Successful Changes

Covid-19 has required AFWD to become even more creative with their outreach and recruitment efforts. With partners struggling to keep up with the changes in their own programs, how could the Youth program keep communities up to date?

Heather Chavez, Director of AFWD’s Youth program, suggested a program called Padlet. Padlet allows users to upload pictures, files, links, etc. to a virtual board. Once the link is shared a person is able to explore the board without creating an account!

Daisy Fields, Youth CCA for Nevada County, was tasked with using her Padlet in order to connect with local partner agencies. The Padlet she created contains a section dedicated to explaining the youth program, labor market information for Nevada County, local job postings, job readiness workshops, professional development workshops, and other relevant community events.

The response from partners was overwhelmingly positive. Many remarked on how unique the platform was and asked for a tutorial in order to make their own. Several agencies reached out after the Padlet had been forwarded to them by a partner on the mailing list.

When AFWD had to make changes in response to rising Covid numbers the Padlet was an easy way for Daisy to keep partners updated on any changes. Currently, Daisy is working on expanding the mailing list in order to reach as much of Nevada County as possible.
Uncharted Waters Provide SUCCESS!

Remember your first job fair? You were dressed to the nines, portfolio in hand with dozens of resumes printed on fancy resume paper. You had spent days preparing, practicing your introduction in front of the mirror, your handshake was perfected and you were determined not to be the first to look away during your conversation with companies you hoped to become a team member of. As you approached the door your stomach was jittery with excitement and nervous at the same time.

This was the stage for companies large and small until 2020 when in person recruitment really took an avenue that previously was underutilized by most communities. Enter the “Virtual Job Fair” – an online event where employers and job seekers can interact via video conferencing, chat rooms, telephone conversations and other technology-mediated communication.

Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) utilizing the Premier Virtual platform on January 20, 2021 hosting the first ever AFWD Regional Virtual Job Fair. This regional area covered Butte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas and Sierra Counties respectfully. Seventy-two businesses throughout the AFWD region participated in the “New Year, New Career” event providing over 1000 openings for the one hundred and seventy-one job seekers who attended during the 10am – 1pm event window.

Company recruiters interacted with these individuals through the “chat” feature as the job seekers entered their virtual booths enabling these people to gain more insight of the company, job openings and share what skills they have and/or their willingness to learn. Job seekers had prepared for this interaction by uploading their resume which was then available to share within the virtual booths of interest. In addition, job seekers had the opportunity to attend multiple workshops to prepare for the virtual format. Recruitment teams through this quick exchange where able to schedule future interviews, request company applications be completed and have current contact information for all the people who visited their booth.

Some comments shared by the companies that attended included:

“This Virtual Job Fair was the highlight of my week. Because I have an online company, communication using online ways is so important. I collected 19 resumes today, and all of them, based on the fact they were all able to navigate the job fair, placed them all in a league of possible candidates. Not everyone chatted with me, but some chatted quite a bit. It showed me their communication skills. From those chatters, several asked for my email address for follow up afterwards. That tells me more about those candidates, namely that they have great communication skills.” – Solar Cowboyz

“Thank you for inviting us to the virtual job fair. I believe it was successful for us at a minimum for exposure that we’re out here as an employer. We had some great conversations with some job seekers. Overall, I think this was a successful event for us. Thanks again.” – Sierra Army Depot
Virtual Panel Speaks to the Community

In January 2021, The Union News hosted a two-part virtual event called “COVID-19 Fallout: How to Get Your Life Back” with a panel of area partners sharing about services offered at their agencies. Topics included, assistance with mental health, job loss, parenting during distance learning, and post-pandemic financial recovery. Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. was asked to participate and speak to resources offered to anyone who may be suffering a job loss.

During the first evening’s live event, as the weather caused flickering power and disruptions to internet service, hosts from The Union, Deana Graydon, Event Manager and Julia Stidham, Advertising Director continued on and led the discussion with representatives from Nevada County Behavioral Health, Sierra College’s Enrollment Services office, and AFWD’s Business Service Representative Kari D’Aloisio.

With the varied topics, during this two-hour talk, panelists shared tips on job searches, education, and coping with the stressors of pandemic-life. Participants from all sides expressed a greater sense of community after hearing others discuss similar struggles over the course of 2020. Being part of that greater sense is what staff members at AFWD do every day in support of the communities served, even during the most challenging times.
Bolstering a Small Business’s Growth

Beowulf Industrial Sewing started in 2017 in Grass Valley. As a small team of professionals who love the outdoors, they craft strong and durable products by engineering hand-sewn solutions for customer needs such as, custom yurts, awnings, and outdoor coverings. Business demands began to grow and so did the need to hire candidates with upholstering or industrial sewing experience. Because this is a niche manufacturing business, finding qualified applicants in the small community posed a bit of a challenge.

By posting their recruitment need for an Industrial Sewer or Sewer Helper with Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) staff worked to find candidates for these unique opportunities. Efforts were successful when a candidate with transferrable skills was hired through the On-the-Job Training (OJT) program.

Upon completion of the training period, Kurt Sandiforth, Owner, and Weston Strausser, Manager, shared feedback of their positive experience, “Words can’t describe how much this program has helped us as a small business doing our best to grow. Your patience, guidance, and sincerity are all much appreciated. We look forward to recommending your services whenever we can.”

AFWD’s employees continue every day to improve the lives of job-seekers through training and the functionality of businesses. The above testimonial confirms the efforts made by staff to ensure those objectives are met throughout the region.
2021 Employment Law

With each new approaching year, Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) collaborates with Butte College; The Training Place to provide a timely Labor Law update for businesses in our northern California counties. Ann Hicks, Labor Law attorney, presents this workshop.

This year many new changes were affecting our California businesses. Some of the topics covered this year include the new minimum wage and minimum salary updates, classification of independent contractors, the new factors of Prop 22 regulating App-based drivers, like Uber, and various exceptions to the ‘employment’ rules. While some issues are yet to be determined, the Labor Law Update for 2021 gives insight into requirements and issues facing our local businesses. There are new training requirements for Sexual Harassment Training and Prevention classes for all businesses. As a sign of our times, additional training is now required for transit companies in Human Trafficking Recognition training.

2021 Labor Law included the focus on diversity training. California leads the way with diversity in the workplace, and the new AB 979 bill requires women (2 out of 5) on boards for all publicly held domestic and foreign corporations with principal offices in California. There are changes to the California Family Rights Act (CFRA), including grandchildren and domestic partners, a positive addition to the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). A significant discussion was made concerning the Covid-19 legislation and Family First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA) which expired December 31, 2020.

There are continual updates to the FFCRA as Covid-19 continues to be present in our lives and business. Much of the Covid-19 legislation continues to change and Ms. Hicks suggests all business owners keep informed by visiting Department of Labor and EDD websites regularly.

Business owners attending this workshop indicated this was one of the most necessary and impactful Labor Law Workshops. Continued changes are impacting small businesses with 5 or fewer employees. The many factors of Covid-19, including reporting policies, affects all businesses with employees. Chris Schneider, a business owner, remarked, “This workshop was so packed with information and it will take some time to digest.” Several businesses commented they were so grateful to AFWD for making them aware of this workshop. This is a vital way that we keep small businesses in our communities informed and up-to-date and will continue to do so, year after year.
Let’s Talk Careers!

Alliance for Workforce Development Inc., (AFWD), the Job Training Center and Smart Workforce Center joined forces to sponsor the Let’s Talk Careers! Virtual Hiring event for Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) in February 2021.

Sierra Pacific Industries is a 3rd generation family-owned forest products company based in Anderson, California. SPI manages over 2 million acres of timberland in California and Washington, and is among the largest lumber producers in the United States. Operations in California include:

- Sawmills: Anderson, Burney, Lincoln, Quincy, and Sonora
- Millwork: Red Bluff and Richfield
- Remanufacturing: Richfield
- Bark Plants: Oroville and Sonora
- Chip Coloring Facilities: Lincoln and Sonora

This event was structured to allow interested job seekers to experience a “Meet and Greet” format with staff from 10 divisions of SPI to learn more about the culture of each location, positions available, career advancement opportunities and other Sierra Pacific Industries benefits. Additional information was shared on how each division accepts applications, hiring requirements and highlight positions that offered a hiring bonus. Two-time frames were provided to ensure people had an opportunity to participate.

One job seeker remarked, “I’ve never attended a virtual hiring event before. It was easy to navigate and I was glad to speak to an actual hiring person. She set me up for a personal interview right on the spot.” Another attendee mentioned, “It was a very relaxed atmosphere. The interaction through the chat feature made you feel very comfortable asking questions. SPI staff wanted you to know this can be a long-term career, not just a job.”

The use of these virtual events has extended the workforce base and is allowing individuals the chance to consider rewarding trade careers with family based companies.
Nevada County

One-Stop Visitors:
2,093

Businesses Served:
193

Business Services:
1,634

AFWD
Clients Enrolled:
698

Unemployment Rate
(As of: February 2021)
6.3%