Responding to a Crisis: COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health and economic crisis that has impacted the world, and demands both a global and local response to mitigate. In Rural Northern California, partners in the Government, Private, and Nonprofit sectors have acted quickly to suppress the effects of the pandemic on our community health, regional economy, and local workforce. Alliance for Workforce Development is doing our part by providing crucial services, information, and resources to impacted workers and employers.

On March 19, 2020 California Governor Gavin Newsom issued a Stay at Home Order for all Californians as a measure to curb the spread of the Novel Coronavirus. While employers deemed “essential services” were permitted to remain open, the vast majority of worksites were forced to implement systems that allowed workers to work remotely, or close operations entirely. AFWD has responded by providing Rapid Response services to businesses and employees. These services consolidate information and programs from the State EDD, the Federal Department of Labor, and the Small Business Administration to provide a comprehensive emergency remediation for COVID-19 affected worksites. Using technology tools like web conferencing and web linked document sharing, we are able to safely provide employers and workers the tools and information they need to navigate temporary layoffs and furloughs.

We have updated our website, www.afwd.org, with live links to valuable services for businesses and workers impacted by COVID-19. We have increased the number of staff devoted to our website chat feature, so that customers can communicate with a live Resource Specialist regarding EDD applications, SBA business loans, and other relief programs. We are providing the public with job leads from critical sector employers who are staffing up in response to the crisis. We are utilizing social media to provide the latest information from federal, state and local agencies to our sizeable digital audience.

AFWD is committed to helping our partner businesses and workforce customers navigate this challenging time. By providing access to the resources and information our community needs we will continue to ensure that businesses and workers in Nevada, Butte, Plumas, Lassen, Modoc and Sierra counties have access to the resources they need to weather this crisis.
Celebrating a New Collaboration

On January 23, 2020, Alliance for Workforce Development Inc. (AFWD) and TEACH’s Adult Education (AE) program unveiled the ultimate collaboration by celebrating their joint location. Many partnering agencies and residents were on-hand to celebrate the Grand Opening. Nearly 40 people attended including members from the US Forest Service, Modoc County Sheriff’s Office, City of Alturas, Modoc County Probation, Department of Education, Lassen County AE partners and AFWD Board Member, Jim Cavasso. Tours were given and services were explained. AFWD proudly showed off their new job board and computer lab with AFWD staff available to assist possible job seekers. TEACH ordered refreshments and shared features of the new Adult Education program which includes GED, HISET (high school equivalency) and Diploma programs. Other AE course offerings include Basic Math and English, Algebra, Financial Literacy, Computer Skills, ESL and Onsite Tutoring. Career and technical educational courses will also be available. Folks were also able to look at the new Adult Ed study facility. Sarah Merrick, the teacher facilitating these courses and her assistant teacher, Janice Savage were available to answer questions about the AE programs. Having these services available with job seeking services makes it more convenient for clients to access. According to many, this type of collaboration is just the beginning. Great things can happen when we think outside the box and explore creative options!
At the Alliance for Workforce Development Inc.’s Open House in Alturas on January 23, 2020, Naomi Wallis had more to celebrate than just a new office to do her job search and education in. She is officially the first person in the Modoc Adult Education to pass a test towards acquiring her HiSET. Her name is proudly displayed on the wall for all to see, acknowledging that she has passed her Reading test and is one step closer to getting her high school equivalency.

Way to go Naomi!
On-the-Job Training = SUCCESS

Susan came to the Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) office in Modoc County seeking assistance with job search and information about Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) training opportunities. Susan had been unemployed since August of 2017 and though she had a great interest and desire to work in the Healthcare sector, she had been unable to find full time employment in her career path with her current skill set. Susan had applied for a Human Resource Assistant position with Modoc Medical Center. AFWD staff determined that Susan would be eligible for the WIOA On-The-Job Training (OJT) program and contacted the employer. OJT funding would allow a 50% reimbursement of Susan’s wages to the employer during the training period. Modoc Medical Center expressed interest in hiring Susan through the OJT program as she lacked the hard skills and work experience for the position and would require extensive training to gain competency. A 16-week OJT was determined to be appropriate for Susan to achieve the skill level needed to effectively perform the duties of a Human Resource Assistant with Modoc Medical Center.

AFWD staff met with Susan and her trainer on a monthly basis during the OJT to monitor her progress and support both parties during the training process. Susan stated that she found the monthly evaluations to be valuable and appreciated knowing where she stood in her trainer’s eyes during the OJT. Amber Mason, Director of Human Resources and Susan’s OJT trainer remarked, “The OJT program has been beneficial to the training process. The monthly “touchpoints” where we meet to evaluate Susan’s progress kept us on track with training and are a good system.” Congratulations, Susan!
The first phase of NDWG funded repair work in the storm damaged Lake City area was successfully completed on February 13, 2020. The six person crew was guided by Modoc County Flood Damage Project Manager, Phoenix Greco. The crew assisted by cutting brush and vegetation, debris removal, burn pile maintenance and traffic control duties. Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) staff worked in partnership with Modoc County and Cal Fire to provide First Aid/CPR and S-212 Chainsaw training and certification to the crew to enhance their skill set and better equip them for future employment. The hardy and determined crew both faced and conquered many challenging winter weather workdays during their project detail which began in mid-November of 2019. Project Manager, Phoenix Greco spoke for both himself and the crew in summing up their experience in just four words, “I love my job!”
Jesus Gonzalez came to AFWD in the Fall of 2019 to inquire about an advertisement for NDWG storm repair positions. He had been unemployed since May of 2019 and had not been able to secure full time employment. Jesus was eligible for the NDWG program given that he had been unemployed for more than 15 of the last 26 weeks and lived in Modoc County which was a disaster affected area. After being referred by AFWD for an interview with Modoc County, Jesus was selected for a Lead Temporary Maintenance Worker position for the 10-week storm project in Lake City. In addition to his regular duties cutting brush and vegetation, debris removal, burn pile maintenance and traffic control, as a Lead Worker Jesus also assisted the project manager with the organization of the temporary maintenance crew members and assigning the work crew to identified projects. Additionally, after obtaining S-212 Chainsaw certification, Jesus was also able to gain experience felling hazardous trees, removing limbs on downed trees and cutting trees into smaller pieces for removal.

Modoc County staff were impressed with Jesus’ progress and at the end of the project offered him a Maintenance Worker position with the County. AFWD will be partnering with Modoc County through the On-The-Job Training (OJT) program to support Jesus during his OJT. The County will also receive support through a reimbursement of 50% of Jesus’ wages during the 16 week training program. Jesus started his new position on March 2, 2020 and will be learning an array of new construction skills while working on a County renovation project.

Congratulations, Jesus!
Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) staff recruited a crew of seven temporary workers for the second phase of NDWG funded repair work. The NDWG temporary job creation program is targeted towards workers who have experienced a layoff, had their hours reduced due to the storm impacts or had been unemployed 15 out of the last 26 weeks and lived in a storm affected area. Funding from NDWG will provide 100% of the temporary worker’s wages during the project. Aaron Zufelt from the Modoc County Buildings and Grounds department is the County project manager for this phase of the project. Work for this phase began on February 10, 2020 and will last approximately eight weeks. The storm damaged Pit River levee area in Alturas is the first area of focus for the new crew.

Before Pit River levee brush removal

After Pit River levee brush removal
AFWD America’s Job Center of California

Statistics
PY 19-20 Q3

Modoc County

One-Stop Visitors: 1,054
Business Serviced: 48
Business Services: 182

AFWD Clients Enrolled: 788

Unemployment Rate
(As of: February 2020) 9.9%