AFWD GOES THE DISTANCE

Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc.’s (AFWD) Youth Program headed to the far west and deep south of Lassen County to offer services and information to Lassen County High School students. First, in April, AFWD met with Westwood High School seniors. Representatives of AFWD offered information about the Business and Career Network’s job seeker services and the Youth Program. The group was small, and a lively discussion ensued surrounding their plans after graduation. Each either had a unique goal or had not decided. Those that were particularly interested in receiving Youth Program services after graduation provided contact information to AFWD.

In May, AFWD was invited by Kerri Cobb, of Lassen Family Services, to judge mock interviews at Herlong High School. The interviews were part of a two-year program Cobb has been doing with the school through the local chapter of Soroptimist International. Seniors at the school presented resumes and were quizzed with some common interview questions and also a few difficult ones. The panel of judges then offered praise, encouragement, and suggestions for improvement. Each senior was queried as to their post-graduation plans. For those without firm plans, panelists provided business cards, information, and suggestions for contacts in careers of interest. Rather than give a score to each senior, the panelists agreed it would be more beneficial to provide each student with a summary of comments and suggestions. Cobb gathered up scoresheets and confirmed she would follow through with that task.
Professional Technical Assistance Training

On May 9, 2019, the Foundation for California Community Colleges (FCCC) and the California Workforce Association (CWA) put on a training that brought together many influential partners to discuss strategies to improve partnership collaborations and work-based learning outcomes. Executive Director for the Foundation for California Community Colleges, Tim Aldinger, started the training off by highlighting some pivotal moments in his personal and professional life and reflecting on his career journey. Leti Shafer, Workforce Development Specialist for the FCCC, followed up with a fun and engaging activity that had the participants chart their own career journey, including the setbacks and successes. Participants were also asked thoughtful questions such as why do you get up and go to work every day and Name five people that have influenced your career choice. A helpful handout was given so that participants could facilitate the activity with their clients in their own offices.

Amy Velazquez, Director of Business Services, and Heather Alexander, Director of Youth Programs, were two guest speakers at the event. Amy was part of the “Ignite Panel” discussion and enlightened the audience with practical ways that Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc.’s (AFWD) Youth program works with collaborating agencies and business partners to ensure that the client has wraparound services and the business has a successful employee.

Heather was part of the breakout session and shared best practices when working with youth to have successful work-based learning outcomes. Daily contact with the client and clear communication with the businesses was stressed. Other panelists were Michele Alford-Williams and Danielle Hackworth, with the California Department of Rehabilitation, that spoke about developing strong partnerships and Vinz Koller, Senior Strategist for Capacity Building that spoke about the future of apprenticeships in California.

The training not only offered excellent information on earn and learn opportunities but also encouraged networking and peer sharing. With a diverse attendance, participants had many lively discussions and made valuable connections.
CWA-WORKCON 2019 Fueling Curiosity

Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) staff attended this year’s California Workforce Association (CWA) WORKCON 2019 held in Garden Grove, California May 15-17, 2019. This year’s theme was Fueling Curiosity with Joey Zumaya, from LinkedIn Learning, presenting the keynote address at the opening plenary. The entire three days were filled with a variety of content rich presentations for every workforce professional.

There were topics presented for every aspect of the workforce industry. Whether you operated in an urban or rural office, there were insightful topics for all participants. Toni White, from Ascend Program, Inc., gave her thoughts on methods to reduce recidivism. Larry Robbin, Executive Director of Robbin & Associates, offered ways to eliminate barriers to employment. Currently, employers across the country are faced with the lowest unemployment rate since December 1969. Several talks addressed the challenges employers face finding skilled, qualified staff. South Bay Workforce Investment Board presenters touched on creating pathways for the ex-offenders to help fill those skilled positions in their talk A Strategic Approach to Serving Adults on Parole.

Bob Lanter, Executive Director of CWA, presented the State of the Workforce during the Wednesday plenary session where he shared the insights from a panel discussion about the many issues facing urban and rural communities alike.
At the Thursday luncheon, The Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC) and AFWD were presented with the 2019 Charlie Brown award for the significant work they have contributed for the Camp Fire survivors. The entire executive staff along with many other staff from all counties were on hand at the award luncheon. Traci Holt, Executive Director, shared phenomenal pictures and touching remarks as she gracefully accepted the award.

John Baker, retiring from CWA, gave a heartfelt talk of his time with the organization through a beautiful slide show. Later when asked about his thoughts regarding rural communities, he said “There are career paths in rural areas, but they look different than the larger communities. Understanding the needs unique to your community is important.” Several talks presented ideas for attracting skilled employees in a full economy. To attract and keep qualified employees, employers should understand what motivates each employee. Mr. Baker commented, “Find out why employees are attracted to the company and what keeps them there, it’s not always money. Understanding what motivates each employee is an important aspect to keeping staff.”

This conference gave us an opportunity to speak with industry experts and learn from other workforce professionals around the state. Winning the prestigious Charlie Brown award was humbling and made us realize our team efforts were recognized.
Licensed Vocational Nurse in the Making

Ja’Luisa had earned her Bachelor degree in Exercise Physiology, but after moving to Lassen County in February of 2018, she was unsuccessful in finding employment in her field of study. Realizing she needed to resolve her unemployment situation, but also needing a career that would provide her opportunities and growth, Ja’Luisa decided to attend Lassen Community College (LCC) to complete her prerequisites to become accepted into the Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) Program. She met the requirements and was accepted into the program for the Fall 2018 cohort. She attended the LVN orientation which provided information about potential assistance from the Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD). She was referred to our Lassen Business Career and Network (BCN) office to speak to a Career Center Advisor (CCA), to see if she could gain some assistance with completing her LVN training.

Ja’Luisa met with a CCA and was determined eligible to gain the support and assistance she needed to complete the program. AFWD assisted her with the required uniforms and equipment needed during the course of the training. The LCC LVN program is very demanding and fast pasted. Her dedication and commitment was evident in her outstanding ability to meet deadlines for assignments and clinical labs.

During the LVN training, the Camp Fire Disaster occurred. Ja’Luisa and several other LVN trainees dedicated their time in applying the new skills they were learning in assisting those at the designated shelters who were sick and needed care. Long days and hours volunteering gave her a new experience and insight into nursing. It was at this point in the training that she realized how learning something thoroughly can be so helpful to others who are in true need of attention when they are ill, or who have experienced a natural disaster, such as the Camp Fire.

Ja’Luisa completed the program and graduated with the 2018-19 cohort of LVN trainees from Lassen Community College, with assistance from the AFWD and her CCA. She was very thankful for the support while in training. She plans to take her LVN licensing exam shortly and start her new career path as an LVN. Good luck, Ja’Luisa!
Dalton came to the Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) in Susanville for assistance with the Lassen Community College Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) program. Dalton had always wanted to work in the medical field, and determined that nursing would be a good career path for him. He was not going to be able to work during the program due to the rigorous LVN program schedule, and needed assistance with costs for the program. Dalton had never worked in the medical field previously, but had shown a great deal of promise in his prerequisite studies. Dalton met with a Career Center Advisor (CCA) and completed assessments, which showed his interests were in line with LVN positions in the healthcare sector, making him an excellent candidate for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult program. Dalton completed the LVN program at Lassen Community College as the class Salutatorian in May of 2018, with the assistance of AFWD. Dalton achieved his LVN licensure through the Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians in August of 2018.

Dalton was interested in remaining in the Susanville area. At the encouragement of his CCA, Dalton applied for a Vocational Nursing position at Northeastern Rural Health Clinics (NRHC). With the help of his CCA, he completed the application process with NRHC. Though lacking experience, NRHC staff had been impressed by his performance during the clinical portion of his training at NRHC, and thought with the help of an On-the-Job Training (OJT), Dalton would be able to gain the work experience required to be successful as a Vocational Nurse. Dalton completed assessments with his CCA, which indicated the need for training assistance as well. AFWD, NRHC, and Dalton worked to develop an OJT plan that would enable him to learn the position well enough that he could eventually perform the job independently.

Dalton recently completed his OJT with NRHC successfully. Over the training, his supervisors stated, “Dalton is very conscientious...he is a fast learner and is willing to work hard and teach others. Dalton has become a valuable asset to the Women’s Health team. He requires little to no supervision and handles all patients with exceptional care and professionalism. The patients and staff all have complimented his skills.” Dalton has really shown what hard work and determination can do. When asked what he thought of his new career, Dalton quoted, “Find a job you love, and you’ll never have to work a day in your life.” Congratulations, Dalton!
Outreach to Crossroads Ministries

Lassen Business and Career Network (BCN) Career Center Advisors (CCA) for the Adult & Youth programs had the opportunity to make a presentation about the Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc.’s (AFWD) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services to Crossroads Ministries. Crossroads Ministries not only provides homeless services to those who are in the town of Susanville, CA, but they also provide recovery and reentry services for those who have been involved in the justice system.

CCA’s were invited to speak to the participants of the program who are currently residing in the Men’s and Women’s houses. As we entered Crossroads, they were conducting a meeting of encouragement for the men and women who are working in their own individualized programs. The AFWD staff began the presentation by introducing themselves, and explaining what the AFWD’s mission and purpose was to the group and our community. Emphasis was made that we can assist those who may have been out of the workforce for a while, with an explanation of how we can work with the job seeker in presenting current job skills, qualities, and abilities for securing full-time employment.

There happened to be a former AFWD client present offering his support who earlier this year completed an On-the-Job Training. He spoke of the services he was able to receive and how helpful it was to be a part of AFWD’s program. He told folks at the presentation how much the support of his CCA helped him get back on his feet and working again. Another job seeker from Crossroads announced to us that with AFWD assistance, she was hired on with Ross Stores.

Some of the questions asked had to do with gaps in employment, such as what to do if you have convictions, and how to address gaps to employment in an interview. We encouraged those who were interested in seeking full-time employment to stop by the Lassen BCN office and we would be glad to see what assistance we can provide. CCA’s also delivered an overview of current workshops and other resources that can be tapped into in order to gain employment. Crossroads Ministries has transportation available for those who have found jobs and are still working in a recovery program. Sherri, Director for the program, emphasized that the more members of the community meet and speak
Successful Career Change

Jennifer had lived in Lassen County for the last 5 years when she came to the Lassen Business and Career Network (BCN) for assistance. She had relocated from the Bay Area, where she had worked in Advertising. Jennifer was unable to find any jobs in the advertising career field in Lassen County, or any other full-time employment earning a wage sufficient to support her household. Jennifer was looking to upgrade her skills to make her more employable, with the potential to promote as well. She had been part owner in an online cookie business for 6 years, but the business was not profitable, and she sold her share after deciding she wanted to go into a career in nursing. She completed the prerequisites for the Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) program at Lassen Community College (LCC), applied, and was accepted into the program in August of 2017. Jennifer had no previous experience in nursing, but assessments showed her interests were in line with LVN positions in the healthcare sector, making her an excellent candidate for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult program.

Jennifer completed the LCC LVN program at the end of May, 2018, with the assistance of AFWD. She went on to successfully attain her LVN licensure through the Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians. She received her LVN License on August 28, 2018.

With the help of her CCA, Jennifer created a new resume and practiced interviewing skills. At her CCA’s urging, she applied for an LVN position at Northeastern Rural Health Clinics (NRHC). NRHC would have preferred to hire an experienced LVN, but felt she had potential to become a good nurse, although she had never worked as one before. Assessments completed with her CCA indicated the need for training assistance, and she was offered an LVN position, with the agreement she would participate through AFWD in an On-the-Job Training (OJT). AFWD, NRHC, and Jennifer worked together to develop an individualized an OJT plan; through the course of which, she would learn the position requirements well enough to perform in the position independently by the end of the training.

Jennifer recently successfully completed her OJT with NRHC. She has also increased from 30 to 40 hours per week. During the training, her supervisors stated, “Patients really like her. Jennifer is doing a great job. Her listening skills and ability to complete tasks when asked are much appreciated. If it was not for Jennifer, I would have a difficult time.” At the end of the training, they wrote, “Jennifer has improved significantly.”

Congratulations Jennifer on following through with your career goals, and becoming an exceptional medical professional!
A Customer Service Natural

A single mom with a young son, Olivia Ramirez had just resigned from her last job at a local wireless company and was looking to secure employment and better her situation. Referred by her caseworker with Lassen Social Services to the Lassen Business and Career Network (BCN), she came to Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc.’s (AFWD) Youth Program, not sure of what her next step should be. She had many ideas of what she would like to do work-wise. Olivia had considered a gamut of possibilities from training in phlebotomy, to training in cosmetology, to working in a warehouse. After much discussion and several career and personal assessments, Olivia turned her job search to the broad direction of customer service. She had truly enjoyed the customer service aspects of the jobs she had held previously. She began turning in resumes and applications for service and sales job openings. She had several interviews, but nothing panned out. Following some more research, Olivia narrowed that focus to office/clerical occupations.

After successfully testing her typing skills, Olivia applied to a local opening for an Administrative Assistant. That application did not result in an interview, but in order to foster Olivia’s career interest in the clerical field, representatives from AFWD checked with Lassen Social Services about the possibility of an internship as an Administrative Clerk. Lassen Social Services was ready and willing and Olivia started a twelve week internship. She began her first week with training on the front reception desk. Her second week entailed training in additional data entry aspects of the job. Olivia informed her work site supervisor that she preferred the people interaction of the front desk. Her supervisor was enthralled! Not many Administrative Clerks request to work the often harried and hectic front desk. She assumed ownership of the job, had a marvelous rapport with customers and clients, and maintained professionalism with other staff, both inside and outside the building.

Although Olivia applied to Lassen County Administrative Clerk openings, she did not have the required minimum of one year of clerical experience so she could not be considered for an interview. With her exemplary internship completed, Lassen Social Services was able to hire her part time so she could continue to offer their clients an outstanding customer service experience. With assistance from AFWD, Olivia is on her way to a career path!
Nancy resides in the town Herlong, CA, which is an unincorporated community in Lassen County, and a 45 minute drive from Susanville, CA. When Nancy first arrived to Herlong she was a single mother raising children and receiving government assistance to make ends meet. She had held previous positions as a Truck Driver and Personal Care Aide in the past. Once she arrived to Herlong, she knew that finding a job where she could make a good living in a rural community was going to take some time, as jobs were very scarce. She began taking on volunteer positions to meet her work requirement, and for networking opportunities, while still receiving government assistance. She volunteered her time with various non-profit services to gain an understanding of what job opportunities could possibly be available.

She began volunteering with Herlong Public Utilities District (PUD) abating weeds. This gave Nancy a chance to demonstrate her work ethic. Next, a volunteer position arose as an Administrative Assistant, in which she began to learn more about the PUD’s operation and service to the town of Herlong. Then a part-time paid position became available as a Janitorial Assistant. She applied and received the position. All this was a great way to get her foot in the door for a position that provided the type of full-time employment that Nancy was really looking for. When an opening became available at Herlong PUD for a Utility Worker/Water Treatment Technician, Nancy applied and interviewed for the job, although she had no prior training or experience in this type of work.

After the interview, the employer reached out to Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc.’s Lassen Business and Career Network (BCN) to find out more about our services and to see if there would be an On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunity that both Nancy and Herlong PUD could benefit from. Nancy went to the Lassen BCN office, and met with a Career Center Advisor (CCA) to find out more about the requirements of the program. Through the assessment process, her CCA found her to be a great fit in participating in our Adult/OJT Program. She began her first day of employment with Herlong PUD in November of 2018 and completed the program in May of 2019. She also completed two trainings with the California Rural Water Association in Mathematics and Water Distribution Operation and Management. Nancy is enjoying her new full-time, 40 hours a week work with the Herlong PUD, and is thankful for the opportunities. Nancy has worked hard and long to achieve her goal. Persistence, patience, and taking advantage of the opportunities offered to her have served her well. She loves Herlong, CA and now can earn a good wage to support herself and maintain her household. Great job, Nancy!
### Lassen County

**Total Visitors**

13,570

**Lassen County Business Services**

- Businesses Served: 90
- Services Provided: 851

**AFWD**

**Total Clients Enrolled**

1,766

**Unemployment Rate**

(As of: May 2019)

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