

The Daily Item

LIFE DELIVERED DIGITALLY



Photos



Justin Engle of Montandon takes a moment to fill out applications during a job fair presented by The Daily Item at the Best Western Country Cupboard Inn in Lewisburg Thursday afternoon. Engle stopped by with friend, Alan Shelley, both are looking for work and had a productive afternoon talking with employers and filling out applications. Liz Rohde / The Daily Item



Brick Kepler, left, director of the Professional Drivers Academy, Milton, talks with Michael A. Shannon II, of Williamsport, about a career in trucking during a job fair presented by The Daily Item on Thursday. Liz Rohde /



Shannon Miller, executive director at CPWDC, speaks to attendees at the Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce monthly meeting at the Carriage Corner Restaurant in Mifflinburg Thursday March 8, 2010. Liz Rohde /

Published April 09, 2010 06:33 am - MIFFLINBURG -- If you're one of the approximately 15 percent of adults out of work in central Pennsylvania, an assessment of your skills may increase your job-hunt chances, workforce officials say.

Skills assessment could aid job hunt

WorkKeys program offers certificates

By Tricia Pursell

The Daily Item

MIFFLINBURG -- If you're one of the approximately 15 percent of adults out of work in central Pennsylvania, an assessment of your skills may increase your job-hunt chances, workforce officials say.

Shannon Miller, executive director, and Rachel Smith, assistant director of the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corp., based in Lewisburg, offered insights and advice concerning high unemployment numbers during the Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce monthly meeting on Thursday in Mifflinburg.

In 2006, after repeated conversations with employers, Miller said, there was concern about a tight labor force. "Now we are in the reverse."

There are now more workers than jobs.

Miller presented highlights of one of the organization's newest programs, called WorkKeys. In 2006, the program began offering job seekers career readiness certificates and assessments and helping businesses to choose the right workers.

Recently, she said, a business came to a local CareerLink office looking to fill 10 positions. More than 700 people showed up, interested in applying. Career assessments of each of these workers, she said, would have better assisted the company in choosing the best workers for the jobs.

WorkKeys is a tool that measures the work readiness skills of an individual, not their grade level, she said. Offered through ACT, which has measured students' preparedness for college for 50 years, this new program measures a person's preparedness for work. The tool helps the workforce development corporation to "bridge the gap between what skills they have and what they need for a particular occupation," Miller said. WorkKeys measures communication, problem-solving, personal skills and interpersonal skills.

ACT has profiled more than 16,000 jobs in the United States. Nearly 3,000 people in the region have these certificates, which can be attached to applications or resumes. Approximately 400 regional employers have signed commitment forms, meaning they understand and recognize the certificates.

The organization's seven CareerLink offices are seeing more and more people who are really looking for guidance and advice to prepare for the future in a competitive job world, Smith said.

Through stimulus funding, the workforce corporation has helped 275 adults and dislocated workers and 700 youths with summer employment. An additional 2,800 workers in more than 200 companies have been assisted through industry partnerships. Specialized programming also is offered to assist job seekers with honing their soft skills and interviewing techniques, so they can "sell themselves," Smith said.



Rachel Smith, assistant director at CPWDC, speaks to attendees at the Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce monthly meeting at the Carriage Corner Restaurant in Mifflinburg Thursday March 8, 2010.
Liz Rohde /

In the nine-county region, unemployment totals 8.9 percent. Those numbers, however, do not include discouraged workers who have given up looking for jobs, Smith said. Or those who have obtained part-time jobs to pay their bills and still are looking for full-time employment. If they are included, the unemployment rate is closer to 15 percent.

The region, Smith said, consists of 600,000 people and 300,000 people who are eligible for the workforce. Approximately 1,800 non-farm jobs were lost between February 2009 and February 2010.

Information is available by calling the corporation at 522-0600 or visiting www.cpwdc.org.