ESSENTIAL YOUTH AT WORK

DURING COVID-19

One of the elements of the Youth Program under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) is Follow-Up Services. Once clients are exited, they are contacted at a minimum of once monthly to assure their continued employment success or educational achievement, and to provide any additional services that they might need during this twelve to fifteen month period of time. Services can vary from client to client based on their individual needs.

After the government ordered business closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lassen Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) was pleased to hear from many Youth Program clients in Follow-Up that they had retained their jobs. Even beyond that good news, youth searching for jobs had actually gained employment during the pandemic.

Essential businesses such as retail and grocery needed additional employees to perform sanitizing duties, such as disinfecting shopping carts. Businesses were also in need of workers to assist customers with locating high demand items and to monitor numbers of customers entering. Youth, as well as all employees, have had to follow safety requirements such as wearing masks and gloves, having their temperature monitored before shifts, and reporting any COVID-19 type symptoms.
Understanding the COVID-19 Economy

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

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

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

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

Dr. Eyler expressed three possible scenarios for economic recovery:

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

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

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

Tammy had been aware of Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc.’s (AFWD) programs for a long time. She had previously been a business owner and had successfully used AFWD services for On-the-Job Trainings (OJT) of her staff. Unfortunately, she had to close her business. She then went on to work as an employee running the business she had sold. Unfortunately, that business closed as well, forcing Tammy to seriously reconsider her future career path. As she was familiar with AFWD’s ability to assist in many areas, she decided to come in for help with her job search. She met with a Career Center Advisor (CCA) and was enrolled in the Dislocated Worker program.

Tammy wanted to find a career that would offer her the financial stability she had lacked as a small business owner. She had always had a soft spot for the youth in her community, and had often mentored them and, as a business owner, gave troubled youth opportunities to stay out of trouble and make a life for themselves by offering them employment opportunities. She also volunteered in 4-H and Boy Scouts, which involved working with youth in the community a great deal.

Since Tammy was used to being the person doing the interviews, rather than being the one interviewed, she was eager to gain a different perspective on the process. She met with her CCA and reviewed interviewing skills. She was able to come up with some good anecdotal experiences she could draw from in order to answer potential situation-based questions.

The position Tammy really wanted was that of Community Services Officer for Lassen County. She felt it met all of her goals for a dream job, and that she would be good at it once she had been trained.

Tammy applied for the position, among several others, and was called for an interview. She told her CCA she was really glad they had practiced interviewing, as it really helped her when the real interview came along. Tammy’s interview went really well. Afterwards, she told her CCA, “That was by far my best interview to date. Thank you for all your help! “
A Can-Do Attitude - Continued

Tammy was offered a position, but because of her lack of certain skills required for the position, Lassen County Sheriff’s Office requested she participate in an On-the-Job Training, which would provide targeted training in the specific skills she was lacking. They recognized Tammy would need extensive training to perform the duties of a Community Services Officer with the Lassen County Sheriff’s Office, as she had no previous experience with that type of work.

Together with her CCA, Tammy developed a training plan that would help her to train to become a successful Community Services Officer.

Several times after her training had begun, her supervisors noted her great positive attitude, and willingness to learn. In one of her evaluations, her supervisor stressed what a great job Tammy had done assisting with planning a public outreach event. Her supervisor stated, “She has an awesome can-do attitude.” Tammy successfully completed her OJT recently, and is happy to be serving the public. She expressed, “I have been very happy with the services received. I truly believe that these are invaluable services, especially in our rural area.”

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

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

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

In addition to providing information on AFWD services and current job leads, the Virtual Rapid Response webinars included an overview of the Unemployment Benefits Application process, and information on county assistance programs such as CalFresh, CalWorks, Medi-Cal, and General Relief. AFWD staff also provided information on various local resources for housing, utility payments, and food assistance. All attendees were provided with a list of local resources complete with phone numbers and website. The webinars for each of our service counties are now posted to our website as are the links to state, county, and nonprofit assistance programs at www.afwd.org.
Lassen Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) assisted eleven 2019-2020 Vocational Nursing students with their Licensed Vocational Nursing training August 2019 through May 2020 at Lassen Community College. Nine of those successfully completed their training and received certification on May 22\textsuperscript{nd}. AFWD was able to assist each with various required costs of their training including tuition, textbooks, uniforms, nursing exam fees, and licensing.

Due to the COVID-19 shutdowns and protocols, the Vocational Nursing School pinning ceremony was virtual through Facebook Live. Graduates received a sweatshirt with a most appropriate 1870 quote from Florence Nightingale: “It would take 150 years for the world to see the kind of nursing I envision” And 150 years later, this group of nursing trainees dealt with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. While many nursing schools closed their doors, the Susanville community healthcare partners kept their doors open to the program. This meant the students did not have to utilize virtual simulations, but were able to continue hands-on clinical training, and complete their coursework on time. According to Director of Vocational Nursing and Health Occupations, Christi Myers, “Nursing students were instrumental in ensuring the safety of our community during the COVID-19 response.”

With the nursing students participating in the ceremony within the safety of their own homes, the pinning honors were completed by family members or other individuals of the graduate’s choosing. The ceremony culminated with the traditional lighting of the lamp which symbolizes the knowledge that is passed from instructor to nurse. Each graduate lit their own lamp and repeated the Nightingale Pledge.
Partnerships Withstanding The Test Of Time

Lassen County Sheriff’s Office and Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD), have been working together and collaborating for many, many years. The relationship has encompassed On-the-Job Trainings, partnering for training at Peace Officers Standards Training (P.O.S.T.) academy, employed worker trainings, collaborating on various focus groups and education boards is sampling of the meeting of these two organizations minds.

Challenges in recruitment needs have made it necessary for the department and AFWD to look at every avenue of networking to assist with getting the various career path positions filled with people who are dedicated in serving the community’s safety needs. Additional challenges the Sheriff’s office faces is how large Lassen County is with 4,720 square miles of a service area of these law enforcement officers are responding to.

The On-the-Job Training program partnership brought four local residents into this emergency services arena working as Correctional Deputies, Correctional Technician, and Community Service Officer. Partnership for a Correctional Deputy to attend the Butte P.O.S.T. academy allows for the department to fill much needed Sheriff Deputy positions.

Recently with the COVID-19 health and safety guidelines two active OJT employees had added duties to assist the Adult Detention Center offering these workers another view of law enforcement and custody protocols and procedures.

A comment from one Supervisor was “we appreciate the team work involved with the training of our employees not only for the Sheriff’s office but the support for the employee. Having someone checking on how things are going regularly and providing the encouragement all along the way is so beneficial”.

We stand together, for many, many years to come.
AFWD America’s Job Center of California

Statistics
PY 2019-2020

Lassen County

One-Stop Visitors:  
15,259

Business Serviced:  
147

Business Services:  
1014

AFWD Clients Enrolled:  
1,900

Unemployment Rate  
(As of: May 2020)  
10%

Lassen Business & Career Network * 1616 Chestnut St., Susanville, CA 96130 * 530-257-5057