Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. along with manufacturers from Northern California showcased their technology, products, and services at California State University, Chico at the second annual North State Manufacturing Expo. The expo focused on education and career opportunities for students and job seekers in the manufacturing industry.

In addition to the Expo, several exhibitors provided breakout sessions where they demonstrated specific tools and software utilized in different industries within the manufacturing field. Sessions included CAD w/ Solidworks for Machinery, Robotics, Ladder Logic, Welding, Mechanical Engineering, and Agriculture/Food Processing.

Over 1,200 people including many students from sixth grade through college attended the expo to learn more about manufacturing and the products being made here in the North State. Exhibitors included Idea Fab Labs, RCBS, Roplast, Metal Works, C-Sys Labs, Joy Signal Technologies, Weiss McNair, Transfer Flow, PG&E, and many others.

Assemblyman James Gallagher also attended the event and presented each exhibitor with a Certificate of Recognition for promoting educational growth and career opportunities for students and job seekers.
As necessity is to invention, scarcity is to creativity. In rural counties throughout Northern California, the need for financial resources and innovative ideas is even more critical following the convergence of events that have eliminated many of the familiar tools and partners. The loss of Redevelopment, continued banking consolidation, population decline and residual fallout from the economic downturn have had serious consequences on the economic health of rural communities. Local organizations with a common interest in creative capital hosted a workshop to excite other communities to become innovative in the ways of rural economic development. The event was held September 15, 2015 at the Chico Masonic Lodge and drew in professionals from as far away as Oakland. The real need for economic growth was the premise of conversations across the tables as networking convened prior to the guest speakers including Lena Robinshon, Regional Manager for the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco as well as our local Alexa Benson-Valavanis, CEO of the North Valley Community Foundation among others.

A full day of dynamic speakers included topics on: The Catalyst Fund, a Participation loan with local lenders which provides small grants with affordable working capital to nonprofits in the early stages of real estate projects. The second topic was New Markets and Historic Preservation Tax Credits, which brought to life inspiring high impact local projects as well as an update of the bill created to bring New Markets and Historic Preservation Tax Credits. Next came our local partner 3CORE, who presented on Collaboration, investing in ourselves through empowering communities to invest in essential place-based priorities. Lastly, was Asset-Based Community Development, which helps identify and connect local assets to build social capital of a community. Stories from rural communities were set as examples and showcased how local lenders are making a difference in their own small towns.

Questions concerning specific approaches topped the day off as the closing remarks encouraged all to promote next steps with partnerships moving from ideas to activation to results!
Continued Drought Related Projects through the Temporary Job Creation (TJC) Program

Efforts continue to proceed in an attempt to help provide public and non-profit entities temporary workers for drought related projects. AFWD continues to recruit workers to assist these entities with drought related projects. Eligibility requirements include layoffs, hours reduced due to drought conditions or having been unemployed 15 out of the last 26 weeks and living in a drought affected area.

The City of Chico contracted with AFWD to have a work crew in Bidwell Park help with the removal of brush and dead vegetation. The park is 3,670 acres and nearly eleven miles in length, making it the third largest municipal park in California. One Mile Recreation Area located in Lower Bidwell Park is a popular meeting spot for swimming, runners and outdoor recreationalist. The entrance and parking area was overgrown with surface and ladder fuels. When fuels accumulate, they allow fires to burn hotter, faster and with higher flame lengths. When fire encounters areas of continuous brush or small trees it can burn these ladder fuels and may quickly move from a ground fire into a crown fire.

The drought project crew was able to remove both surface and ladder fuels from the entrance, parking area and restroom hut. Due to the drastic changes and impact the crew made, they were recognized in a newspaper article in the Chico Enterprise Record for the great work they were completing. Due to the size of Bidwell Park, the crew has been able to impact some of the heaviest and most dense areas of the park including, Caper Acres, Annie’s Glenn, the Deer Pens and alongside Big Chico Creek removing invasive plants and ladder fuels.
Chico Area Recreation and Park District (CARD) was one of six worksites that Alliance for Workforce Development (AFWD), Inc. was able to assist through the National Emergency Grant (NEG) funds to provide public and non-profit entities with assistance for temporary help to work on drought related projects.

Christopher Sims had been unemployed since April 2014 where he last worked as a Head Lifeguard for Columbia Association. He met with AFWD staff on July 24, 2015 to seek assistance with finding employment. Due to his previous experience in landscaping and outdoor work made him a good candidate for the Park Laborer position with CARD for the drought program.

On August 31, 2015, Christopher began working in Degarmo Park in Chico, CA removing sod and replacing it with drought resistant plants and bark. Christopher caught on quick and soon began working with several different crews for CARD in parks throughout Chico. He was able to use his transferrable skills such as irrigation repair and weed eating to show his worksite supervisors how flexible he was and his eagerness to work.

After working at CARD for only a month, the Director asked Christopher to apply for a permanent position. Christopher applied for the position of Park Laborer III and continued to train and work with CARD throughout the interview process. This gave Christopher the opportunity to take some of the work experience he was gaining to pass the interviews and accept the permanent position with CARD.

Congratulations Christopher!
It has been almost three years since AFWD partnered with the Butte County Sheriff’s Office to provide a three-part workshop called “Job Readiness”. These workshops are held for three consecutive weeks, at two hours per workshop, at the Daily Reporting Center (DRC). The clients attending are part of the Sheriff’s Work Alternative Program (SWAP) and are on formal probation.

For most of the client’s attending, re-entering the workforce can be intimidating and challenging, not only socially, but because of their criminal background. At the DRC clients feel safe to talk about their circumstances. The Career Center Advisors (CCA) provide classroom assistance, written instruction and “hands on” help. The workshops are specifically designed and created to meet the unique and specific challenges of job searching with a criminal background. They are given detailed information on how to complete a Standard Application, most specifically how to answer “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?”. Resumes are discussed in great detail and each client receives help on how to determine their own soft/hard transferable skills and what type of resume to use. Job Searching and how to approach employers is another set of skills provided. Clients are shown how to use online Career Assessment and Interest Profilers, to assist them on types of jobs or careers to look for or pursue. Lastly, clients have the opportunity to participate in a Mock Interview. While this is sometimes a fun and/or funny workshop, generally the clients will walk away with valuable information on how to conduct themselves in public with an interviewer. Usually one of the CCAs will volunteer to be interviewed, which adds some seriousness to the situation, while providing role model material.

The clients are given the opportunity to complete a survey at the end of the last workshop. Listed below are some of the things participants have been able to take away from this workshop:

**Which Phase did you like best?**
“All 3 helped me immensely. The last one (interview) stood out for me because I have an interview soon, and now feel confident.”

**What specifically did you like about this workshop?**
“How it boosted my confidence. My resume is finally completed and I am already in the job search field.”

**Additional comments?**
“The Career Center Advisors were an inspiration! They have went beyond their call of duty to help me get hired and it’s a life change I was seeking and hoping to achieve.” AFWD is able to change lives and promote individual and community change for the good!
AFWD received a call from Fran Anderson, Coordinator – Youth Employment & Volunteer Program at Fairview High School to assist with mock interviews for some of their graduating senior students. Four Business Service Representatives (BSR) Nicole Clift, Catherine Madsack, Esteban Tadeo and Petra Quiroz were able to attend. Each BSR was assigned two students to interview. To make the process more realistic the BSR’s designed questions that focused on the occupation the students were interested in learning more about. Understandably, many of the students started the interview very nervous and unsure of themselves, however they were much more confident as the process went on due to helpful advice and feedback from the BSR’s.

One student was noticeably nervous and when asked what type of job she was applying to, she did not know what to say. The BSR paused the interview to talk to the students about her classes and interest. During the conversation it was apparent that the student was very good at Graphic Design and had done a lot of volunteer work. The BSR explained that she should interview for a Graphic Design position and make sure to mention the volunteer work she has done. Once the interview resumed the student was much more confident and did a great job.

This experience was a great way for the BSR team to be mentors to youth in the community and assist with getting them ready for the workforce. It was an all-around great experience for everyone who participated.
On September 22, 2015 The Butte County Career Center Advisors (CCA) attended the Understanding Strengths: Path to Success course. The insightful course was sponsored by AFWD, Inc. partner, Butte College The Training Place in Chico. This course was designed to identify one’s temperament, workstyle improve communication with co-workers, strengthen relationships and improve team success.

The CCA’s completed a self-assessment to determine their Communication style, Motivation style and Recognition style. The majority of the staff have been co-workers since 2011, yet never recognized their communication styles to better serve customers and improve their communication as colleagues. After reviewing their scores from the self-assessment, AFWD Butte County Career Center Advisors were placed in four groups: Adventure, Curiosity, Harmony, and Responsibility. Each group had diverse communication, motivation and recognition characteristics and traits. The participants were able to discuss their differences and similarities to improve their case management team. They were given 30 days to recognize their traits and apply their strengths. During the 30 days staff had to reach out to their co-workers and practice applying their strengths together.

The CCA’s implemented their 30 day plan and were able to recognize the strengths of their co-workers and themselves. Each CCA received a set of cards describing their group (Adventure, Curiosity, Harmony, and Responsibility) and the groups of their co-workers, which describe their communication, motivation and recognition characteristics and traits. The team has developed improved strategies in communicating with one another and with customers. The Career Center Advisors have also created additional strategies to recognize their strengths to improve the service delivery of WIOA services.
A Valuable Resource

As part of an ongoing partnership between Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. and Butte Community College the AFWD Career Center Advisors routinely connect with students providing services. These services assist the students towards successful completion of occupational programs, which lead to employment opportunities.

AFWD staff were recently invited to speak to Butte College CSL20 College and Life Success class at the Chico Center about how to prepare for the job market. AFWD provided the class of 30 students a two hour presentation on topics such as completing employment applications, resume development, writing cover letters, job search methods and networking for employment. Interviewing techniques, dressing for success, following up and writing thank you notes.

Prior to the class presentation, students completed career assessments as part of their curriculum and had a good understanding of their individual strengths, interests, and career choices. Instructor, Adelle DeMasi noted that the last class lecture was on personal values and appreciated having this reinforced during the presentation. “You talked about how personal values contribute to the preparation and performance. It was so fitting and perfect a coincidence.” – stated Demasi

The students attending contributed greatly to the success of the evening, asking intelligent questions and offering thoughtful feedback during discussions. The conversation was lively and at times humorous. They were excited to learn how to best represent their skills to potential employers.

Adelle DeMasi is an advisor for the Chico Student Success Center at CSU, Chico, as well as an instructor in the First Year Experience program at Butte College. “Folks need to know their resources! The students had really good questions prompted by your discussion, you gave them so much food for thought. Honestly, that was one of the best presentations I have seen on preparing for the job market.” Ms. DeMasi went on to say, “Your agency provides such a valuable resource, it is so needed. Thank you again for doing such an outstanding job!”

Students were invited to visit the Butte County Americas Job Center of California for information on free workshops, job search assistance and computer access. We look forward to working with the students and instructors of the First Year Experience program at Butte College in the future.
The Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. with the Butte County Department of Employment and Social Services (DESS) has funding available to assist with the costs associated with hiring and training employees. The goal of the Skills Training Employment Program (STEP) is to place DESS job seekers in employment with local businesses for the purpose of gaining work experience.

Dianne Abundis applied for the Skills Training Employment Program (STEP) in July 2014. Dianne had plenty of work experience but was having difficulty connecting with employers and getting interviews.

In September 2014 Oroville employer, Souper Subs, who has had experience with the STEP Program, interviewed and hired Dianne as a sandwich artist and counter server. She has successfully been employed since her work experience ended.

Dianne reports that the biggest adjustment for her with this position was adapting to the ‘back of the house.’ Having been a server for several years she had plenty of experience with customers but very little experience with prepping or cooking the food. She has learned the importance of prepping the food, sanitation/cleanliness and how to keep items organized and rotated.

In November 2015, Dianne was asked to be the Assistant Manager of Souper Subs. “Nana” who is co-owner of Souper Subs reports that “Dianne is a take charge person; she sees what needs to be done and gets it done.” Dianne also does some of the ordering now and is an asset to the business.

“I feel at home here now,” states Dianne, “I have a lot more confidence.” Next on her list of ‘things to accomplish’ is to learn to bake and to cook the restaurants very popular soups, breads and other daily specials.
Dream Job: To Become a Firefighter

Chad Davis enrolled in the AFWD, Inc. youth program during July of 2014. He had recently moved here from the small southern California border town of Calipatria. Chad was a new graduate from high school who was struggling to find work in Oroville. While attending the Youth Workshops, which he completed in the first month of his enrollment, staff assisted Chad with creating a resume and supplying him with job leads. Chad had a lot of previous unpaid experience from high school, having been very involved with his local 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) back home, but connecting with a good job here can be tough.

By November 2014, Chad found work as a mason working for C Reynolds for Masonry in Oroville, CA. AFWD staff assisted him with work clothing for his new job. This job was an essential piece of the puzzle that would lead to Chad’s eventual success, a job was not his end game. AFWD staff helped Chad enroll in Butte College in order to help him work towards his dream job of being a fireman. His Youth CCA assisted him with not only enrollment, but also his FAFSA, which can be very confusing for a new student. By September of the following year, Chad became the first person in his family to attend College.

Chad took a full load of classes his first semester. He was assisted by AFWD staff in constructing a schedule that would still enable him to work part time while attending school. Chad started off taking the necessary classes to attain a pair of certificates in Fire Technology, working towards the eventual goal of an Associate’s Degree in Fire Technology, with a possible EMT certification. This month Chad graduated with the first of these certificates, a certificate in Basic 32. With this essential piece of his education in hand he is now applying to Federal Jobs using USAjobs, and moving towards the start of his new career.
Kristen Hackney is making great strides in the AFWD youth program. Since October of 2014, when she requested our assistance with obtaining her GED and finding a path to stable employment. Kristen had lived in dozens of locations and had never had the time or stability required to complete her education or focus on long term employment. After working for one season at the Cannery in Oroville, she was ready to move forward with finding a job and starting a career. Over the next two months Kristen completed all six of the workshops offered by AFWD to enhance work related and life skills, and she also successfully completed the additional customer service training. Kristen was willing to take part in many activities that would help her decide which industry she would like to work in.

In order to enhance her chances of finding work, and increase the base wage that she could earn, Kristen attended and successfully completed the Fork Lift Certification offered by Butte College the Training Place. Kristen continually participates in job search activities like mock interviews, working to get her driver’s license, and studying for the GED. She has been meeting with the tutor for the last ten months and has successfully raised her basic skills scores six grade levels. She plans to earn her GED in the near future.

When unforeseen circumstances did not allow her to work as a forklift driver, Kristen moved on to another area of interest, office occupations. She is currently finishing up a work experience in the Oroville Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. office where she acts as an administrative assistant. She helps both staff and the public access and utilize the resources available at the America’s Job Center of California. Kristen has used many of the skills she has learned like Microsoft Word, email, copiers, scanners and to send and receive faxes. She has had plenty of opportunity to exercise her skills in customer service, while working with customers that utilize the services in our office. Since Kristen started her position she has been able to learn all the necessary skills to be able to function in an office environment.

Kristen’s hard work has paid off, she is now setting the stage for the successful completion of her goals. An On-the-Job Training (OJT) with a local company is an option as she finishes her GED and continues to take part in the success of her own employment plan. Securing employment will be the capstone to her time in the youth program.

Congratulations, Kristen on all of your accomplishments so far!
Pharmacy Tech Success!

Maria Dimopoulos was enrolled into the youth program over a year ago. Since Maria’s enrollment she completed the Pharmacy Technician training through Boston Reed College.

With the help of her Youth CCA, Maria submitted her Pharmacy Technician state license application. After weeks of anticipation and checking the mail, her license arrived! Maria applied at every Pharmacy Technician job opening there was in Butte County.

After months of searching, applying, and denial, Maria never lost hope. Maria found a position open at CVS Pharmacy, who was in search of filling a position as a Pharmacy Technician Trainee. With the support of AFWD’s Business Service Representative, Maria was able to develop a relationship with CVS Pharmacy that ultimately led to an interview for Maria. Maria went through the interview process and was offered a position, beating out a transferring CVS employee. Two months have passed and Maria is growing with the company, enjoying her job and has even been able to purchase her first car!

Congratulations, Maria on your accomplishments!
Butte County Visitors
31,419

AFWD Business Services

Business Served 731
Service Provided 3,383
Positions Filled 797
Training Assistance 88

Program Services
Total enrollments
Adult 127
Dislocated Worker 100
Youth 40
Employed 136

Unemployment Rate
Butte 6.7%    Nevada 5.2%
Lassen 6.9%   Plumas 9.9%
Modoc 8.1%    Sierra 6.6%