Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) and the Paradise Ridge Chamber of Commerce, two very valuable organizations, teamed up to reach out and contact local Paradise businesses affected by COVID-19 via a business outreach event. The chamber turned to AFWD for assistance in administering a survey with its members to learn more about their current needs and issues they are facing due to COVID-19. The Business Service Representative (BSR) team from the Recovery Office joined in to help out with outreach and survey gathering.

With the chamber’s vast directory of business in Paradise, each BSR was assigned a portion of the list to make contact with and conduct the survey. It was an impactful event for both the business owner and staff learning about current operations, learning about business needs, and barriers to operating their business during COVID-19 on top of recovering from the Camp Fire. Staff shared with the business owners’ resources that both AFWD the Paradise Ridge Chamber of Commences has to offer in supporting them and their business during this challenging time.

Information that was collected/learned from the survey will be compiled into a report that will be shared with chamber members. AFWD is very proud to offer its support to the Paradise Ridge Chamber of Commerce and local Paradise business in their efforts to support each other’s businesses during this challenging new environment of COVID-19, which impacts the road to recovery from the devastating Camp Fire.
In July, employment placements for the COVID-19 Additional Assistance Grant were still needed. Program staff reached out to the County of Butte to see if there was a need for temporary workers to assist with any added work duties in the wake of COVID.

Butte County responded that the COVID-19 Call Center had been flooded with call activity and additional staffing would be beneficial to the community. Two Skills Training Employment Program (STEP) clients were selected to staff the Butte County Public Health COVID-19 Call Center. The work they perform is primarily to answer the phones and to provide assistance to callers by connecting them with the information they seek. They write down the topic of conversation and keep track of the focus subject for daily STATS. Topics may include COVID-19 testing questions and where individuals can get tested in Butte County. They also field complaints about a business/restaurant not following the State of California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance, enforcement questions, and provide help locating guidance on the county Public Health website. Daily tallies are reported to an email group that includes the Director of Public Health for Butte County. The COVID-19 Call Center Clerk staff have an important role in assisting the citizens of Butte County to connect with valuable information about the COVID-19 virus.

Additionally, the Neal Road Landfill needed extra sorters due to a substantial increase in recyclable materials in the wake of a statewide shutdown of these centers. STEP client Laroy McSpadden was chosen to staff the Landfill. Due to COVID-19, the recycling markets have been impacted by export and transportation restrictions, requiring the need for additional workers in all aspects of the landfill operations, such as assisting with loading/unloading vehicles, cleaning/sanitizing equipment, and facilities, directing and assisting customers at the facility or through the office operations.

These temporary positions will allow the clients to earn income while building up their work history and skill sets as they continue their job search and we continue to job develop on their behalf to secure full-time permanent work.

All three of the STEP clients have been successfully performing their new duties and are scheduled to have their temporary contracts extended through the end of the year.
Resiliency in Action

Nicole Ritchie came to us in March of 2020 in need of assistance returning to the workforce, with interviewing practice and with guidance with adapting to the 21st century human economy. Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) had the opportunity to work with Nicole and help her reach her professional goals. She came with impressive skills and work history and with an eager longing to secure a position that helps people. Unfortunately, she was about to find herself facing an unprecedented set of obstacles: the COVID-19 global pandemic, massive civil unrest, a devastated economy and an immense unemployment crisis. To make the best of a terrible situation, Nicole found herself with ample time to perfect her professional communication skills and prepare herself for not just a job search, but the pursuit of a career. After several weeks of workshops, resume and cover letter tailoring practice, interview practice and the preparation of countless application packets, she landed an insanely great career with 3Core.

3Core is a local non-profit organization that serves Butte, Glenn and Tehama Counties and surrounding communities with vital business services. Nicole’s transferrable skills were perfect for the Lending Relationship Manager position, but the vast difference in industry from banking to social service left her with qualifications deficiencies and a need for extensive training. 3Core gave Nicole a fantastic opportunity for an On-the-Job Training, took her under their wing and she quickly became a raving success.

Nicole has finished her OJT with a stellar final review, is excelling at her job and loves coming to work every morning. We are honored to have worked with Nicole and so very proud of her hard work and dedication. She is the image of resiliency in action!

Play Ball

The Camp Fire devastated the town of Paradise and damaged the Paradise Recreation and Park District (PRPD) land. This included; parks, trails, and the baseball fields. Providing recreation spots to a town that has gone through a natural disaster has become more of a priority. This community desperately needed something “normal” and playing baseball is one way to unite the community. PRPD has been working to recover the damage done to the baseball fields by repairing the backboards, fencing, and lighting. Paradise Park and Recreation knew they would need additional help with this venture, and Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) has worked closely with them to provide additional laborers to aid in the efforts.

Due to the Federal Emergency Disaster Declaration issued for the Camp Fire in Butte County, funding was made available to assist with clean-up and repair efforts in areas affected by these incidents called Temporary Job Creations (TJC). TJC’s are funded by a federal grant that subsidizes wages and associated costs to assist in the restoration and repair of damages done by the devastating wildfire. Paradise Park and Recreation have hired two of the TJC site workers they have had through the AFWD TJC program. It’s a win-win for both parties involved. PRPD gets great employees with the employees being able to have long term self-sustaining employment.
Social Media Strategies During Economic Shutdown

With the increased needs of our business clients due to economic shutdown, Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC), staff and Service Provider Directors implemented an action plan to enhance and support our businesses throughout the NoRTEC region. Recent surveys indicated that an area that needed more light shed on it was adapting business models and practices to new business realities. A relationship was established with a north state firm; Kate & Company Marketing + Collaboration. Because NoRTEC listened to the business’s needs and in their continuing efforts to promote economic stability; small business owners in the north state region were invited to a series of no-cost Social Media Strategies presented by Kate & Co.

Social Media Marketing does turn sales. Facebook is the biggest of all the social networks, Instagram is second. 87.1% of U.S. marketers will use Facebook in 2020, and 75.3% will use Instagram. It’s a constantly evolving platform based on algorithm changes, new tools, and shifting demographics. Effective Facebook marketing requires an understanding of the latest Facebook statistics and how they apply to social marketing strategy. In three video sessions, Kate and her crew took attendees on an in-depth virtual look at social media marketing focused on how small businesses can break through the social media “noise” to create a strong and successful online game.

Video One: Social Media Planning – Three essential themes were addressed that dismantle personal challenges and support the creation of a solid social media action plan. Advice to construct a "business story," (aka brand), then they shared systems for a manageable posting plan, outlined effective evaluation techniques, and more.

Video Two: Social Media Content - Explored the social media content areas that provide small businesses with the best value and walked through proven practices that not only motivate and engage customers but also grow a digital presence.

Video Three: Social Media Hacks – Kate & Co pulled out all the stops in the final video, sharing countless game-changing hacks. They shared how to engage influencers and specific posting guidelines, using cross-promotion and helpful apps, and showcased all sorts of juicy insider tips. Then they proved its effectiveness by taking viewers on a virtual tour of six Northern California businesses to pull back the curtain on a unique collection of best practices and social media “wins.”

Thank you to NoRTEC and Kate & Co. it was a win for everyone that attended.
Accounting at its Finest

Delinda Fisk came to Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) in July of 2018, she was starting school but wasn’t quite sure how she was going to be successful with little help and many barriers in her way. When she was enrolled with AFWD she stated that she has always wanted to become an Accountant because she was great with numbers. She completed an O*NET Interest Profiler Assessment and it showed that being an Accountant was the best fit for her, and the projected employment trends had a bright outlook.

Delinda started her Associate’s Degree in Accounting at Butte Community College in August of 2018, with assistance from AFWD providing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services. She faced many obstacles as a single mother in school full time. Having to juggle a part-time job, full-time school, and home life is very difficult. She managed to make the Dean’s list every semester with straight A’s and graduated with Honors in May of 2020.

When she first graduated it was difficult for her to find a position due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. There were hardly any businesses open, let alone hiring new staff. With Job Search assistance provided by AFWD staff, she accepted a position working as front and back office as a receptionist at an elder care facility. Though this was not an accounting position, she was glad to be working to provide for her family during these difficult times. However, Delinda was determined to find the perfect position as an accountant somewhere in the Chico metropolitan area. She didn’t give up and continued to look for work that would best suit her interests and needs. Her determination landed her a position at Jeffery G Vesely CPA. She is currently working as a Staff Accountant and is doing her dream job. This is a position and a company that will provide Delinda a long-term career and she knows that she will be happy there.
Perseverance

Sarah Machado came to our program asking for assistance with her Medical Assistance Program through Butte County Career Technical Education. Sarah was a Camp Fire victim who wanted to continue with her education and complete her goals. She knew it was going to be difficult but she knew she needed to get it done. Through Sarah’s training she manages to maintain her grade level at A+. Sarah completed her training and got her certification. She is now waiting for her State Board Exam and in the process of looking for full-time employment.

Sarah is a perfect example of everything possible with the right people on your side. She eventually wants to continue with her career in the medical field and look into the RN program. Nothing will stop this young lady from reaching her goals.

She is determined!

Making Changes

Araceli was referred to Alliance for Workforce Development Inc. (AFWD) in February of 2019. When Araceli came to AFWD she was struggling with homelessness and needed help finding employment so she could better support herself. She had minimal work experience at the time. When she met with her Career Center Advisor, she received assistance with her resume along with interview clothing and job search assistance. Araceli participated in AFWD’s job readiness training. She then received an internship with Super Subs that she successfully completed. She found out through multiple career assessment that she enjoys helping and working with people. When a position opened at the Torres Shelter, she received help to apply. She was offered an On-the-Job training (OJT) opportunity.

Araceli received work clothing and tools to better assist with her new OJT. Araceli then faced a new set of challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic swept the nation. She was determined to help and protect the vulnerable population she once was a part of. She assisted by keeping residents socially distanced and aware of the new sanitation practices. Araceli completed her OJT in June and continues to help and thrive in a community that she loves.
Personal Protection Equipment for Butte County Businesses

With supplies made available through California’s Governor’s Office of Emergency Services in a collaboration with the Office of the Small Business Advocate, 3Core organized the distribution of surgical masks and hand sanitizer to Butte County businesses. The distribution took place on July 24th in several Butte County locations simultaneously.

Alliance for Workforce Development (AFWD) volunteers participated in this generous no-cost allocation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to our local businesses in both Chico and Oroville.

The distribution in Chico took place at the Chico Municipal Airport in the form of a drive-thru, allowing participants to remain safely in their vehicles. All volunteers wore masks, practiced social distancing, and used hand sanitizer frequently.

Signs directed cars as they entered the airport into two lanes. Each lane had several volunteers taking down the business name and number of employees, gather the needed supplies, and load them into each vehicle. The setup allowed the volunteers to serve four cars at a time, keeping the lines moving at a relatively fast pace.

Each business was allocated one box containing 50 masks per employee and one 16oz bottle of hand sanitizer per employee, a 30+ day supply. Posters displaying the proper use of masks and hand sanitizer were also distributed in both English and Spanish.

Chelsea Irvin from 3Core did an amazing job organizing this event. While being interviewed by the local news station she said "It’s been an incredible struggle these last few months for businesses to figure out which way forward, how to keep their employees safe, how to keep their customers safe. "We think being able to provide these supplies will enable them to get back to work but get back to work safely."

The Oroville Chamber of Commerce, with assistance from AFWD staff, distributed PPE to another 46 local businesses. This distribution included 500 bottles of hand sanitizer and over 57,000 masks.

During the 3-hour event, supplies were distributed to hundreds of Butte County businesses, all very grateful for the assistance.
Helping Hands

In the middle of a pandemic, non-profit’s services are even more in need. Peoples needs for assistance during a pandemic substantially increases. The mission of the Chico Housing Action Team (CHAT) is “to ensure that every person in our community has access to affordable housing.” They want to utilize every penny and or donation received to help those in need. Community partners play a large role in providing opportunities for CHAT clients. One of the community partners CHAT leans on is Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD).

They reached out to AFWD to see what kind of services they could provide. The services that fit their needs were On the Job Training (OJT) and resources for setting up policies and procedures at their new office location. In addition, the wage reimbursement program helps offset the cost of training new hires and benefits local businesses, the community, and local non-profits.

AFWD was also, able to provide prescreening for potential candidates for positions that were available. This relationship with AFWD makes it possible for this small non-profit to use the resources available the best possible way.

Training Success

Kendra lost her employment after the 2018 Camp Fire destroyed the youth residential development property where she worked as a supervisor. She reached out to Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. for assistance in finding a new job. During her assessment it was determined that she had transferable skills in the area of social services and would be a good candidate for an On-the-Job Training position with the Community Housing Action Team (CHAT).

Kendra is currently participating in an OJT as a Case Manager for CHAT and learning how to assist developmentally disabled adults with securing housing, managing their daily activities, and coordinating service efforts with partner agencies. Upon completion of her OJT, Kendra will be gainfully employed as a full time Case Manager.
Asking for a Helping Hand

Brock started the Fire Academy at Butte College right out of high school. He had no prior training or experience. A few weeks into the program he failed an exam and was dropped from the Fire Academy. He was then told that he would need to pay the tuition and costs to re-enter the program and was referred to Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) for assistance.

After completing his eligibility, Brock expressed a desire to attend medical courses to be better prepared for the Fire Academy when he returned the next semester. AFWD assisted Brock with paying fees for books and supplies and he completed the Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) training successfully. Brock then reapplied to and was accepted into the Fire Academy a second time.

After his first week he contacted his Career Center Advisor and said “What a difference. This time I am prepared. They should have everyone take the EMR courses first.” Some of the trainings required to complete the EMR course include Vehicle Extraction, Cal Fire Basic Firefighter, Wildland Firefighter Safety and Survival, Emergency Response to Terrorism, and Swift Water Rescue Awareness. His training was interrupted due to COVID-19 but he did not let that keep him from finishing. As soon as his instructors contacted him that training would resume, he returned and completed his training. Brock’s current plan is to work as a Teacher Aid at the Fire Academy while he completes the Paramedic program at Butte College. After completing the Paramedic program, he will seek employment as a Fire Fighter.

(Brock with Coordinator Sanfilippo)
MAKING CONNECTIONS THAT LAST

Valerie came to Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) after she was laid off from her Tech Support position with AT&T where she had worked for 29 years. Before her Tech Support position, she was a Human Resource Manager with AT&T. She had been searching for employment in Butte County and was close to exhausting her unemployment benefits. Valerie has great clerical transferrable skills and after assessments were made it was determined she would be a great fit for the Butte County ROE Processing Clerk Work Experience (WEX) position. She loved working with Butte County but needed a more permanent stable job.

Valerie networked within Butte County and found Butte County was looking for a Child Support Specialist position. She had interviewed and was offered the position. She now has unsubsidized permanent employment with Butte County Child Support and is thankful for the support she received in helping to bridge the gap in her employment and make connections to her forever job.
On July 30, 2020, Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc., had the opportunity to take part in The Power of Three Webinar focusing on how we, as workforce development professionals, can maximize business engagement to support the re-employment efforts post COVID-19.

The webinar was hosted by Bob Lanter, the current Executive Director of the California Workforce Association, Melinda Mack, the Executive Director of the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals, and Luann Dunsford, the CEO of Michigan Works! Association. Each of the three presenters are experts in the field of workforce development and believe that cross-state sharing will enable local workforce boards and providers to learn from each other.

The information presented in the webinar included: Using labor market data and workforce intelligence to understand the impact of COVID-19 on hiring and employment. Supporting employers to adapt and respond to COVID-19 and ideas on how to develop new relationships to expand business supports. Making services easy to access for employers and the business community including how local workforce boards need to adapt local policies. After each of these sections were presented, we broke off into smaller groups for peer-to-peer sharing and discussion.

In the Labor Market Data section, we learned how workforce boards use information and how we can use this information to shape our services. Melinda Mack directed us to a few of her favorite resources such as the US Census Bureau for things like job to job flow information and the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program for poverty map information highlighting areas with the greatest workforce needs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics is a great resource for information like pay and benefits, job openings, and turnover.

Some of the other information covered in the webinar included current strategies and tools the workforce system uses to support employers adapting to COVID-19 like On-the-Job Training, Customized Training, Rapid Response, Apprenticeships, and Job Fairs. Although these are not new to the workforce development industry, how we approach them is a whole new process. One of the more informative discussions surrounded the move from traditional job fairs to virtual job fairs. These virtual job fairs are online events that allow for social distancing by offering candidates the chance to quickly and conveniently connect with employers from home.

Another important section of the webinar focused on developing new relationships to expand business support including Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and Entrepreneurships. How can we assist businesses in meeting the local requirements for continuing to do business safely and supporting new businesses arising from the new business environment.

The Power of Three was a very informative, interactive presentation offering useful resources and creative solutions for workforce professionals to maximize business engagement. The webinar platform provided for cross-state sharing between workforce professional giving us the chance to discuss best practices and learn from each other.
Recovering with New Skills

Theresa Boyer was referred to Alliance for Workforce Development (AFWD) by a friend for employment assistance after being long-term unemployed. She was interested in developing new skills as a Construction Laborer. Having been affected by the Camp Fire, Theresa was interested in assisting with the clean-up and repair efforts on the Ridge. She wanted to help bring her community back to life!

Theresa did not have the necessary skills, certifications, or training to obtain employment as a Construction Laborer. She was enrolled into the MegaFire National Dislocated Worker Grant and successfully completed HAZWOPER 40 through Butte College Training Place. Hazwoper 40 is a 40-hour OSHA approved training designed to prepare cleanup workers to operate safely in hazardous areas; the training covers policies, practices and procedures that reduce the risk of injury and illness related to harmful exposures. Theresa also completed a certificated chainsaw, chipper, and grounds operations training through Butte College Training Place. This training provided her with the necessary skills to be able to assist in the clean-up and repair of fire affected areas.

In order to gain hands-on experience, earn an income, and close the gap in her work history, she participated in the Temporary Job Creation (TJC) program and was placed at the Town of Paradise. While on the job, she has developed new leadership skills while working on the crew. She is often praised by her supervisor for being a positive influence to others by demonstrating safe work practices, proper use of tools, and safe use of the chainsaw while clearing damaged vegetation.

Theresa is grateful for the opportunity to be involved with the Town of Paradise recovery process. When asked what was her favorite part of the job, she replied, “I love running the chainsaw.”
The Light in the Darkness

Suzanne attended a Rapid Response event provided by Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) and partnering agencies when her business was preparing to close at the beginning of this year. This was the first time she learned of the special services provided to individuals affected by business closures. She had been employed at Kmart approximately 11 years working in various positions and uncertain what steps to take to obtain her unemployment benefits as well as job search. Suzanne was also directly affected by the Camp Fire disaster, losing her home and transferring from the Paradise Kmart to the Chico store. Due to lack of local housing, she and her family relocated to Corning, CA, and have been living there since that time. Her income supports her family and when COVID19 started it was very disruptive.

Due to the current situation Suzanne has not been able to secure full-time employment and asked for assistance to AFWD who helped her through the new COVID19 Impact Supportive Service Grant with rental assistance. Suzanne met all the eligibility requirements for this grant. This opportunity has enabled her to secure housing while she is able to obtain full-time employment.

Suzanne appreciates the help that she has received from the AFWD team and encourages more people to be aware of the services and opportunities that are for the community. AFWD continues to provide the light in the darkness for the community of Butte County.

Suzanne Hilliard, Dislocated Worker Program 2020. Receiving her check.

Healing by Helping Others

Karen requested assistance in obtaining full-time employment from the Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) Recovery Office. She had exhausted her unemployment benefits and was struggling to find work. She was laid off from California Vocations where she worked for more than 15 years performing duties as a Human Resources Manager. She and her family also lost their home as a result of the Camp Fire and it has been really difficult for her to recover from this loss. Once she found stable housing in Magalia and somewhat settled, she felt ready to get back to work.

Karen wanted to assist the community affected by the Campfire like she had been and was selected to participate in a Temporary Work Experience with Butte County in the Right of Entry call center program. She wanted to continue her career pathway in the Administrative and Office support sector. She was hired as a Processing Clerk, managing the requests for hazard tree removal in the areas affected by the Campfire.

Karen appreciates the help that she has received from the AFWD team and encourages more people to be aware of the services and opportunities that are available for the community. Since the beginning of this work experience, she has been a good worker and team player and has receive outstanding evaluations from her supervisors.
Combating the COVID-19 Pandemic

In May 2020, Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) received a COVID-19 Additional Assistant grant to employ, in a temporary capacity, workers who were directly affected by COVID-19. To qualify, participants had to have lost their employment or had their hours reduced as a direct result of COVID-19. One of the worksites AFWD was able to utilize was their long-standing partner, the City of Chico. Previously, the City of Chico and AFWD have worked together on Drought, Storm, and Wildfire grants to put individuals to work on temporarily cleaning and repairing City-owned areas that were damaged by natural disasters.

For the COVID-AA grant, three individuals were employed for two to three months performing supplemental sanitation of park benches, picnic tables, playground equipment, and restrooms in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were trained by the City of Chico, Park Facilities Manager on maintaining safe practices while performing their duties. The City was excited for the extra help keeping their parks sanitized so visitors could feel safe utilizing their facilities. AFWD looks forward to continuing our mutually beneficial partnership on future endeavors with the City of Chico.

COVID-19 Additional Assistance Participants, Darrisha Daniel and Brian Bordelon at work sanitizing surfaces in the City of Chico owned Bidwell Park, 5-mile Recreation Area.
Making a Valiant Comeback

Karen Baldivid came to us in mid-2020 as a retired individual, seeking to return to work for financial reason and eager to secure a position which helps people. She had retired from Butte County and learned about Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) during the COVID-19 pandemic at a virtual workshop. She was having trouble finding work in her field due to the pandemic and was seeking assistance. AFWD had the opportunity to work with her and help her reach her professional goals. AFWD was able to place her in a Work Experience temporary job to stop her gap in employment and gain networking access to the county once again. After several weeks working as a Safety Monitor for Butte County Public Health, she landed a great job with AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is an organization that serves Oroville and surrounding communities, even nationally. Karen’s transferrable skills were perfect for the Case Manager position, but the large retirement gap in her employment history made job searching difficult. AmeriCorps gave Karen an opportunity, took her under their wing and she has quickly become a success.

Now, she has come back with vigor, is excelling at her job, and loves coming to work every morning. We are honored to have worked with Karen and so very proud of her hard work and dedication. She has truly made a valiant comeback!

Moving Forward with Tree Removal

After the Camp Fire, the devastation left numerous hazardous trees on private property. The trees have fire damage and pose a risk of falling blocking eligible private roads traveled by the public.

Now the trees will be inspected and the damaged ones that are posing a hazard to the public will be removed. The tree removal operation is the next important step in continuing to rebuild the Camp Fire burn area. California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) is working with Cal OES and the Butte County Right of Entry (ROE) with the process to remove the trees that are hazardous to the people of Butte County, the workers, and the environment. The ROE is managing the safe removal of fire-damaged trees in danger of falling on public rights of way, public facilities, or private roads that serve as critical access for services to residents.

Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) has partnered with ROE by placing participants in the ROE processing call center. Through the Work Experience (WEX) program this program is 100% subsidized funding of the wages for the participants. The participants receive training and skills to use moving forward in their employment search while earning a paycheck, with the added benefit of helping their communities.
Butte County

One-Stop Visitors:
2,224

Businesses Served:
538

Business Services:
6,625

AFWD

Clients Enrolled:
130

Unemployment Rate
(As of: August 2020)
9.0%