Local Employer Expands Applicant Search

As unemployment rates drop, the available candidates to fill job openings diminishes. The unemployment rate for September 2018 in Plumas County was 4.7%, the lowest since September of 2000 when the rate was 4.4%. While the lower unemployment rate indicates a healthy economy, it also presents challenges to businesses in filling open positions. For growing businesses like Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) in Quincy, finding enough qualified people to fill open positions can be difficult.

Manufacturing employers, like SPI, continually search for qualified applicants to fill the growing needs of their expanding mill operation. Recently the staff at Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) reached out to SPI to offer the opportunity to attend the Chico Job Fair and conduct outreach with job seekers.
Local Employer Expands Applicant Search – Continued

The recruitment team from SPI was delighted to attend the Chico Job Fair, held at the Manzanita Place in Chico. Kealey Froggatt, Human Resource Assistant, commented, “We are grateful to be included in the Chico Job Fair, as we are constantly searching for new ways to reach applicants.” Attending this job fair gave SPI exposure to people with all levels of skills. By noon, they had met a variety of skilled and unskilled applicants. For a large employer like SPI, with multiple sites in Northern California, attending the Chico Job Fair really helped to widen their exposure. Kealey remarked, “Applicants in the Chico area could work at either the plant in Red Bluff or move to Quincy. We received several experienced Millwright applicants which are difficult to find in the small town of Quincy.”

Finding qualified candidates can be a challenge, and AFWD looks forward to continued partnerships with Sierra Pacific Industries and helping them to extend their outreach to a wider pool of candidates. Partnering with our local businesses also assists our communities as they continue to grow.
Adam Hardgrave came into our Quincy office in early December looking for employment. He had recently lived in Paradise and worked out of Butte County. On November 8th the town of Paradise was destroyed by the Camp Fire, burning down Adam’s house and causing him, his wife and 3 children to relocate to Quincy with other family members. With his place of employment now gone, Adam needed assistance finding work and starting new. He had previously worked for a heating and air conditioning company so he applied for a full time position with Heat Transfer Systems as a Geothermal Technician.

The employer interviewed Adam and was interested in employing him but they were concerned that Adam was unfamiliar with the Geothermal Technician position. The employer values his knowledge that he has gained working in this industry, but felt that Adam would need extensive training in order to perform the duties required for this position. The employer agreed to hire Adam through AFWD’s On the Job Training (OJT) program.

Both Adam and his new employer are very grateful for the opportunity of bringing him on through an OJT. Adam feels that he has been given an opportunity to get a fresh start in a new area after going through such a traumatic experience. Although he’s starting all over again, the future is bright for Adam and his family.
Nearly 250 veterans and family members made their way to the Plumas-Sierra County Fairgrounds in East Quincy on Saturday, September 22, to take part in the first-ever Plumas County Stand Down. Stand Downs can be one to three day events that provide supplies and services to veterans, such as food, clothing, health screenings, signing up for VA benefits, as well as many more services. Alliance For workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) attended this gathering along with approximately 50 other vendors. Our goal was to present to these veterans the services we can assist them with in our community. Veterans often face a menagerie of paperwork and red tape. The Stand Down was an effort to have the different organizations all in one place this day.

At AFWD, part of our mission is to partner with as many local agencies across the board, so as to provide better services to individuals like veterans. AFWD was complimented many times on the services we offer the community as well as the effort we put forth to collaborate with other agencies in our area. Many brochures of information on available services to veterans along with packets listing jobs available in Plumas County were distributed.

Our local supervisor, Mike Sanchez, who is a veteran himself, spoke fondly of his years in the service. Congressman Doug LaMalfa gave a welcoming talk to open the event. Some local groups that attended: Voter registration groups, Feather River Blue Star Moms, Plumas Crisis Intervention and Resource Center, Body and Soul offering free haircuts, and so much more. The organizers provided coffee and donuts, as well as a barbeque lunch. Non-perishable items and surplus gear was provided to all veterans in attendance. The first Veterans Stand Down of Plumas County was a great success and we look forward to next year’s being even more successful! With roughly 2000 veterans living in Plumas County, the goal is to reach out to them all!
Learning Through safeTALK

On November 2, 2018, the Youth Career Center Advisor (CCA) for the Plumas Business and Career Network (BCN) had an opportunity to attend a workshop called safeTALK, provided by Plumas Rural Services. Plumas Rural Services (PRS) was granted a federal funds grant that has made it possible for PRS to provide multiple seminars throughout Plumas County. The grant is intended to bring more awareness to suicide in our rural area. They are able to teach anyone ages 15 and older who are interested in becoming first aid helpers in the community. It emphasized a coming together of the community to combat the rising suicide rate by teaching people how to be aware, reach out, and ask the hard question, “Are you having thoughts of suicide?” Suicide is the second leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24. By attending the mental health first aid workshop, the Youth CCA is able to better identify and respond to Youth clients that may need assistance.

safeTALK is a training program that is designed to teach helpers how to recognize invitations from persons reaching out for help. Helpers are able to assist other when applying what safeTALK stands for; suicide alertness for everyone Tell Ask Listen KeepSafe. This program is designed to assist participants monitor the effect of false societal beliefs that can cause otherwise caring and helpful people to miss, dismiss, or avoid suicide alerts and to practice the safeTALK step actions to move past these barriers. Helpers are able to assist in connecting a person with thoughts of suicide to life-saving intervention resources. Applying skills, tools, and community connections, helpers are able to recognize signs in others, making it possible to reach out sooner to make an impact, and reduce the alarming rise of suicide in our society.
Chester - The Unexpected Evacuation Site

The people from Sterling City and Magalia fleeing the fires of Paradise had no other escape route except driving 60 miles over the mountains into the Chester area. As a result of the Camp Fire in Paradise the town of Chester in Plumas County unexpectedly became an evacuation site.

The community of Chester assisted helping these evacuees; providing food, clothing, and shelter and a listening ear. Several people arrived in the cold Chester temperatures of 40 degrees with just a t-shirt, shorts and sneakers. The community provided warm clothing, knapsacks and food to survivors without hesitation.

Plumas County organized a town hall meeting at the Veterans building in Chester. Sheriff Greg Hagwood spoke to the people introducing representatives from FEMA, Red Cross and various other service providers present to assist the Camp Fire survivors.

Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) was on hand from the beginning of the disaster assisting people in filing for their disaster unemployment insurance and in job search for those relocating to the area. Several evacuees decided to move to Plumas County. AFWD was on hand to assist in creating resumes, completing job applications and exploring the multiple job opportunities in the community. Working with several applicants relocating to Plumas County, AFWD was able to partner with a local business with the On the Job training program for one of the Camp Fire survivors. Jason Blust, owner of Heat Transfer Systems, was very happy hiring a new technician during the busy winter season. The technician will be learning new geothermal skills. Jason said “This is a difficult situation for anyone, but we are happy to hire the technician, it’s a win-win for all concerned.”
Making Her Way

In July of 2018, Tahlah Willis made her way into the Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc.’s (AFWD) Plumas Business and Career Network (BCN) looking for employment. She mentioned that job seeking in our area had proven to be difficult. Tahlah was excited to learn about and to join the Youth Program, stating extra assistance in finding employment would be beneficial. Upon completing professional and personal assessments, both Tahlah and her Youth Career Center Advisor (CCA) discovered that Tahlah would thrive best in a setting in which she could assist others.

Not long after Tahlah and her CCA began to work together on job search, Tahlah was able to share with her CCA that she was offered a job working at the Dollar Tree. She accepted and started as a part-time employee. Soon thereafter, through diligence and a positive attitude, Tahlah was promoted to a full-time employee. While excited to be working, she felt something was still missing. She discussed with her CCA the prospect of a second job. After more job search, Tahlah was soon added to the SavMor grocery store team as a full-time employee. Since becoming gainfully employed, Tahlah has flourished and has gained the independence she has been wanting.

Tahlah has expressed how pleased and thankful she has been with the assistance she received from AFWD and the Youth Program. Tahlah stated, “They are amazing people, and extremely helpful.” She has since referred other job seekers to the AFWD office. Way to go Tahlah!
From Long Term Unemployed to Employed!

Kevin Puls came into the Plumas Business and Career Network (BCN) earlier this year looking for employment, as he had not been employed since 2007. In June of 2017 the Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD), had a National Dislocated Worker Grant-Temporary Job Placement (NDWG-TJC) for Storm repair work, which targeted possible employees that had experienced a layoff, had their hours reduced due to the storm, or had been unemployed more than 15 out of the previous 26 weeks and lived in a storm affected area. Kevin was assessed by the Career Center Advisor (CCA) and he was determined to be eligible for the NDWG-TJC grant.

Caltrans had a position available as a Temporary Maintenance Worker to help with clean up after the storms. They reviewed Kevin’s application and asked Kevin for an interview. After going over some interview skills and the interview process with Kevin, he was hired by Caltrans in Chester, CA. While working for Caltrans, Kevin has assisted with repairs to asphalt and concrete on the town streets and highways, performs traffic control using necessary equipment, clean-up and removal of debris lefty by the 2017 winter storms, and repair and clean up culverts and drainage systems and repair and replacing signage.

Although this is a temporary job, Kevin takes it seriously and is applying for a permanent position with Caltrans. The skills Kevin has acquired while working with Caltrans will be a great addition to his resume for his future employment. Kevin’s supervisor has been very pleased with the work and dedication from Kevin. Having Kevin working in this position was an asset to Caltrans and will make him more employable for future employment. We wish Kevin the best of luck, as he moves forward in his career path!
Invitational Tour of Sierra Pacific Industries, Inc.

Once a year one of the largest employers in Plumas County, Sierra Pacific Industries, Inc. (SPI), invites select local businesses to attend a tour of the Quincy mill property. This year, the tour began with a discussion of this family owned business, which now is one of the largest land owners in all of California. Several Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) staff members from Lassen, Sierra, and Plumas County attended this insightful tour. The property spans many acres, with over 325 people currently employed. SPI has openings for just about every department at the mill. SPI prides itself on being able to provide long term careers for those employees wishing to work hard and learn this unique business. Angie Wilcox, HR Coordinator at the Quincy location said, “SPI provides many special benefits such as educational scholarships available to children of our employees to help offset the costs of education. It’s just one of the many extra benefits SPI offers.”

While all employees begin as a laborer, there are many unique positions for which SPI offers in-house training. Millwrights are often trained in house because of the specialized requirements of their equipment. Employees can work their way up to various positions such as Grader, Sawfiler, and heavy equipment mechanic to more specialized positions within the co-generation plant. Quincy SPI operates a co-generation plant supplying all the energy needed to operate the mill. The tour gave us a better understanding of the many different positions unique to a mill operation. Kealey Froggatt, Human Resource Assistant, explained, “Any employee wanting to have a career can do so with SPI. Often employees are encouraged to apply for open positions within the firm.”

The sales and marketing for SPI is done from the Anderson location. Dave Little pointed out, “We encourage our employees who want to learn different parts of the industry to apply for any open position. We have had lumber Graders move to our Sales department in Anderson.”

Touring SPI allows AFWD to better serve the firm by gaining an enhanced understanding of the many positions available to this unique industry. SPI draws employees from all over the North State. We are able to provide the service of posting job openings in many of AFWD offices, thus giving SPI more exposure.

Several new prospects have been referred to SPI from neighboring counties. Kealey Froggatt mentioned she was grateful to AFWD offering the extensive recruitment services and appreciates us going above and beyond to help get the word out to the job seekers.
AFWD America’s Job Center of California

Statistics

PY 2018 -2019

Plumas County
Total Visitors
1,636

Plumas County
Business Services

Businesses Served 104
Services Provided 521

AFWD
Total Clients
Enrolled
988

Unemployment Rate
(As of: November 2018)

Butte 4.3% Nevada 3.3%
Lassen 4.1% Plumas 6.4%
Modoc 6.3% Sierra 4.8%