

Expo Matches Workers to Gas-Related Companies

Sun Gazette, October 17, 2010

Companies doing business in the Marcellus Shale are moving to the area and creating jobs for local workers.

About 1,000 of the jobs were available at Saturday's Marcellus Career Expo at the Pennsylvania College of Technology field house.

The expo, hosted by the college, Williamsport-Lycoming Chamber of Commerce, Marcellus Shale Education and Training Center and Pennsylvania CareerLink, attracted 20 Marcellus Shale-related companies.

"The expectation for the expo is real simple: to connect the local population to a growing industry," said Jeffrey Lorson, director of the education and training center.

According to an event program, companies were looking for, among other things, receptionists, sales staff, crane and heavy equipment operators, commercial drivers, general laborers, mechanics, drillers, derrickhands, and engineers.

"There are definitely local jobs available," said Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President Jason Fink. "There are a lot of folks saying people are being brought in from out of state for these jobs. That's not what we're seeing from these companies. They are hiring local."

That was true of Sooner Pipe LLC, a Texas-based company which this year opened a pipe distribution facility in Montoursville.

"We need to hire approximately eight laborers at the beginning of the year," said Dennis Holt, facility yard manager.

The company already has hired 11 people, all of them local residents, Holt said.

"Our company wanted to hire all local people and we're purchasing everything local - all our equipment and services," Holt said.

Mark Farabee, district manager for Halliburton, which operates a dry cement mixing plant in the Borough of Montgomery, said his company is expanding and anticipates hiring 300 people by the end of next year.

"We definitely have a lot of job openings," Farabee said.

About 80 percent of those hires will be local, he said.

Express Energy Services, a company with an office in Montgomery, has 62 employees, said Casey Morris, general manager.

"The majority are local," Morris said, adding, "We're always looking to hire employees. I just hired 12 people within the last three or four days."

According to Morris, jobs are available, but with 60-to-100 hour workweeks, they are not for everybody.

"It's a hard industry and a lot of people don't want to work the hours," Morris said. "We're 24 hours. When they call, we go. It can be any time, day or night."

"We have some real good local (employees), but we go through a lot of people to get the right ones," he said.

Employees generally start with the company making entry level money, he said, but they can, within two years, make significantly higher wages.

Those wages, coupled with abundant overtime hours, can translate into significant annual earnings, he said

"With all the overtime, they make good money," Morris said. "Starting out, they don't make as much, but in two years (they can make) a lot of money if they're trainable. I can see them making \$60,000 to \$100,000 a year."

Linda Van Der Pool, Lycoming County CareerLink site administrator, said there has been a significant increase in the number of gas industry jobs available to local workers.

"The employer base is much larger than it used to be," Van Der Pool said.

CareerLink produces a gas industry job listing and updates the listing weekly throughout the state's Marcellus Shale region, Van Der Pool said.

Agency clients can search for jobs in the entire state, or personalize a search to a specific county or mile radius, she said.

The agency matches workers with potential companies, but also conducts workshops to help them with resume writing, interview and computer skills, she said.

"We also have one-on-one case management for adults and dislocated workers," she said.

The expo was the second such event held at the college. An estimated 2,500 to 3,000 job seekers attended a similar event at the college in April.

The turnout for Saturday's event was smaller than in April. Lorson said that could be attributed to an increase in knowledge about the gas industry.

"The general population is more educated on who the companies are and what types of jobs are available," he said. "I think the people who've come today are focused more on what the opportunities are."

"Now that many of the companies have been in the area for a year, or two or three years ... people are more educated about what they do," he said.

A spring job expo is scheduled for March 11 and 12.