In January, Long Valley Charter School’s counselor, Kathi Sherman, asked Alliance for Workforce Development Inc. (AFWD) to participate in judging student mock interviews. The mock interviews were part of Long Valley’s Career and Technical Education program for 9th and 10th grade students. Students were schooled in the entire interviewing process: appropriate clothing, proper handshakes and eye contact, and answering both common and tough interview questions.

On the day of the interviews, AFWD was joined by other community business professionals. The volunteer judges reviewed potential questions and selected those best suited to the situation. Students were assigned occupations for which they would be interviewing. The judges asked each student identical questions. At the conclusion of each interview, students were offered praise for positive aspects of their interview skills. The judges then offered tips and suggestions on ways to improve. The students did quite well given the fact that many of them were not even old enough to enter the workforce. Sherman videotaped each interview so students could review their own performance later.
This year’s Youth@Work Conference was attended by six of Alliance for Workforce Development’s Youth staff as well as, three Butte County probation officers. The conference was held in Long Beach California and themed Planet Shakers. The theme centered on the world’s needs to get a good shaking as we can’t afford to leave behind any young person that can make a difference. Henceforth, California Workforce Development is supporting youth as disruptors that change the world for the better.

There were many exciting guest speakers attending that spoke on a variety of topics ranging from Eduardo Garcia, the “bionic chef” who lost an arm in an accident but has made his success since by investing in a condiment and seasoning line to Judson Laipply, YouTube sensation that inspired the audience with his “The Evolution of Dance” video. In addition to motivating speakers, participants had over fifty breakout sessions to choose to attend.

Heather Alexander, Youth Program Manager, teamed up with Travis Hunderberg, Ron Kimberling and Lucas Russell of Butte County Probation Department to share evidence based practices that work to holistically serve young youth offenders and support them as they move into the workforce. Tips were given on how to start a multi disciplinary team meetings, how to share outcomes to garner support, engage business, and develop client accountability. Templates and tools were provided, and the audience engaged in an exciting question and answer period.

The Youth@Work Conference afforded the youth staff to make new contacts and exchange new ideas. The attendees were excited to get back to their office and reflect on what they learned.
We first began working with Randy Darrow in March 2018. Randy was a general contractor who is currently on disability and seeking to build a business using his experience and passion for helping businesses in the area of bookkeeping and payroll services. Randy was working a few hours a week for a few local non-profit organizations using QuickBooks to organize their financial records and discovered his interest and aptitude in that area. He had seen first-hand how understanding the financial side of a business helps people make better informed decisions and felt compelled to help business owners understand basic financial reports and data to grow their businesses.

Randy came in to the Lassen County Microenterprise Technical Assistance program to develop a business plan for The Bottom Line – a local venture focused on the financial needs of small business owners who weren’t yet ready for a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) – but needed help growing their businesses to the next level.

Based on the suggestion and guidance from Alliance For Workforce Development, Inc., business consultant, Randy conducted several informational interviews to gather local data and discovered unmet needs. This market research confirmed Randy’s hunch that there was a large local niche of small business owners who were struggling in the area of financial management, particularly around the areas of bookkeeping, payroll, and compliance with labor and safety laws.

Randy quickly identified his best target audience, his competition, his vision for The Bottom Line, and his personal motivation for creating it. A model participant in the program, Randy completed every task with enthusiasm and thoroughness. He identified a compelling “Point of Difference” to focus his business plan on the clients he most wanted to help and work with.

While conducting market research, Randy connected with a local employer whose needs matched the services Randy wanted to provide. Sensing an opportunity, Randy arranged a follow-up meeting with this prospect, then met with his business consultant to strategize. Together, they created several follow-up questions designed to uncover more information in order to determine if this prospect was a good match for Randy, and vice versa.

After some coaching on how to control the flow of the conversation and get information to make a determination, Randy had a successful meeting with the prospect. A few more sessions with his business consultant resulted in a powerful proposal for the employer, and prepared Randy to make a strong pitch focusing on the prospect’s wants and needs and Randy’s solution based on his strengths and industry experience and insights.

Randy excelled – resulting in a large Project Contract doing work he loved for an employer he deeply respected.
While working on the new contract, Randy continued working on his business plan with the professional input from his consultant. One long-term vision was to create a franchise that could be sold – so two versions of the plan were under development – one for a sole proprietor model, and one for a franchise model. Both plans addressed marketing, sustainability, growth, milestones and metrics. Along the way, a meeting with the CPA consultant validated Randy’s perception on the viability of the plan.

When the initial Project Contract ended, Randy reviewed the results with his client, and using the techniques learned previously, uncovered new opportunities, and created a new proposal for more work that was quickly accepted by the client. Randy felt he had gained everything he wanted and expected, including financial gain, from the program, and we wrapped things up with a final exit interview.

According to Randy, “I would never have been able to make this happen on my own, and I am so grateful for the opportunity, guidance, expertise and knowledge provided by the consultants through the Lassen County Microenterprise Technical Assistance Program run by the Alliance for Workforce, Development, Inc.”
The LVN Career Path

The Alliance for Workforce Development (AFWD) Adult Program Career Center Advisors in Lassen County have been working in collaboration with Lassen Community College’s (LCC’s) most recent Licensed Vocational Nursing LVN trainees in preparing for job readiness.

Christi Myers, Director of Vocational Nursing/LVN Instructor, and Celeste Wiser, LVN Instructor, have tirelessly dedicated their time in providing a well-rounded education and technical skills training to prepare these participants for their chosen career path in Healthcare as Licensed Vocational Nurses.

As part of this preparation, AFWD staff presented the Resume Writing and Interviewing Techniques job readiness workshops to the entire LCC LVN class. These workshops were incorporated into the LCC LVN “Leadership and Professional Development” class. The Resume Workshop provided an interactive resume development packet to the students. Through the use of the resume packet and the skills learned in the Resume Workshop, each trainee had the opportunity to develop a professional resume that would allow them to present the skills and abilities gained in their classroom and clinical training, as well as other previous work experiences, and to showcase skills they will bring to their positions as Licensed Vocational Nurses, including their unique qualities.

At the end of the Leadership class, the LVN students were each required to participate in a mock interview session with real community professionals. Each of the trainees had the opportunity to practice providing responses to potential interview questions and to receive feedback from the panel of interviewers, consisting of members of the local Susanville, CA Healthcare community and AFWD staff. The panel of volunteers included representatives from Seneca Healthcare District, Lassen Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Northeastern Rural Health Clinics, and Banner Lassen Medical Center. The selected interview questions were those with a high likelihood of being asked in a real LVN interview, and many were related to a specific nursing setting. Interview panel members offered constructive feedback, encouragement, and focus to candidate responses.

The LVN program at LCC is rigorous and demanding, and provides the opportunity for its participants to receive hands-on guidance. Ever-learning and growing, these trainees have true courage, commitment, and desire to push themselves to be the best they can be. The support, insight, and expertise the Healthcare community gives to these potential LVNs is commendable, and offers them a look at the possibilities available to them in the future in the health care career path they have chosen.
In February, staff members from the eleven county Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC) gathered in Anderson, CA for training in the Ascend method for working with criminal offenders after release. Criminal defense attorneys and Ascend founders, Christine Morse and Toni White presented the principles of the Ascend Program during the riveting two-day training.

Christine and Toni created the program after watching their clients over the years continually return to the criminal justice and prison systems. They reported that the recidivism rate for offenders in California is 67%, the highest in the nation! Frustrated by that statistic and their client’s experiences, they created a curriculum which addressed the causes of criminal behavior with input from psychologists and researchers at Sacramento State University. Ascend utilizes science-backed practices to help people effect change. The curriculum includes cognitive behavioral therapy, legal education, life-skills training, challenging physical activities, yoga, meditation, and career counseling. Ascend graduates to date have a reported success rate of 75%!

The training initially focused on the six criminogenic risk factors that threaten the success of rehabilitation for an offender after release. These risk factors, which cause or are likely to cause criminal behavior included:

- Anti-Social Network (The Leading Risk Factor)
- Anti-Social Beliefs
- Family Dysfunction
- Addiction
- Lack of Job/Education
- Poor Impulse Control

Ascend training participants with Ascend founders, Christine Morse and Toni White, center front.

"...When the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life."

George W. Bush
The second focus area of the training was the importance of recognizing when our brains are experiencing “Decision Fatigue” and how to rectify it. “Decision Fatigue” leads to a tendency to procrastinate and to make reckless decisions which can be detrimental for ex-offenders. Glucose and rest are the antidotes to “Decision Fatigue” and help to maintain the ability to use rational thought in decision making.

The third focus area of the training delved into the laws where a person can accidentally become involved in illegal behavior or “guilt by association” crimes. These include Aiding/Abetting, Conspiracy, and Constructive Possession crimes. These crimes often ensnare innocent people who make the mistake of associating with people involved in criminal behavior. It is the most common reason that offenders are charged with new crimes and/or violate probation/parole and it often plunges them back into the cycle of the criminal justice and prison system.

Additionally, a series of role playing exercises and games were utilized by Christine and Toni to reinforce the focus areas and to allow participants to experience the Ascend method first hand. Participants were also able to imagine walking in a client’s shoes while role playing through everyday scenarios that ex-offenders face in life. Christine and Toni concluded the training by emphasizing the importance of Workforce staff utilizing the Ascend method to work with clients. Christine stated, “When Ascend comes together with Workforce, we don't feel so alone and we have a much greater impact.”
Rachel came into the Business and Career Network (BCN) in Susanville looking for assistance in finding work. She had last worked as an Instructional Aide, but had not worked since May of 2017. She requested job search assistance from a Career Center Advisor (CCA). Rachel initially expressed interest in office/clerical work, as she has some clerical and administrative skills. She also wanted to find steady employment with the opportunity for promotion. Rachel completed career assessments, which indicated she had an aptitude for office, organizational, communications type of employment. She had been interested in the real estate industry ever since her family had previously owned rental properties. AFWD staff knew of a recent opening as an Assistant Property Manager with CM Cottages and Rachel applied for the position. Rachel prepped for the interview with her CCA and further investigated property management duties so she was well prepared when had the opportunity to interview for the position.

CM Cottages owner Jared Hancock having previously hired utilizing the On-The-Job Training (OJT) program reached out to AFWD regarding the possibility this program for Rachel, who he felt was a good fit for the company but lacked a lot of the skills needed to the position.

Rachel again met with her CCA at the BCN to determine her need for assistance with an On-the-Job Training (OJT). Rachel completed additional assessments to determine her need for support and her likelihood of success in completing the training. Rachel’s assessments showed her work preferences were compatible with Property Management positions in the Real Estate/Property Management sector, making her an excellent candidate for the position. It was determined in order to quickly learn the specific and technical aspects of the position, an On-the-Job Training (OJT) would be beneficial.

AFWD, Rachel, and CM Cottages worked together to develop an OJT employment plan including job specific criteria to determine her success over the length of the OJT. Per her individualized plan, Rachel was required to meet these job specific goals in order to successfully complete the training.

Rachel started working in September of 2018 as an Assistant Property Manager with CM Cottages, and completed her training recently. During her training, Jared noted, “Rachel has demonstrated her ability to be a self-starter and identify work that needs to be completed and prioritizes work appropriately. She keeps others well informed and works well. “She has been a great asset and integral part of the team.”

Great job, Rachel!
The Long Road to a Great Job-Caltrans

At the time staff first met with Jeremy McLain, Alliance For Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) had begun placing qualified individuals into the National Dislocated Workers Grant (NDWG) Storm, Temporary Job Creation (TJC) projects. The TJC positions funded through this grant provided qualified individuals with temporary working positions that would provide them with new skills and a current work history that would make them more employable. They also had the opportunity to seek full-time employment while participating in the program, with the help and guidance of a Career Center Advisor (CCA).

Jeremy met the NDWG Storm Grant eligibility criteria for participation, he interviewed and was selected for a 29 hour per week a position, as a Temporary Maintenance Worker, with Caltrans in Susanville. Jeremy was excited about this opportunity and looking forward to the possibility of applying for a permanent position opening up with Caltrans in the near future. Worksite visits and evaluations indicated his Caltrans TJC supervisors were very pleased with the work Jeremy was doing. He was able to get along with other co-workers, brought integrity to his work, and possessed very good critical thinking and self-management skills.

After a few months in the temporary position, Jeremy learned that a permanent, full-time position had opened up for a Highway Maintenance Worker with Caltrans through the State of California. His TJC Supervisor at Caltrans encouraged him to apply. He contacted his CCA to ask for some assistance in navigating and applying for the position through the California State Website, CalHR. Jeremy’s CCA assisted him with the process in applying, and after some time, Jeremy was contacted for an interview. Jeremy worked with his CCA in practicing responses to potential interview questions until he felt he was ready for the interview. After two interviews, he was given a conditional job offer, with additional steps to complete for his final hiring. His CCA helped him complete and review the final steps to the hiring process.

Jeremy began his position with Caltrans in February 2019. He was so thankful to the staff at the Alliance for Workforce Development for believing in him and in helping him to earn this position. He now feels he has the security of work that he had long hoped for, and feels great about being able to provide for himself and his family.
James Shepard was ready to get back into the workforce! Recently, James had worked with a mentor who recommended he apply for a Carpenter’s Assistant position with Nobles Construction Components; a high volume production prefabrication facility, manufacturing floor components located in Susanville, CA. James applied and interviewed with the company but was concerned because he didn’t recent work experience which he felt might exclude him from getting a job offer.

Through conversations between owner Tim Nobles and Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) staff, Tim was interested in hiring James but thought he needed specific training in order to work in the position on his own. While James had prior work experience in basic carpentry and maintenance, he was lacking the refined skills required to work as a Carpenter’s Assistant at Nobles Construction Components. Through the On-the-Job training (OJT) program James would get an employment opportunity and Nobles Construction Components would have the support of the program not only for training wage reimbursement but support for their newest crew member to have regular performance evaluations that keep an eye on how James is gaining the skills he needs.

When James accepted the position he was notified that he would be required to have his own Carpenter’s Assistant Tool Kit. James did not have the money or resources to purchase the equipment he needed before starting work. Fortunately, AFWD was able to assist him in purchasing the items needed for the tool kit, and James was able to begin his full-time position with Nobles Construction as a Carpenter’s Assistant on time with all of the equipment required.

He really loves being back to work. He feels good about where he is at in his life and the good fortune of his new job. James will continue to receiving ongoing support from AFWD staff for any questions or concerns that may arise during his participation with the program. During a monthly worksite check, it was stated, ‘James is a good and hard worker, learning his job skills for the position, keeps his head down, and completes all of his daily work, with no issues.’

James is also proving to be a versatile employee, and with a bit more training, will be very competent, whether he is assigned to a cut station, or framing table. James successfully completed his OJT March 22, 2019.

This is a new beginning for him, and he is certainly making the most of it!
Lassen Alliance for Workforce Development offered their inaugural Career Café in November of 2018. Career Café was created to serve job seekers a taste of careers in Lassen County, a smattering of 21st century job skills, and other career guidance activities. The arrangement is informal where attendees and presenters sit down and enjoy coffee and snacks while exchanging information.

This first Career Café featured careers in Social Service. Becky Terwilliger, Analyst with Lassen County Community Social Services, along with Kendra Lancaster of Child and Family Services were on hand to answer questions about careers in Lassen WORKS, Adult Services, Child and Family Services, and Child Support Services. AFWD offered instruction on using career assessments and the 21st Century Skill of Social Diversity Awareness.

Jennifer Branning, Chief Probation Officer with Lassen County Probation, was the guest speaker for our December Career Café. This informal round table provided participants the opportunity to discover more about the operations of Lassen County’s Probation Department and possible job opportunities. Branning spoke of her personal career path to the job of Chief Probation Officer, focusing on her education, challenges, and her desire to be the best at what her job requires.

Branning also provided an overview of the level of assignments for Probation Officers along with requirements of and application tips for the positions. Officer Branning was able to offer personal tips and strategies to attendees who planned to apply to current openings.
Careers in Construction
Kirack Construction

Mike Kirack and Wade Workman of Kirack Construction joined AFWD for the January Career Café with a career focus of careers in construction. Kirack and Workman answered questions from attendees and provided an overview of the types of jobs they offer and their expectations for applicants and employees. Kirack has been successful in a small, rural county because he has chosen to diversify. Kirack Construction is licensed in and can tackle virtually all forms of construction from kitchen remodels to commercial roofing. They specialize in seamless rain gutters and can also do asphalt sealing and striping.

They explained to attendees that they are looking for serious applicants who don’t necessarily have years of experience, but rather a desire and drive to learn and work maturity skills of dependability and initiative. They stated it’s also important for their employees to present well and be able to interact positively with clients while on the job. Although at the time they had no openings, circumstances can always change. They encouraged attendees to stop into their office with resumes and applications.

Careers in Corrections
High Desert State Prison

Careers in Corrections was the "monthly special" at the Career Cafe in February. Anthony Lane, Associate Warden of Business Services, and representatives from High Desert State Prison Plant Operations, Food Service, Custody, and Human Resources were on hand to answer questions about working for the California State Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. They were joined by representatives from the California Prison Industry Authority - CalPIA - and Phoenix House - a substance abuse counseling program: both contractors with CDCR. The group from HDSP was met with a standing-room-only crowd with an abundance of excellent questions.

Attendees received current and detailed information about the hiring process along with some insider information. HDSP representatives spoke of their facility as a cohesive "family" of employees and offered encouragement to those wanting to apply. They stated that any career at HDSP is a wonderful long term opportunity for anyone who wants to enjoy great compensation, opportunities for advancement, and the joy of outdoor living in beautiful Lassen County.

Human Resources welcomed any and all calls from applicants. Hiring process information sheets and business cards were distributed. Afterward, attendees were able to meet individually and speak with representatives from areas in which they were interested in applying.
Herlong High School Career Fair

Students at Herlong High School enjoyed a Career Fair hosted by the Soroptimist Club of Susanville. The March 7, 2019 event was well attended and hosted over twenty business professionals ready and willing to speak to the students about their respective careers. Each student was given a passport and as they conversed with the business professionals, they requested the professional’s initials on the passport. Passports with five initials were entered into a drawing for cash prizes of $100, $50, and $25.

Students asked the business professionals specific questions about their careers including questions about a typical work day, education required, and salary ranges. They also looked for personal opinions such as what they might like to change about their jobs. Career Advisors from Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. shared information about their programs and services with the students. They also shared their own personal career path to their positions as Career Advisors. Many of the local Herlong employers were on hand to inform students of summer job opportunities.

Altogether, it was an amazing opportunity for the students to learn about different career possibilities and get first-hand, insightful information from experts.
AFWD America’s Job Center of California

Statistics
PY 2018-2019

Lassen County

Total Visitors
9,906

Lassen County Business Services

Businesses Served 82
Services Provided 688

AFWD
Total Clients Enrolled
1,439

Unemployment Rate
(As of: February 2019)

- Butte 6.1%
- Lassen 6.2%
- Modoc 10.9%
- Nevada 3.9%
- Plumas 12.5%
- Sierra 7.8%

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