

New Faces in the Employment Neighborhood

This column is presented weekly by the Public Education sub-committee of the Clinton County Natural Gas Task Force in an effort to provide accurate, up-to-date information on activities surrounding the Marcellus Shale formation and the natural gas exploration industry.

It's interesting to consider how we become accustomed to the familiar faces, personalities and voices within the communities that we live, work and socialize every day. As with many creatures on this planet, we are more comfortable with the known than we are with unknown or unfamiliar. This can also be true when we take a closer look at the changing face of employment in Clinton County.

Companies with names like Halliburton, TRICAN, HB Rentals, Key, Excalibur, Old West, Stallion, Chief, Anadarko, Weatherford, Gas Field Specialties, Talisman, XTO Energy, Speedy Heavy Hauling, and Dawn Trucking make up a few of the new faces locating in both Clinton and nearby Lycoming Counties, drawn here by the emerging natural gas exploration industry.

How are these new companies impacting employment locally?

The most current Labor Force Data available for unemployment in Clinton County stands at 9.2% for the month of September 2010 (source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis). This number represents approximately 1,800 individuals able and available for work in Clinton County from a total Civilian Labor Force of 19,600. These numbers are encouraging as they represent a drop in the unemployment percentage from 9.6% in August 2010 and an overall increase in the number of Clinton County residents now working -- approximately 17,800 employed as of September 2010.

Some of this growth can be attributed to those new faces around the neighborhood. And the growth and escalation of local operations within the natural gas industry has the potential to bring hundreds of new employment opportunities to Clinton County. The question for many job seekers is, "How do I break into this industry?"

The local PA CareerLink office has discussed this question with a number of employers within the natural gas industry. A common response is: we are searching for individuals with a strong work ethic that we can train and promote to various positions within our company. Natural gas industry employers also are looking for individuals willing to work non-traditional hours, in some cases in around-the-clock operations that continue regardless of dates, times and weather. Applicants should be prepared to work long hours, consecutive days or nights, in remote locations and in all types of outdoor weather conditions. These non-traditional job conditions are often balanced with family-sustaining wages, medical and other employee benefits.

So, how do job seekers get a foot-in-the-door?

The staff at the PA CareerLink-Clinton County office is working to establish new relationships and extend the full range of employer services to these new natural gas industry employers. At the same time, we continue to service the ever-changing needs of our long-standing employer community. Whether servicing new or existing employers, our goal continues to be to offer the support and services necessary to match people with available job opportunities.

Pennsylvania's workforce delivery system, better known as the PA CareerLink, realizes the potential job and economic growth for Clinton County residents the natural gas industry can bring. The local CareerLink office is a one-stop portal to a full menu of services for both job seekers and employers alike. Services such as career counseling, individual career planning, skills identification, job development, training sponsorship, supportive services, dislocated worker support, and youth and soft skills instruction are all available at the local PA CareerLink office in Lock Haven.

A person's background and training is important for any job they may be seeking. PA CareerLink services are accessible to any job seeker or employer at no cost and can be a jobseeker's best chance to connect with the natural gas industry. The CareerLink staff will schedule a time to meet with you and discuss your plans for future employment. This eligibility interview will be a private conversation between you and the Workforce Specialist and will serve as an opportunity to identify those skills you currently possess and those skills needed to find employment in a high growth field like the natural gas industry. If, after this interview is completed both you and the Workforce Specialist agree that training is indeed necessary, the conversation shifts to identifying those occupations that have potential for high growth and high employment opportunity while paying "family sustaining" wages. Simply put the Workforce Specialist will ensure your efforts are channeled in the right direction so any training received will have the best chance to lead to gainful employment once completed.

Any Pennsylvania resident seeking employment or training services should first "Enroll" with PA CareerLink either by accessing the website at www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us or by visiting the local office, located at 8 North Grove Street in Lock Haven. When a job seeker visits the CareerLink office they will work one-on-one with a trained Career Resource Area professional who will conduct an initial assessment. This assessment looks at the individual's past work history, skills, education and training in an attempt to identify strengths and weaknesses that can be used to create an individual job search plan.

Once the assessment is completed, the next step is full enrollment on the PA CareerLink website where a job seeker will build an on-line resume that can be used to apply for any job posting, whether a position is within the natural gas industry or with other local employers outside that industry. Once an individual is enrolled with the CareerLink the full service menu is accessible.

If more intensive services are required it is at this point that an eligibility interview will be scheduled with a Workforce Specialist. These intensive services could take the form of increased staff time spent with an individual to develop a professional resume,

polishing interviewing skills, developing soft skills for success, obtaining the WorkKeys Career Readiness Certification, exploration of training or financial aid options, remedial learning, GED classes or targeted workshops designed to improve a person's marketability for future employment.

The local PA CareerLink offers over 30 no-cost workshops each month from their location on Grove Street. Pre-registration is required for any workshop of interest and can be completed by accessing the Events Calendar on the PA CareerLink website or by calling the office at 570-893-4022. The following is just a sampling of the workshops available on a monthly basis: Resume Writing, Interviewing Techniques, Job Search "How To", Microsoft Word, Excel & Internet Navigation, WorkKeys Orientation, Customer Service, Dealing with Difficult People, Giving & Accepting Criticism and Employer Expectations. Again, all of these workshops are available at no-cost to the job seeker or employer.

In some cases the CareerLink can provide financial assistance for training in occupations that appear on the High Priority Occupations (HPO) list for the Central Workforce Investment Area. This is a list of occupations identified by Labor Market Professionals as having the best opportunity for employment in our region. If the training you desire is on that HPO list then an application or contract can be submitted on your behalf by the Workforce Specialist for consideration and possible funding. To learn more of the specific requirements for training, call or stop by the local PA CareerLink office. Please note that not every applicant receives funding for training and that each case is considered on an individual basis.

The team at the local PA-CareerLink office continues to develop new opportunities to bring together local job seekers with local employers. Just last week, PA CareerLink-Clinton County hosted a Career Fair in which 24 area employers participated, including Gas Field Specialties and TRICAN, two of the newer faces from the natural gas industry. Nearly 300 job seekers were in attendance between the hours of 10:00am and 2:00pm. This one event provided job seekers with a great opportunity to meet local employers face to face to discuss employment openings, share their resume and fill out company applications. People can watch for information on future Career Fair events in The Express newspaper or by accessing the Events Calendar on the PA CareerLink website.

In addition, some of the new employment opportunities within the natural gas industry that have recently been listed on the PA CareerLink website include: CDL Driver, Heavy Equipment Operator, Caterer, Cook, Safety Manager, Diesel Mechanic, Welder, Completions Foreman, Operator Assistant, Swamper Driver Helper and Office Assistant. To learn more about the specific qualifications, industry certifications, education requirements, targeted recruitments, training available and application procedures, a job seeker should visit the local PA CareerLink office.

The face of employment in Clinton County is changing. The new employers within the natural gas industry represent new technologies, new processes, new job descriptions, new challenges and new opportunities for Clinton County residents. The PA CareerLink

is the one best stop to locate current employment information, attend helpful workshops, formulate a personal job search plan, explore training options and make informed decisions about your next career move.

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