

SWWDB Update



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

BERGAMOT LAYOFF DOESN'T SLOW DOWN CHRISTINE HUFFMAN

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When 46-year-old Christine Huffman of Clinton was laid off from Bergamot Brass Works in Delavan, she could 'see the handwriting on the wall.' "When I started there 16 years ago, we had 120 employees. It was down to 30 when I got my layoff notice," she said. She started there in e bay sales and web site development, "but they kept piling on more and more responsibilities."

But she didn't sit around and rue her situation. She contacted Cyndi Pohl, Career Specialist with the Manpower Group at the Rock County Job Center, and Cyndi got her moving quickly. Although her husband was working, almost all of the their income was going toward their mortgage, plus supporting two children, aged 10 and 8, was creating financial hardships.

At first, Christine decided to change fields and go into medical coding. With the assistance of WIOA,

she enrolled in a six-month medical coding on-line program, which she almost immediately realized was not for her. "I'm not good at starting a new career, so I decided to stick with something close to what I was doing at Bergamot, which was serving as their controller," Christine explained.

She soon located a position as assistant administrator of payroll at PepsiCo. She replaced a person that suddenly decided to retire without notice, and thus Christine could not learn from her and there were few directions to follow. "I'm still learning, however, I've been able to figure out most of the job, but it is challenging," Christine said. While her new salary isn't as high as her Bergamot job, it is close, plus she knows that there's no wondering whether the check will be backed or need to be held.

"Cyndi was very helpful," Christine said. "When I was nervous, she encouraged me and helped me to stick with it."



Christine said that even when she was going to school, trying to learn a whole new language, and it wasn't working out for her, Cyndi gave her extra time and support to make the change. Cyndi also provided Christine with resume development, links to job searches and appropriate web sites.

"Christine is a very smart person with a lot of perseverance. She always kept the doors of opportunity open and I knew she would succeed in finding self-sufficient employment in an area she is a good fit," Cyndi said. "I truly wish her much continued success!"

"I'm not sure about my future, as far as further education...for now I'm just trying to learn my new job," Christine said. But she's happy to be with PapsiCo.

BARBARA CONWAY ACTS FAST TO LOCATE NEW JOB

When Barbara Conway of Janesville lost her office manager position at Rehab Resources, where she had worked for 16 years [22 years in total as she was a physical therapist there from 1994-99], she was frightened but also motivated to locate new employment. Rehab Resources, a pediatric therapy facility, closed its Janesville office, although they still operate in other locations.



"I'm really enjoying my new job. I've met many helpful and pleasant co-workers."

---Barb Conway

"With Cyndi's help, I was able to prepare and locate a great job with Dean in patient account services," Barb said. Cyndi Pohl, WIOA Career Specialist, is Barb's case manager. "She helped me with many things--- resume preparation, job searching, practicing interviewing, preparing applications and more," Barb said. "In fact, I was so well-prepared for my interview with Dean Clinic that I anticipated their questions and was super well-prepared, which helped me to land that job," she added. Barb, who just turned 56, started at Dean on February 15 and recently completed her training.

"Barb is such a well-rounded person. She is very smart, pleasant, and easy to get along with," Cyndi said. "I just knew landing a job wouldn't be a problem for her. She always accepted my suggestions graciously."

"I actually also had an interview at Mercy when the Dean position became available to me. I'm glad I took the Dean job because I didn't hear back from Mercy for a long time, and then it was just to let me know they hired someone else," Barb said. She also landed the Dean position just as her last week of

unemployment insurance was running out. "The timing was perfect," she added. "The only drawback is the travelling distance, but I plan ahead and now have everything timed out well to be punctual."

Barb has an extensive background in a variety of medical disciplines. In addition to attending UW-Eau Claire for three semesters, she earned her associate degree from Blackhawk Tech in 1990 in Physical Therapist Assistant, and she is currently working toward earning her MedCerts certification, funded through WIOA. She also has extensive experience in insurance, billing and coding, and other administrative duties. "Barb's tenacious drive to work and complete MedCerts training proves the reason she is so successful," Cyndi said. "It's been a true pleasure working with her."

Barb and her husband have two grown children, both of whom are college graduates.

"I'm really enjoying my new job," Barb said. "I've met many helpful and pleasant co-workers." She said she was scared when she lost her Rehab Resources job, but Cyndi was a source of comfort and inspiration. "I would get frustrated, but Cyndi helped a lot. She still keeps in touch and calls and emails me. I was fortunate to have had her for my mentor," Barb added.

FSET HELPS JAMES EDGELL TO LAND PRODUCTIVE JOB

It has been a roundabout means to find a good job for James Edgell of Beloit, but with the assistance of the FSET (Foodshare Employment and Training) program and his FSET Specialist Nancy Alseth, it appears James has found where he belongs.

He began at Jamco Products, a manufacturer of carts, trucks, platforms, cabinets, tables, workbenches and other similar products in South Beloit, in January, 2015, first through a temp service (PeopleLink) and then on their full-time staff payroll in April, where he now receives a higher wage along with regular raises, fringe benefits, and other 'perks.'

James was not required to enroll in FSET...he volunteered. An 11th grade high school dropout in 2002, James worked at a number of jobs the past dozen years, initially at McDonald's and then as a press assistant for a printer followed by carpentry and construction jobs. "When I found out about FSET, I knew they could help me get my occupational career on track," James said. Nancy helped him complete an effective resume, provided him with gas vouchers to help locate his new job, and

provided work boots and other necessary paraphernalia for his job.

"FSET helped me more than I ever thought it would," James said. "I really like working at Jamco and would like to stay there for quite a long time," he added. He is also considering returning to school at BTC to complete earning his GED.

"James was very good to work with," Nancy Alseth said. "He took suggestions very well, had input into his planning and job preparation, and was a real pleasure to be with." She said he will soon be exiting the FSET program.

The 33-year-old James, whose main job at Jamco is ensuring the carts are prepared for shipping, works the second shift and has not missed any time on the job. "I was really prepared for my interview due to the help Nancy provided, and I thank her and FSET for that assistance," James said.

His future looks bright. We wish him the best!



HIRING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

A total of five hiring events were held in March and April, some of them larger ones and a couple of smaller ones.

Job Service Employment Specialist Heath Bierman indicated attendance numbers have been lower, but part of that can be attributed to more jobs being filled and fewer being available. He said last year there were 1,300 jobs available at the mid-March Hiring Event...this year there were 700.

Following are the summaries of each of those events, with photos from them shown on this page and the following page:

March 16, Hiring Event at Rock County Job Center, 9 a.m.-noon
132 job-seekers, 43 employers with 700 job openings

April 5 Hiring Event at Beloit Housing Authority, 1-3 p.m., 37 job-seekers, 7 employers, 155 job openings

April 14, Hiring Event at Rock County Job Center, 1-4 p.m., 136 job seekers, 46 employers, 900+ job openings

April 20 Job Fair, Richland Center, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., 82 job-seekers, 28 employers, 430+ job openings

April 26 Job Fair, at BTC Monroe Campus, 99 job-seekers, 28 employers, 475+ job openings

MARCH, APRIL SEES FLURRY OF HIRING EVENTS

ROCK COUNTY JOB CENTER, MARCH 16



The Dane County Sheriff's Office was seeking qualified candidates for a variety of positions within their organization at the March 16 Hiring Event.

BELOIT HOUSING AUTHORITY EVENT, APRIL 5



Interested job seekers talk to a PeopleLink Staffing rep at the Hiring Event held at the Beloit Housing Authority on April 5.

GREEN COUNTY/MONROE EVENT, APRIL 26



HIRING EVENT, ROCK COUNTY JOB CENTER, APRIL 14



Left---Shown is an overview of the Hiring Event held April 14 at the Rock County Job Center. The 46 employers in attendance offered over 900 jobs to those who inquired.

Right—CCLS (Creative Community Living Services, Janesville) staff were very busy as they were looking for qualified caregivers and a community protection coordinator at the April 14 event at the Rock County Job Center.



Below—MPC, Inc. of Richland Center was at the April 20 event seeking machine operators.

RICHLAND CENTER, APRIL 20

Below, Right---Tractor Central of Eau Claire was at the Richland Center Regional Job Fair looking for service technicians, counter parts sales associates, and equipment sales personnel.



CULINARY ACADEMY TO BEGIN JUNE 22

Following the success of the Welding and CNC Bootcamps offered the past two years, a new Culinary Academy is being offered for the first time starting June 22 and running through August 11.

Co-sponsored by the SWWDB, Blackhawk Technical College and Manpower, classes will be held at BTC's Central Campus from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Participants must be 18 or older, have an 8th grade reading level, and be able to lift a minimum of 40 or more pounds. The program is designed for participants to learn to cook for institutional settings rather than restaurants.

Participants successfully completing the curriculum (two credits of food service sanitation plus certification) will be able to prepare foods and have knowledge in areas such as breakfast, lunch, sandwiches, yeast breads, desserts, salads, soups, basic nutrition and menus.

Techniques will include sauteeing, roasting, frying, braising, grilling, baking, and short-order cooking. They will be learning on both large and small equipment.

The class will be limited to 12 students. Participants will come from dislocated worker, adult and FSET clients looking to improve their employment possibilities.

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.

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MICHELLE LOMAX KEEPS CLIMBING LADDER OF SUCCESS

In the July 1, 2012 issue of the *SWWDB Update* newsletter, we highlighted Michelle Lomax of Beloit, who had earned her GED with WIA funding help after having worked as an administrator at Alcoa.

In her 15 years at Alcoa, Michelle had climbed the ranks despite not having her high school diploma, but when Alcoa closed, she had some hard decisions to make. Foremost was disclosing her little-known secret---she had never completed high school.

But she decided dropping out wasn't going to define her, and she completed her GED requirements and tests in November, 2011.

We're happy to report that Michelle is graduating this month from BTC, with a degree in Human Resource Management, and will present a speech at that ceremony.

In addition, she was the keynote speaker at BTC's Student Recognition Award ceremony and received awards for Intern of the Year, Student Organization, Outstanding Leadership, and Campus Ambassador, among others. "It's been a long haul for me, but I've accomplished my goal," Michelle stated. "From starting with my GED, I never thought I'd go this far, but determination kept me going," she added.

After being out of school for 22 years, returning for her GED wasn't easy, but she vowed to take her education as far as could. "Stay focused, don't get discouraged, and just go for what you want," she said.

Congratulations, Michelle, on a job well done!!!

