing for this new position--black polo shirts, pants and slip safe shoes. After working as a server for several months, Josiah was promoted to Floor Manager. He is now responsible for supervising up to six people depending on the event. Shortly after his promotion, he was able to afford a nicer apartment. As he put it, he had moved “uptown to the avenues!”

In addition to finding employment, the CCA assisted Josiah with updating his FAFSA and returning to Butte College. Josiah is now attending college full-time where he is working on a degree in sound engineering and working part-time. When asked how the AFWD Youth program helped him, Josiah responded, “Well, you showed me how to manage money and be independent. You helped to find work for me that made me happy and that worked with my schedule. I was able to participate in career and financial seminars. This program was extremely valuable and rewarding, and I’m so glad I did it.”
Adapting During COVID-19

Chris Lightle is the owner of two popular restaurants in Oroville called Souper Subs and Dam Bowls. He shared his struggles as a business owner in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic with Alliance for Workforce Development Business Service Representative Wendy Sweeney. He shared with Wendy how Stay at Home Order has affected his business, why he rebranded one location, and how he established new protocols and procedures to remain open during the initial phase of the isolation order.

In the first few weeks of the pandemic, Chris was forced to make the tough decision to close the Souper Subs Café on Table Mountain Blvd. A large number of customers at this location were employees from the neighboring Butte County Department of Employment & Social Services (DESS) Office. Most DESS employees were working from home due to the stay at home order, and without that foot traffic there were not enough customers to remain open. He also shortened the hours of operation at his Oro Dam Blvd. location, closing earlier each day and eliminating Sunday hours.

Fortunately, the Oro Dam location has a drive thru window and curbside service, and Chris had already established a sophisticated online ordering system. These factors allowed him keep the Oro Dam location open albeit while running lean. When the café closed Chris found it necessary to lay off three staff members, and move the remaining staff over to the Oro Dam location. As business picked back up for drive through and pick-up, Chris was able to bring the laid off employees back, and even bring on two additional staff.

Souper Subs was fortunate to receive the PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loan which has helped to assure their continued operations. The added funds not only ensured staff wages, but allowed for the staff expansion. With the additional staff, Chris added a delivery option to the Souper Subs service structure. They plan to keep this delivery system in place even after the pandemic, because it has been so well received by their customer base.

As Butte County enters “Phase Two” reopening, some of changes necessitated by COVID-19 will remain in place for Chris and his team, with an impact to the bottom line. Plastic containers for all orders (Chris has decided to use disposable plates and table ware for added sanitation) means additional overhead costs, as do added cleaning & sanitation measures.

The Table Mountain location has reopened in “Phase Two”, but with decreased foot traffic, they have decided to reopen under a new business model. They have changed the menu to feature fast, healthy options including salads, wraps and smoothies. This model allows for decreased preparation costs, while attracting customers with unique options and quick service. To mark the change, Chris has given the location a new name, Dam Bowls. Customers can order online at www.toasttab.com/dambowls/v3 or by email at Menu@DamBowls.com.

Chris feels the pandemic made him take a hard look at how his business operates, and what he could do to adapt. Chris has been a long time partner with AFWD, hiring several of our subsidized candidates. He’s an Oroville business owner who knows that good business decisions, and being a good community member are one and the same.
Butte County

One-Stop Visitors:
19,464

Businesses Served:
1,189

Business Services:
17,606

AFWD

Clients Enrolled:
1,900

Unemployment Rate
(As of: May 2020)
13.5%

Chico Community Employment Center
500 Cohasset Rd., Ste. 30
Chico CA 95926
(530) 961-5125

Camp Fire Recovery Team
1600 Mangrove Ave., Ste. 115
Chico CA 95926
(530) 616-1053

Oroville Community Employment Center
78 Table Mountain Blvd
Oroville, CA 95965
(530) 538-7301