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 services 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.
Scientific Career Pathway

Taylor came to Alliance for Workforce Development as a potential candidate for an On-the-Job-Training (OJT) opportunity with Sierra Streams Institute. Taylor had formerly been a Naturalist tour guide with Lindblad National Geographic Expeditions and was struggling with finding a position in Nevada County that would allow her to utilized her recent degree in Environmental Biology.

Upon Taylors interview with the Sierra Streams Institute it was determined that Taylor had some great transferable skills for the position as the Community Health Scientist from her time as a Lab Technician at UC Berkeley and as a Naturalist Tour Guide. However, she would need technical training in areas specific to Sierra Streams’ field work. This made Taylor an ideal candidate for an (OJT).

Through the OJT program, Alliance for Workforce Development is able to provide a training plan based on an employers skill criteria, and reimburse a portion of a participant’s wages to the employer, to ease the costs associated with training a new hire. AFWD staff work with worksite supervisors during the OJT period to ensure that a participant like Taylor is learning the skills they need to become a proficient employee.

An AFWD Business Service Representative (BSR) worked with Sierra Streams management to identify the core competencies Taylor would need to be a successful Community Health Scientist. Using these metrics, Taylor’s Career Center Advisor (CCA) helped Taylor identify what skills she’d need to focus on during her training period. As the training has progressed over the last few months, both Sierra Streams and Taylor have benefited from the targeted, well-defined training plan that the OJT Program provides.

Taylor is now near the end of her OJT training period, and she has received positive feedback from her Supervisor. In addition to mastering the technical skills outlined in the OJT training plan, Taylor has been noted as a valuable team player. Taylor is well on her way to securing her new career path as a Community Health Scientist!
Perseverance Pays

Sean was receiving County Assistance and trying to survive with three children when he came to AFWD’s Grass Valley location looking for long term, gainful employment.

To achieve this goal, Sean got support from local partner agencies to create the stability needed to pursue career goals. At Alliance for Workforce Development’s Grass Valley Business and Career Network Office, he got assistance updating his resume in our Resource Center, and attended our Interview and Resume Workshops, where he gained the skills and confidence to effectively market himself to prospective employers. With the new tools he had obtained at AFWD, Sean was now a skilled and ready applicant.

In January 2020, AFWD hosted Air International for a Hiring Event at the Grass Valley Business and Career Network. Sean attended at the suggestion of AFWD staff, and was hired by Air International as an Assembly Technician. Within two weeks he was promoted to Material Handler, and he is now looking at being promoted once again to Line Supervisor!

Sean attributes much of his success to taking advantage of the resources and assistance AFWD had to offer him, and has expressed his sincere gratitude for helping him find a career path that he is thriving in and truly enjoys.

Sean’s story is an example of what can be accomplished through collaborative efforts, and persistence, and is what we strive to achieve with each of our visitors, here at Alliance for Workforce Development!
Career and Educational Support for Women of Nevada County

On January 18th AFWD Business Service Representative Kari D’Aloisio was invited to participate in the Business and Professional Women of Nevada County Member Dinner, to discuss the employment, training, and career exploration services at AFWD’s Business and Career Network Nevada County. Carly Pacheco, Deputy Director of FREED (a local disability resource center serving Nevada County), and Jasmine Aebersold of The Friendship Club (provider of assistance to at-risk youth ages 10 to 18), were also on the panel. Participation in this event was an opportunity to share AFWD services in partnership with other community providers, to an audience of Nevada professionals and business decision-makers.

Business & Professional Women of Nevada County (BPW-NC) is an organization dedicated to improving the professional, personal, economic, and educational opportunities for women. Founded in 1932 as a local chapter of the national organization, Business & Professional Women/USA. It is now an independent group affiliated with the national Business & Professional Women’s Foundation.

Members of BPW-NC seek to make a difference in the lives of local women re-entering college or vocational school and the workplace. The group sponsors the Helga Rohl Encouragement Award, and the Dolores “Dee” Eldridge Scholarship Program to women in Nevada County. In Spring 2018, Nevada County’s Career Center Advisor and Sierra College Student, Kate Abbott, was the recipient of the Encouragement Award, and is an example of the benefits organizations such as Business & Professional Women of Nevada County offers to professional women in the community.
Meet Your Match Job Fair 2020

On Thursday March 12, 2020 Alliance for Workforce Development Business Service staff joined the Nevada County Union, the Nevada County Association of Realtors, The Nevada City Chamber, the Greater Grass Valley Chamber, and the County of Nevada in presenting the Meet Your Match Job Fair.

Over 25 Employers from all over Nevada County were on hand to meet eager Job Seekers looking for positions. Over 150 job seekers attended the event. The job fair was hosted at the Veteran’s Memorial Hall in Grass Valley.

Employers from every sector were hiring, including Government, Construction, Education, and more. Jobs from Entry Level to Career Professional were represented. Some highlights included the California Highway Patrol, County of Nevada, Durham School Services, Box Power, NV5, the California Conservation Corps, and more.

Nevada Joint High School District sent several student groups by bus. Some students got the chance to apply for work, but for many it was a chance to see what a job fair is like, and to become familiar with the hiring and recruiting process.

An Accessibility Job Fair was hosted as well, highlighting career opportunities for differently abled job seekers.

KVMR Nevada County Community Radio was on hand, giving live interviews to employers and job seekers. AFWD Staff was interviewed and spoke on the importance of events like these to employers in Nevada County. Now and historically, Nevada County has a low unemployment rate, and workers can be hard to find.

A potential dark cloud hung over the event, in the form of the COVID-19 outbreak that had just started to make headlines in California. Staff from AFWD, the Union, and other volunteers were diligent in reminding attendees to maintain 6 feet of personal space at all times, and hand shaking, a job fair staple, was expressly forbidden.

But despite the chaos of COVID-19, the event turned out successful. In the weeks following, many employers updated AFWD that they had found candidates to hire from the event. We look forward to joining our partners again next year, to provide pathways to success for employers and job seekers in Nevada County.
Nevada County

One-Stop Visitors:
5717

Businesses Served:
203

Business Services:
1158

AFWD

Clients Enrolled:
788

Unemployment Rate
(As of: February 2020)
3.7%