

# VIRGINIA



# WORKFORCE CONNECTION

Virginia Workforce Council Fall 2010

## From the Chairman's Perspective



### This fall, celebrate new beginnings

By Dr. Robert P. Leber  
Chairman, Virginia Workforce Council

As I pen what is most likely my final column as your chairman, I cannot help but be impressed by a theme of new beginnings in this fall 2010 issue of the Virginia Workforce Connection newsletter.

You will learn of courageous young people like Kayla Henley who is well on her way to earning her associate's degree in culinary arts and gaining valuable experience through a WIA youth program in Southwest Virginia. Over the past two summers, close to 6,000 of Virginia's youth have benefited from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and WIA-supported work-readiness skills, training and meaningful work experiences. The newest Youth Career Café in Newport News is a premier example of a regional partnership with the Boys & Girls Club and the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development.

Hope is alive for adults and dislocated workers as well when we read about the grand opening of the Arlington Employment Center. Check out the recount of a successful job fair that drew more than 1,500 attendees in the Danville area. And in Lynchburg, the Future Focus Expo highlighted for 2,500-plus students all the possibilities that a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) career can offer.

Gain fresh insights from one of our newest Council gubernatorial appointees in this issue's Op Ed column. No matter what your political

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## Governor's forum focuses on bettering educational opportunities for working adults

With growing pressure from international competition and the rapid pace of technological change, the "war for talent" has been described as the central battleground for businesses in the 21st century economy. As a result, the competitive position of states and regions in the global marketing place is largely dependent on their people. "The Governor's Forum: Aligning the Agendas for Education, Economic Development & Business" held in Richmond Oct. 21 focused on one segment of the population—the working adult.

Supported by a grant from the National Governors Association, the forum advanced an agenda for Virginia that will lead to an increase in the education and workforce credentials of adult workers. It also heightened awareness in the Commonwealth about the need to develop the incumbent workforce. The forum identified barriers hindering working adults from attaining degrees, proposed solutions to improve the human capital of Virginia's workforce, and discussed a set of public and private strategies and public policy reform targeted to meet adult workers' education needs. It also engaged business, economic development and education leaders to propose ways to increase education levels of Virginia's workforce.

A post-forum action plan will be developed to capture the forum's outcomes and will be available in late December. The agenda, speaker bios, presentations, and the post-forum action plan can be found at [www.vccs.edu/workforce/forum](http://www.vccs.edu/workforce/forum).



Gov. Robert McDonnell talks about the need to develop Virginia's incumbent workforce during a forum held in October in Richmond.

## Greater Peninsula receives Career Pathways grant

In August, the Greater Peninsula's submittal was one of three proposals selected from 16 proposals to be awarded a Regional Career Pathways Grant by the Virginia Community College System. The \$75,000 strategic planning grant will be facilitated by the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development and Thomas Nelson Community College.

The grant, part of a Ford Foundation Grant to Virginia, is aimed at developing an integrated and coordinated Career Pathway System for high school students and adults at all levels. Partners include businesses, post-secondary education, adult education, and secondary education.

The Peninsula grant will focus on the Advanced and Green Technologies in Manufacturing Career Pathway, with an estimated 20,000 new jobs proposed by companies on the Peninsula over the next six years. The program intends to align economic and workforce systems through a Comprehensive Career Pathways Strategic Plan for Advanced Technology.

This grant will be used to conduct a labor market study of jobs in green and advanced technologies in manufacturing on the Virginia Peninsula from 2010 through 2016, including how changes in the

(See GRANT on page 3)

## Workforce training: Good communication skills will help land a job

By Romy Mohta

Today's job market has significantly changed. We are competing globally for jobs in the Commonwealth and the country. As technology evolves so are the jobs. People need to keep up with the new skills in the market and sharpen the skills they currently possess. The practice of revolving employees by laying off workers during a slow economy and hiring new ones during an upturn makes the job market very volatile.

The basic part of a job application remains the same—a good resume. Schools are putting new people in the market without the practical experience they need to apply for a job. Resumes do not reflect the true skill sets and do not do justice for jobseekers.

Considering there are several thousand people without jobs, employers are getting picky in choosing an ideal employee. Very often, employers are not picking those who have been on the bench for a long period regardless of the skill sets. People currently without a job are competing with recent graduates from schools or various programs. Previous generous compensation packages are no

longer the norm. Employers are lowering cost while hiring new people and bringing in new talent.

As employers, our challenge is to find the right employee who is dedicated to the job and will satisfy the needs of our clients' projects. Certain skill sets are very difficult to find and are specific to a few job hunters. Effective communication is the key to everything. Several new jobseekers and some on the bench do not possess good communication skills. Employers want a "complete package" in every

employee, which would include—but are not limited to—current technology skills, oral and written communication skills and personal attitude, which could help a new employee adapt immediately after hire.

Everyone coming out of school should receive practical help when it comes to writing a resume and preparing for an interview. Mock interviews

should be carried out in school before graduation. Public speaking is something most of us fear. We have to overcome this fear when applying for a job, specifically when there is a panel of interviewers. For those in the job market, we council members should help guide them in the right direction. We should help provide the same training to those without a job as well as to recent graduates. Matching employers to potential employees will benefit us all in the Commonwealth.

One piece of advice I'd like to offer to jobseekers: If you need a job, be willing to travel. Several jobs require people to travel even with the advanced technology of video and web conferences. Are you willing to do so? Potential jobseekers should note they cannot just be the "best" in the market anymore as competition is very high. They must strive to be "better than the best" to garner employment with the right employer.

Do you have what it takes? Apply and never give up.

(Romy Mohta is president of Richmond Travels LLC.)

**Holidays are here. What would be an ideal gift? Helping others find a job would be the most ideal gift that one can give this holiday season.**

## Meet Kayla Henley: A young lady with a full plate, big heart and bright future



College student Kayla Henley finds time in her busy schedule to volunteer at two local elementary schools to help teach youngsters the importance of healthy eating.

She is a student, a professional and a volunteer. Kayla Henley, a 21-year-old senior at Southeast Culinary and Hospitality College, has little spare time on her hands. But the time she has is spent doing something she loves that profoundly impacts and enhances her local community.

Through a program called Chefs Move to School, Henley is teaching children about nutrition and positive eating habits. The program originated from First Lady Michelle Obama's nutrition initiative to encourage chefs to conduct nutrition programs in local schools. Henley's involvement has touched the lives of youngsters at both Washington-Lee Elementary School in Bristol, Va., as well as Anderson Elementary School in Bristol, Tenn.

"I am volunteering my time for this because we need to teach kids something about nutrition. We need to do something about the rates of childhood obesity," Henley says, and not just rely on the little time teachers have to dedicate to the subject. So many youngsters don't understand the importance of healthy eating habits, she laments. But by regularly emphasizing the benefits of good nutrition, she hopes to help children live healthier, more productive lives.

Currently, Henley also participates in the Workforce Investment Act Youth Program operated by People Inc. When she graduates from college in 2011 with an associate's degree in culinary arts and restaurant management, she'll intern through a WIA program at Grace Recovery, a residential treatment center for women with life-controlling problems such as substance abuse. She'll be head chef at the center, where she'll be able to use her skills and passion for nutrition by planning and preparing meals and teaching nutrition to the women housed there.

According to Traci Mitchell, senior youth workforce development for People Inc., "Kayla is a very talented young lady, and she will be a great asset to the 21st century workforce."

## VEC hosts third regional conference and reports new re-employment trends

On Oct. 14, the Virginia Employment Commission hosted its third in a series of four regional employer conferences being held throughout the Commonwealth this year. Like the preceding ones, this western region conference, held at the Hotel Roanoke, focused on the governor's jobs opportunity agenda. It featured various speakers who addressed topics of interest to the employer community.

Featured items on the agenda included such topics as on-the-job training, registered apprenticeship programs and the work opportunity tax credit program—all designed to save businesses labor dollars which transfer directly to bottom-line savings. The VEC welcomed guest speakers from other partner agencies such as the Virginia Community College System and the Virginia Department of Business Assistance, who explained how their programs can assist Virginia businesses.

One of the highlights of the day was the employer panel discussion, composed of three business owners/managers who shared how they use various business services offered by the VEC. Dr. Robert P. Leber, deputy commissioner of the VEC and special adviser to the governor on workforce development, was the luncheon speaker.

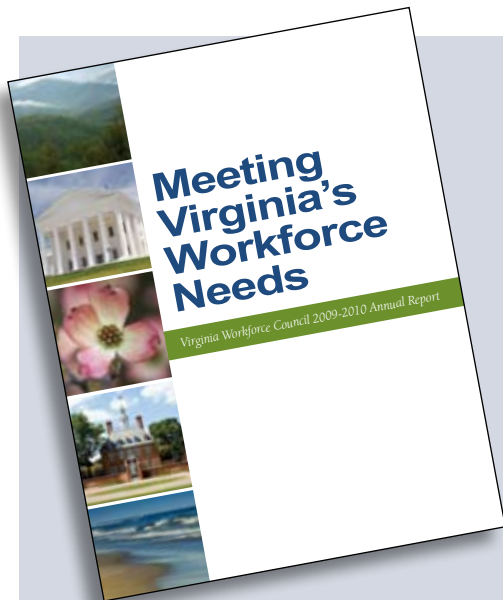
The last conference in the series is slated for Nov. 17 in Fredericksburg.

### Re-employment services update

Two trends seem to be emerging from re-employment services specialists' reports throughout Virginia: More jobseekers are declining re-employment services because they have returned to work, and more staffing companies and temporary service companies are recruiting on-site.

Attendance at job-search workshops is up after the summer lull. One Lynchburg area jobseeker reported she was able to apply what she learned to land a job offer from the area's largest employer. Today, she is an administrative assistant to its president.

Staff continues to join forces within their communities to bring additional information and services to jobseekers. For example, the Tri-Cities office near Petersburg now has a partnership with adult basic education and recently started its second GED® preparation class. 🌍



### Hot off the Web!

**VWC's 2009-2010 annual report is now available to read online. Please check it out to see how the Council helped Virginia's workforce this past year through education, training and partnerships.**

### Career Pathways

(continued from page 1)

economy and the emergence of green jobs will affect this sector. Once completed, the data will be used to develop a strategic plan to align programs, including GED® and middle college, to assist high school students and adults into those employment opportunities with the right skill sets.

The other two Regional Career Pathways Grants were awarded to community colleges in Charlotte County and at the foot of Clinch Mountains.

Southside Virginia Community College, with campuses in Alberta and Keysville, is using its funds to help adults aged 25 and older who lack a high school diploma or GED® and who are currently enrolled in adult education classes. The industry sectors involved are allied health, hospitality and service, corrections and construction trades.

Southwest Virginia Community College in Cedar Bluff will be implementing services and programs to help displaced workers, underemployed working adults, adult GED® graduates and candidates, secondary Tech Prep graduates and postsecondary Tech Prep students in the industry sector of energy.

The grants will run from August 2010 through December 2011. 🌍



*During the recent Future Focus Expo in Lynchburg which spotlighted STEM initiatives, students reacted with comments such as "this is great!" "awesome event" and "I didn't know there were so many job choices here!"*

### Central Virginia expo lets area students explore STEM careers

The fifth annual Future Focus Expo, an outreach program of the Region 2000 Technology Council, drew a record number of middle and high school students and exhibitors Oct. 12 to Liberty University in Lynchburg. Some 2,500 students, including all eighth graders from two area school systems, came to visit with representatives of more than 50 regional companies and organizations to learn more about the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Exhibitors from Region 2000 such as AREVA, Babcock & Wilcox, Wiley|Wilson, Centra and AMTI talked with students about available careers with their companies, and the education and training necessary for those careers. Area colleges and technical schools including Sweet Briar College, Randolph College, Liberty University and National College also provided students and their families with information about STEM careers.

Area middle school students had the chance to explore science and engineering through a series of technology challenges distributed to area schools a month before the Expo. More than 100 teams of students brought their final designs to the Expo for judging. Prizes were awarded to the winning teams.

Additionally, students were invited to explore STEM concepts in the Get Set Hands-On Challenge area. Activities included creating a geodesic dome out of marshmallows and toothpicks and exploring buoyancy concepts with helium balloons in a challenge provided by NASA/NIA.

The Future Focus Expo is just one of the programs the Technology Council and area companies support to get the next generation of workers interested in their community's emerging career paths. Other STEM initiatives the Tech Council provides include Lego leagues, robotics competitions, a STEM newsletter and Web portal, and a summer STEM career academy in partnership with Central Virginia Community College. 🌍

## Summer Youth Employment Program enjoys another fruitful year in 2010

The Virginia Community College System allocated \$1.2 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act state set-aside funds to the Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs). This money supplemented unexpended funds available to the LWIAs in order to continue the momentum of last summer's extended ARRA youth employment program, which ran from May 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010. Last year, the LWIAs expended about 90 percent of the initial allocation and served some 4,000 participants.

From May 1 through Sept. 30, 2010, the LWIAs served 1,751 participants. LWIAs provided work-readiness skills training and meaningful work experiences just as they did last summer. Highlights of this summer's program include:

- All of the local areas provided a summer program.
- All programs operated very well because of lessons learned from last summer.
- All partnerships established last year produced workplace experiences for participants relevant to their career interests.
- Some participants gained permanent employment.
- All programs received media exposure.
- Each LWIA had a culminating activity celebrating participants' success.

Many of the young adults experienced a culture shock when placed into employment, as the summer program was often their first work experience. For many, the experience was their first time being around people different from them and many were out of their comfort zone. Through the employability workshops, program staff showed youth how to interact in the workplace on a professional level and gave them tips to help them feel comfortable in a work environment.

All the localities reported they appreciated this program because of the structured activities and opportunities provided to these youth, such as exposing them to the world of work at various public and private places, and helping them develop good work ethics. They realized the benefits to their community because youth were afforded:

- Work experiences that enabled them to develop job skills and attitudes for successful employment.
- The opportunity to explore possible career paths.
- Opportunities to learn more about themselves and their capabilities.
- The chance to earn income, become responsible and reap the rewards of working.
- The chance to develop a work history and skills appropriate to help them obtain future jobs.

Even though the participant numbers this past summer were smaller than in 2009 due to the lower level of available funds, youth served received the benefits of an employment and training program that added value to their lives.

## Arlington Employment Center now open



Arlington County government and state dignitaries officially opened the Arlington Employment Center, LWIA 12's first One-Stop center, on Oct. 1.

Conveniently co-located within Arlington County's Department of Human Services Building, the center offers its constituents a wide variety of services. Customer now can receive access to job training services, apply for unemployment insurance, receive housing and other financial assistance, and gain access to public health services all in one location.

*(From left) Howard Feldstein, director of the Arlington Employment Center; Dr. Robert P. Leber, special adviser to the governor for workforce development and deputy commissioner of the Virginia Employment Commission; David Remick, executive director of the Alexandria/Arlington Workforce Investment Board; and Christopher Rieley, commercial lending officer of Virginia Heritage Bank and chair of the Alexandria/Arlington Workforce Investment Board, are on hand for the Arlington Employment Center's grand opening.*

## PCFWD partners with area Boys & Girls Clubs

The Peninsula Council for Workforce Development has partnered with the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Virginia Peninsula and has opened a Youth Career Café in the new Crossroads Village Boys & Girls Club and Workforce Development Center in Newport News. This innovative facility not only provides youth with the educational and recreational offerings of a traditional Boys & Girls Club, but it also houses a Youth Career Café.

"We are extremely excited about this new unique regional partnership with the Boys & Girl Clubs of the Virginia Peninsula. It allows both organizations to leverage resources and, more importantly, it allows us to extend our ability to expand the workforce readiness skills for young people on the Peninsula. This will further ensure that our employers will continue to have access to world-class workforce talent," says Matthew James, president and CEO of PCFWD.

"Our partnership with PCFWD will help ensure that young people develop the skills they will need to be successful in the workforce," adds Steve Kast, president and CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Virginia Peninsula. "The resources of the Youth Career Café will be available to our members from all of our clubs and to people throughout the community."

Members from other local clubs in Hampton, Newport News, York County, Gloucester County, Williamsburg and James City County who want to take advantage of the services offered through the café are provided transportation to the Crossroads Village Club.



*Members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Virginia Peninsula now can take advantage of the offerings of PCFWD's Youth Career Café at a new combined club-café at Crossroads Village in Newport News.*

## More than 300 jobs represented at Danville/Pittsylvania County Job Fair

Jobseekers flooded the sidewalks and wrapped around the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research in Danville Sept. 22 to meet with nearly 25 employers representing 300 or more jobs in the area. Skilled, professional, sales and entry-level job openings drew a diverse crowd of more than 1,550 jobseekers from throughout the region to a job fair sponsored by Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce, area Virginia Workforce Centers and the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board.

Laura Neal, one of the event planners, said the job fair was "a ray of hope for the community and a great way to connect qualified candidates with the many opportunities available." Attendees had the chance to personally meet one-on-one with human resource staff and hiring managers rather than just mailing in a resume or submitting an application online. Many companies noted that several candidates made great impressions and they welcomed the opportunity to put a face with a name.

"We have had a tremendous response from area employers. The great news is that we have jobs in our region," says Laurie Moran, CCE, president of Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce. Many employers were shocked by the turnout, which was much larger than expected. In fact, some even had to resort to writing contact information for qualified jobseekers when they ran out of handouts.

While most employers are still processing the large number of applications they received, others are currently conducting interviews. And a few, such as a



*The job fair in September in Danville was a huge success, attracting a diverse crowd of more than 1,550 jobseekers from throughout the region.*

local car dealer, have already put job fair attendees to work—in this instance, selling and detailing cars.

After meeting employers, candidates completed required paperwork on-site at professionally staffed

application stations where a mock computer lab was set up and application tables were stocked with pens and phonebooks for reference.

Those who attended job preparation workshops at the Community Resource Jamboree held at Averett University in mid-August were preregistered and granted early admission, allowing extended face-time with hiring managers. 🇺🇸

### Chairman's Perspective

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leanings may be, we all observed an interesting revival, if you will, of the Boston Tea Party after the November elections. If you are a history buff like me, this era of change is fascinating to watch and learn from. With change come new ideas and unique solutions proposed to the challenges we all face, particularly with our economy.

As we enter into the holiday season, we can give thanks for the resources abundant in this great Commonwealth and the possibilities for all to forge a career pathway and a new beginning. For all of those involved in Virginia's workforce development and delivery system—and thereby helping our fellow Virginians succeed and our business community flourish—THANK YOU! 🇺🇸



*Nearly 50 volunteers from several community agencies worked together to help jobseekers and employers make meaningful connections at the job fair sponsored by Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce, area Virginia Workforce Centers and the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board.*