

TO: Workforce Investment Board

DATE: 19 March 2003

FROM: Staff

For Action

For Information

For Discussion

SUBJECT: California Workforce Association 50 Stories

PROPOSED MOTION(S):

DISCUSSION: This is an annual publication by the California Workforce Association and is an opportunity for the 50 Local Workforce Investment Boards to highlight their area and accomplishments.

ATTACHMENT(S): Merced County Workforce Investment Board Story

Merced County Workforce Investment Board

WIB Chair: Rick Osorio, President of Osorio Financial

Dept of Workforce Investment Director: Andrea T. Baker

Area Snapshot

Merced County (pop. 218,815) is located in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, the world's most productive agricultural area, and spans from the coastal mountain range to the foothills of Yosemite National Park. Agriculture related industries are a major source of employment along with food processing, retailing, light manufacturing, and service industries. By the year 2010, it is expected that Merced County's population will grow by 18% to reach 266,700.

There are 83,700 residents in the labor force in Merced County, and unemployment rates are consistently in the double-digits. 25.4% of the County's residents live in poverty. With 8.9% of its population under age 5, and 34.5% under age 18, Merced County ranks number one throughout the state for highest proportion of youth population. Merced County is ethnically diverse, with 45.3% of its residents identified as Hispanic and 6.8% as Asian. Merced County is the proud home of the tenth University California campus.

Funding Sources

The One-Stop Service Centers of Merced County, operating under the name "Worknet of

Merced County," has facility operation costs of approximately \$2,249,170 per annum. Approximately 95% of these costs are from Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds. Partners contribute the remaining 5% through in-kind resources and include representatives from the Community College, State Employment Development Department, Merced County Office of Education, the Merced Adult School, Job Corps, Jobs for California Graduates, Central Valley Opportunity Center, Community Action Agency, California Department of Rehabilitation, Action Business Center, Experience Works, Merced Housing Authority, and Senior Community Employment Programs.

Services Delivered/People Served

The Worknet One-Stop System in the Merced Local Workforce Investment Area consists of one full service center in the City of Merced, an affiliate in Los Banos, and one in Livingston. In addition to the full array of services offered in the One-Stops. Merced County Office of Education and Jobs for California Graduates are there to serve Younger and Older Youth populations. A minimum of 1,063 Younger Youth and 500 Older Youth will be served over a 20-month period.

A "Day Pass" system tracks the daily attendance of customers and services they receive. This allows the department to collect information on core services used and obtain other pertinent feedback. In the year 2002 a total of 42,615, customers

received One Stop services, an average of 3,551 customers per month. Customers received at least one Core “A” service, with the majority accessing multiple services. All Core, Intensive and Training Services are provided through the Worknet One-Stop System.

Linkages with the Private Sector

The Worknet One-Stop System Business Services Unit was formed through the direction of the Merced County Workforce Investment Board. The unit’s emphasis is on providing customized services to employers such as screening to the employers specifications and referring qualified applicants and also providing On the Job Training services through the Worknet system. The Unit provides information and vouchering for tax credits such as Enterprise Zone Vouchering, LAMBRA, along with Conditional Certification for Work Opportunity Tax Credits. A total of 2778 requests for Enterprise Zone/LAMBRA were screened with 1017 vouchers issued.

Partnerships with the economic development community to survey the needs of businesses and access retention services are ongoing. Worknet utilizes the Employer Advisory Council seminars to provide business customers with legislative updates, labor laws, and management tools. Support from Buckley Radio, local businesses and Worknet partners have provided an opportunity for job seekers and employers to meet through two annual Job Fairs and Westside Expo. Participation in Chamber of Commerce events continues to strengthen the linkage of Worknet with the private sector.

Initiatives

Local hospitals, Merced College and the Workforce Investment Board have committed funding to address the critical shortage of nurses in our local labor market. Focus groups will be initiated for careers selected by the Workforce Investment Board to identify skill gaps. The results will be used to improve training and to prepare individuals to be competitive in the workforce. A new childcare initiative has been inspired by the Hewlett Packard Foundation and the anticipated opening of UC Merced. Worknet will participate in this initiative by addressing the training needs of the childcare career cluster.

The Chamber of Commerce, Merced County Economic Development Corporation and the workforce system is currently developing a series of Workforce Academies with a focus on employers in Merced County. The first Academy is scheduled for June 2003 and was made possible with a grant from Department of Labor and SBC.

Through the Merced County Workforce Investment Board Education and Employers Committee, the Youth Employability Card program has been developed and implemented. This was a collaborative effort with the Merced County Office of Education, Merced County High Schools with the goal to have the business community fully support the card by requesting it during an interview. The card

certifies that the bearer has achieved a minimum GPA, completes all assignments, has minimum absences and tardies, and works well with others.

Funds received from the Department of Rehabilitation and Employment Development Department enhanced universal program access to the One-Stops for the disabled with the purchase of adjustable computer tables, specialized keyboards and software and a TTY system.

Alumni Story

“I stumbled upon the Worknet Employment Resource Center quite by accident. Expecting nothing more than a wall of job listings, the receptionist responded to my apparent puzzled look with a courteous introduction to Worknet. As a first time visitor, I was guided to Janie Melin, an Employment Training Specialist. I found her to be very cheerful, and her positive attitude to be contagious.

We discussed the circumstances leading up to my career change, work history, education, skills, etc. Once she had a general idea about my interests and abilities, Mrs. Melin explained how to use the Caljobs Website to access local employment opportunities. I was then given a tour of the Center’s wealth of resources. Everything one might need to assist with their job search could be found here. What a fantastic concept! In parting, she assured me that I would have no trouble finding a job. (However, if I did experience trouble, various training programs were available). Her kind words were an encouragement, and I left with more confidence than I had entered with.

The Caljobs Website led me to an appealing position at the Housing Authority of the County of Merced, to which I applied. Knowing that a typing certificate would be required in order to verify speed, I returned to Worknet to utilize practice on the typing program. Feeling a little awkward, I confessed to Employment & Training Specialist Wendy Shaw, that I was not a very good typist. She disputed, saying, “I think you are better than you realize.” Again I was encouraged.

The Housing Authority’s hiring process involved: written exam, formal interview, physical, drug test, background check, informal interview, and “*the dreaded typing certification.*” With the help of the Worknet resources and its dedicated staff, I not only obtained the typing certificate, but also an exciting new job with a highly esteemed organization.

Once hired, I learned that my new position included assisting at Worknet periodically. What a privilege!

- Stephanie Busbea