

SWWDB Update

A publication describing matters of interest regarding the services and programs of the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board



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SALES CAREER APPEALS TO RYAN BUSWELL

When General Motors left Janesville, Ryan Buswell considered a transfer, but having two boys, now ages 12 and 10, he decided he wasn't going to 'chase GM.' Instead, he took the 'buyout' and then decided on pursuing a field that he felt would offer numerous opportunities and fit his personality—sales. He is now working for American Awards and Promotions in Milton and he couldn't be happier.

"My brother was in sales, and we have very similar personalities, so I figured this would be a good field to get into," he explained. He found the American Awards position almost immediately following his graduation from Blackhawk Technical College in May, 2010. "I had only pursued two positions, one in insurance, and the other at American Awards," Ryan said. In fact, he was already offered the insurance job (he had previously earned his insurance license) when the American Awards position was offered. He felt that position would fit him better.

"Ryan gave the best interview, and we interviewed many," said Mark Warren, who with his wife Lori own American Awards. "He also is well-qualified, with his BTC marketing degree." Mark also cited the fact Ryan "has the enthusiasm to succeed. Rather than sitting around waiting for things to happen, his motivation is significant," Mark added.

Ryan, now 38 years old, was able to complete his BTC marketing degree in one-and-a-half years, as he had earned some previous credits. He had been at GM almost 13 years. He is very involved in his community as a youth sports coach plus other activities, so he plans on remaining in the Janesville-Milton area. He has been taking additional classes and seminars through the sales industry, and even has the options of earning his bachelors or masters degrees, much of it online. He truly enjoys working at American Awards and plans on being there for a long time.

"I really appreciate the



Ryan Buswell in front of American Awards & Promotions in Milton.

help I received from the Dislocated Worker Program through the AFL-CIO LETC assistance," he said. "I also now really appreciate the types of programs that assisted me and many others," he added, saying as a taxpayer, he likes to see that his (and others') tax dollars are being spent wisely to help those with a need such as he had. "It provided me with a number of options, and I was able to take advantage of it to help me and my sons."

TAYLOR GOES FROM PAINTING FLAGPOLES TO PLCs



“It (Dislocated Worker assistance) allowed me to enroll during hard times and get out faster into the workforce.”

---Scott Taylor

When Scott Taylor dropped out of the 9th grade to travel across the country painting flagpoles, he never dreamed he'd eventually go back to school to earn a college diploma. But after several jobs and many years, he has done just that. “A friend really talked me into taking that painting job—it was a kind of ‘spur-of-the-moment’ thing,” Scott said. But he lasted six years with B & D Enterprises. Scott was 21 when his son was born. “I knew I had to settle down.”

The 34-year-old Janesville resident recently started work with Mueller Service and Equipment Co., Inc., Monroe, as a PLC Programmer and panel builder. Mueller specializes in the sale, installation, and service of systems and equipment for the dairy industry. But it took a layoff to get him into that field.

Freedom Plastics had provided that ‘steady employment’ for 10 years before they closed their Janesville facility. Scott had actually started classes part-time at Blackhawk Technical College two years prior to the Freedom closing, but when it happened, he was able to take classes full-time, with the assistance of Dislocated Worker funds. “I didn’t think I would be eligible, but several of my classmates told me to check it out and I qualified,” he explained. Funding helped with tuition, tools and day care. With a (now) 12-year-old son and two-year-old daughter, who was born one month after Freedom Plastics closed, assistance was welcomed.

FIRST TASK—EARN GED

Scott actually started at BTC in 2006, when he earned his GED. He completed the Electromechanical

Technology program at BTC this year and started at Mueller in mind-June. It didn’t completely eliminate time away from home, as there is periodic travel, such as one of his first jobs, which was to travel to Kentucky to assist in solving problems at a cheese factory. Plus the commute to Monroe takes about an hour each way. But he is home enough and stability of the job provides the comfort Scott has been seeking. The company, which has been in existence for many years (and has had several name changes), has about 10 employees. Scott is responsible for a number of duties, which will probably increase as he grows with the company. “Hopefully, as the duties increase, so should the pay,” he smiled.

“I couldn’t have done this without the Dislocated Worker assistance I received,” Scott said. “It allowed me to enroll during hard times and get out faster into the work force,” he added, saying his case workers—Nancy Alseth, Kris Case, and Dave Shaw—all gave tremendous help. But it was truly Scott’s determination and perseverance which allowed him to progress from a 9th grade dropout to the success he has now achieved.

JACKIE NARVAEZ HAS 'LAST LAUGH' ON HER CHILDREN

When Jackie Narvaez decided to return to school to further her occupational prospects, her children 'needed' her a bit. But when it was over, she asked them, 'Did you make the Honors List all four semesters?' They did not have a positive response. She even helped her children with some of their homework. "I don't think they took my going back to school seriously—but now they know how much it meant to my advancement," she explained. Her children are now 24, 21, and 18.

For Jackie, now 40, returning to school led to an excellent position with Spectrum Brands-Rayovac in Fennimore. It took a layoff from Philips Corporation-Advance Transformer in Boscobel, where she had worked for 12 years, to get her moving in the educational direction. Philips closed its Boscobel facility, moving production to its three Mexico plants in November, 2008. "I'd never been laid off—this was a totally new experience," Jackie explained. "I waited until after the holidays to start looking for work," when she landed a third-shift job that paid a pittance. "It wasn't what I was looking for, so I decided to return to school," she said. She seriously considered nursing, but the program was filled so she combined her prior supervisory experience at Philips with the Supervisory

Management program at Southwest Wisconsin Technical College/ "I had the experience—I just needed the education," she said.

In her accelerated program, a number of her classes were online, which, when combined with the fact almost half of her classmates were much younger than her, could've created some problems. But Jackie had the right attitude and drive for success. "I learned a lot from the diversity of the students," she said. "It helped me to prepare for locating employment."

She also was assisted by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Dislocated Worker Program along with the TAA program, which provided assistance with books, tuition, and transportation costs.

LANDS JOB PRIOR TO DEGREE

Jackie had completed three of the four semesters and decided she would apply for a job, even though she hadn't yet earned her associate degree. "It all happened so quickly," she said. "I applied on a weekend and by mid-week was hired as a third-shift machine operator by Rayovac in January," she said. She didn't want to wait until May (graduation) when she'd be competing with many other recent graduates.

Although initially her employer suggested she

apply for a supervisory position at the completion of her program, her supervisor approached her after about three weeks on the job and asked if she'd be interested in a third shift supervisory position. She accepted yet still completed her degree on time in May, 2010.

"I'm sure my lead position at Philips helped me to land this supervisory job, but the education sealed it," Jackie said. She already has a bachelor's degree in her sights. "Once you back to school, you realize the value of education. I would recommend to anyone considering it to give it a try—I think you'll see how much it can help you," she said, adding that her case workers and counselors were invaluable aids. "I didn't realize all of the resources available. Those in similar situations should definitely check it out," she added.

One thing is for sure. Her children know that their mother can and has succeeded, and that education's value cannot be overestimated.

"I'm sure my lead position at Philips helped me to land this supervisory job, but the education sealed it."

---Jackie Narvaez

VETERAN'S & COMMUNITY JOB FAIR DRAWS OVER 300

A Veterans' and Community Job Fair, held on Friday, July 15 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Army National Guard Armory, 2700 Kennedy Dr., Beloit, attracted hundreds (340 is the official count) of job seekers, who met with business reps and HR reps from over 30 local employers.

With a theme of Dress for Success, those attending were asked to bring resumes and complete job applications. Attendees were also eligible to apply for state and federal benefits and receive information about loans, health care, and education benefits.

Veteran's Representative Charles Jones spearheaded the effort to bring these resources together. Thanks goes out to Charles and the many others who helped to organize, sponsor and participate in other ways to ensure the success of this community event. In fact, Charles, along with Stephanie Luebke, Edward Schroeder and Dave Shaw all received Veteran Program Incentive Awards for their tremendous efforts in creating this successful Job Fair! Congrats to all!!



With plans to open in early 2012, St. Mary's Hospital drew many applicants looking to be hired for the numerous jobs to become available.



Business reps, like these from Genencor, were busy all day as job seekers like Alan Honor asked questions and completed applications.



Charles Jones, right, speaks with Regional Veterans' Supervisor Rob Stigler.

CRAIG BUNKER IS A 'SMOOTH OPERATOR'

Being out of school for over 20 years, when Craig Bunker of Milton was laid off from Lear Seating, returning to school was a real challenge. "It was a hard adjustment for me, but I put my mind to being successful, and it has paid off," Craig explained. He recently started working for Smooth Operators of Darien, WI as a Diesel Mechanic, and he couldn't be happier.

He actually started there part-time before even graduating from Blackhawk Technical College (BTC), but her became a full-time worker on May 16. The 40-year-old utilized Dislocated

Worker and TAA funds to assist with tuition, books, and some limited help with transportation and tools. "I couldn't have gone back to school without the help," he said. Supporting a wife, one child of his own plus three stepchildren placed a major strain on their finances. But he indicated having a light at the end of the tunnel in the form of a job was a major incentive. "Jodi Olson (his case worker) was extremely helpful," he said. "She made the transition very easy for me."

Craig decided on the diesel mechanic field over auto technology because it had a

better chance of a larger salary. While the company's other mechanic is working mainly on trailers, Craig's area of concentration is on the trucks. The company hauls tractors and equipment, specializing in energy-related systems and equipment, many of which are time-sensitive. "I may be looking to advance in the future, but for now I'm happy with this job at Smooth Operators and I plan to give them the best I have," he emphasized. "I'm just thankful and excited about the support I received from TAA and the Dislocated Worker programs and also Smooth Operators," he added.



"I put my mind to being successful, and it has paid off."
---Craig Bunker

FOR MICHAEL EWERS, TWO DEGREES IS BETTER THAN ONE

Obtaining an associate degree in Electromechanical Technology would be enough for many. But combining that with a Business Management degree would open up many more occupational opportunities, and that is just what Michael Ewers has planned for his future.

"I enjoy school now, but I used to actually hate school," he explained. "It was very difficult losing my job, but in the long run, it may have been the best thing that happened to me," he added. He maintained a 3.54 GPA at BTC. In fact, on his first day back to school he had an algebra test. "That was one of my easiest classes in high school," he said. But when the instructor directed the students to place their books under their seats after reviewing the syllabus, Michael got a 64%. "That was a 'wake up call' for me—I ended up getting an A in that class," he smiled.

He's now attending Concordia University twice a week, where he plans on earning his Bachelor's degree in Business Management in December, 2012, after having graduated from BTC in May, 2011. "My goal is to manage a production line," he said. Michael, a Clinton High School graduate, was employed at Stoughton Trailer from 2003-07. When work dried

up, he left and worked at Avid Pallet Co., a Hendricks Holding Co., as a Production Supervisor, but when GM shut down and Chrysler slowed due to the economy, the company was severely affected, and Michael was again looking for work.

"Supporting my wife and four boys created some real hardships," he said. "I wouldn't have had the nerve or motivation to return to school, but the WIA Dislocated Worker program provided the resources to allow me to do that, and it has been a real blessing." Cyndi Pohl, Michael's most recent case worker, knew he would succeed. "He's a very eager, motivated individual as evidenced by his educational and occupational successes," she said. "He even pursued his work search prior to his BTC graduation, which led to his quick placement immediately after completing his degree."

It's not that Michael is performing his duties at normal speed. He's doubled up on his Concordia classes, allowing him to earn his degree in a quicker amount of time, attending twice a week from 6-10 p.m. In between, he attends his kids' football games, and by the way, did we mention he's now back working as a Maintenance Mechanic at Stoughton Trailers? He was hired a week after he completed his BTC classes.



Michael Ewers proudly displays his BTC diploma

"The management aspect of my future career is very important to me," he said. "With my prior education, experience, and combining of two career fields, I feel I have numerous opportunities to either continue in my current position, enhance promotional opportunities, or have doors open for other opportunities should they arise," he explained. For someone who disliked school earlier in his life, Michael Ewers has completed an 'educational transformation!'

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'KICK START YOUR CAREER' WORKSHOP VIA TV

For the first time, the Statewide Videoconferencing system was used to assist job seekers through a videoconferencing program titled "Kick Start Your Career." There were 11 participants at the Janesville Job Center site (shown below), and another eight at the Platteville site, with 16 sites participating across the state. The group was welcomed by Deputy Secretary of the DWD Reggie Newson (shown on the screen). While there were a few problems such as background noise and powerpoint accessibility on a few of the systems, for the first effort things went fairly well. It is anticipated that use of this system will grow substantially, saving dollars and time and making resources and expertise more readily available.



About the SWWDB...

The Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (SWWDB) serves a six-county area in the Southwest corner of Wisconsin. We are a dynamic collaboration of private and public leaders working together

to promote innovation and quality in local workforce development activities.

The Board meets on a quarterly schedule to address workforce development issues and provide

oversight to the eight Southwest Job Center offices located in the area. Committee members meet on an as-needed basis to provide guidance and direction on topical issues.

LEGISLATORS VISIT JOB CENTERS



Left-- [Fr. Left] Reps. Amy Loudenberg, Joe Knilians and Janis Ringhand gain insights from SWWDB Exec. Dir. Bob Borremans (arm raised) at the Rock Co. Job Center on 9-16. Rep. Evan Wynn was also in attendance but had to leave prior to the tour.



Below—Borremans (back to camera) speaks with Sen. Tim Cullen (left) and Manuel Vasquez (right), representing US Senator Ron Johnson on 9-19.

In addition, Rep. Travis Tranel visited the Job Center in Fennimore on 9-23.

SEPTEMBER 21 JOB FAIR



Over 1,300 job seekers and almost 40 employers offering almost 1,000 jobs made this Job Fair one of the largest ever offered in Rock County.