

Community Coordinator Report

Plumas County

APRIL-JUNE

2020

When Life Gives you Lemons, Make Lemonade

Moving back to Quincy in March of 2020, after being away a while, was tough for Lynda. She was trying to re-establish herself and was having challenges securing employment. She visited Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc.'s (AFWD) Plumas Business & Career Network (BCN) to look for local resources that could assist her. After discussing her goals and situation, staff recommended that she participate in the Youth Program under the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA). After hearing about the services the program offered, Lynda agreed that it would be of benefit to her during this time.



Working quickly, Lynda took assessments and made an employment plan. She was very clear in her goal of working with animals or in a position in which she could be of service to others. Her Career Center Advisor (CCA) assisted her in sprucing up her resume and advised her on local opportunities. It was fortunate that they were able to get her prepared for job search so quickly, because soon after, California issued a “stay in place” order due to COVID-19 pandemic. Amidst fear and overwhelming challenge, Lynda persevered in her job search.

It wasn't long before her tenacity paid off. Lynda was offered a position as a delivery driver at Quincy Pharmacy. Lynda loves the daily challenges of her job and the people that she works with. She also enjoys being able to help people during these challenging times, since her employment is categorized under “essential” services. Her long-term goal is to become a pet groomer, but for now, she is grateful for the opportunity to work and save money. Way to seize opportunities and make things happen, Lynda!



From Seasonal Job to Full Time, Year Around Employment!!

Duncan came into the Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) Plumas Business and Career Network (BCN) for assistance in finding fulltime, self-sufficient employment. He had recently been laid off of his seasonal job in a yard maintenance position for a local resort and had exhausted his Unemployment Benefits. Duncan has a family to support and the seasonal work was just not enough. Duncan has a Universal Technical Institute/Associate of Occupational Studies Degree where he studied Automotive, Diesel, and Industrial Technology. He had also attended the Ford Accelerated Credential Training Program that was offered there, where he achieved many awards in his field of study. After meeting with a Career Center Advisor (CCA) at AFWD he was determined eligible for the Dislocated Worker Grant as a job seeker under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

With help from his CCA, Duncan had worked on his resume and did some extensive job searching. He applied for various jobs in the Quincy area for different employers, but was not called in for an interview until he applied for a job with Sierra Pacific Industries as a General Laborer. CCA went over the interview techniques with him and he went to the interview feeling prepared. Duncan was hoping to get his foot in the door as a General Laborer, and then hopefully make his way into the truck mechanic shop. Sierra Pacific called him and offered him the job. It is a full time, year around job with full benefits, which is what Duncan wanted to be able to support his family.

Duncan has been very appreciative of the help that AFWD was able to afford him. Things are going very well for Duncan, and he is grateful for the opportunity and assistance AFWD and the WIOA program were able to provide to him.



Photo Source: <https://www.facebook.com/SPIQuincy/>

New Career in a New Field of Work



Austin was referred to the Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD) office in Quincy, CA, hoping to get assistance with entering into fulltime work. Austin had the aspiration to find a job where he could serve the community. Although he had no comparable work experience, he had interviewed for a Mortuary Assistant position with Blair Mortuary and Crematorium. He had recently been laid off from a job with Indian Valley Community Services District, and he really needed to find a job where he could support himself and gain new skills to give him the potential to be

more successful in the future. His only other past work experience had been as a ranch hand and a security guard. Austin met with a Career Center Advisor (CCA) to assess his need to participate in an On-the-Job Training (OJT). Austin's assessments showed that although he had the interest and aptitude for such a position, he was lacking hands-on experience. It was determined he would benefit from an OJT. Austin strongly felt the Blair Mortuary and Crematorium would be a great place to work to help connect with the community he desired to serve.

AFWD's Business Services Representative (BSR) contacted the owner of Blair Mortuary and Crematorium to let them know Austin would be eligible to participate in an OJT, if they decided to hire him for the position. Larry, the owner, wanted to hire Austin, as they were impressed with his interest in serving the community and wanted to help him gain the skills he needed to become successful in the future. He acknowledged that Austin would need extensive training to perform the duties of a Mortuary Assistant with Blair Mortuary and Crematorium, as he had no prior experience with that type of work. All parties agreed it would be beneficial for Austin to participate in an OJT.

Together with his CCA, Austin developed a training plan that would help him to train to become a successful Mortuary Assistant. Austin successfully completed his OJT recently, and is happy to be serving the public. He is gaining useful knowledge and skills and has found a great place to work. Great work Austin!



From Wholesale to Retail... A COVID-19 Response



As businesses approached their second and third months of shelter-in-place response to COVID-19, business owners were beginning to worry how much longer they would be operational.

One wholesale business owner, Christina Schneider, reached out to Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc., (AFWD) Business Services Representative (BSR) for information and support. Christina's Hand Painted Glass, has been selling unique painted glassware wholesale to gift shops for over 20 years. When the shelter-in-place order came, not only did her gift shop orders stop that day but all previously placed orders in March were cancelled. Christina was understandably upset. She said, "I've faced many up's and down's in the wholesale business but this – this is devastating". All her wholesale clients just stopped ordering in March, April, and May.

AFWD staff and Christina discussed whether or not she would be eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, (PUA) as well as taking advantage of the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) assistance from the Small Business Administration (SBA). In addition to the programs available to assist COVID-19 affected individuals, Christina was asked if she had thought about porting her business to retail customers over the web using Etsy, eBay, Facebook and other online websites. Christina hadn't; she hadn't previously taken the time to even think about doing a retail market line. Recognizing this was the perfect time, several in-depth discussions took place, resulting in hiring a local firm to assist her in this endeavor.

Christina applied for the SBA EIDL grant and was awarded \$25,000 to start designing a totally new line of glassware for the retail marketplace. With these funds she was able to hire a web marketing group, design a website and even create new packaging specific for retail customers who often purchase one or two items at a time. Wholesale varies from retail markets with minimum purchases and custom orders.

Christina, like most business owners, was in a bit of shock for many reasons due to Covid-19, yet by creating a new business model it took the focus of what she could not control and created a new future opportunity.

Christina commented, "With the help of AFWD, I was able to re-focus my worries about the business to building a new business model that actually is growing my business during a time when the wholesale business stopped completely".

Often in the most challenging of times, we find avenues for growth. This business owner took steps to grow her business by adding a new business model – the retail market, and porting her business to the internet. She used this 'Covid Time' to develop her strategies, develop a new product line and expanding her business of 20 years.



COVID-19 Virtual Rapid Response



“Thank you AFWD for this webinar and for answering my questions. The information was very helpful.” – David, webinar attendee.

The workplace, as we know it, has change. As the Rural North State adapts to the “new normal,” Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc’s (AFWD) essential services are a lifeline to businesses and workers struggling to find footing in an uncertain labor market. Among these critical services, is the Rapid Response program.

Rapid Response was designed to be a proactive, business-focused program to assist companies facing potential layoffs or plant closures. Rapid Response teams provide early intervention assistance to avert potential layoffs, and immediate on-site services to assist workers facing job losses. This process is normally triggered when a business issues a WARN (Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification) notice. The California WARN Act is a regulation that requires employers to provide workers and local government officials with at least 60 days notice before a mass layoff, plant closure, or a major relocation. Normally, this notice gives our Rapid Response team time to conduct an on-site visit to assist both the business and employees. However, due to the unprecedented scale of the lay-offs, and the prohibitions of the isolation order, AFWD management sought a solution that was both virtually accessible and broadly available.

AFWD staff developed a virtual presentation to provide affected workers information and guidance on navigating a lay-off. We leveraged our relationships with county Social Service providers and the EDD, to provide information on resources and programs available in each of the counties we serve. In an effort to reach as many people as possible, invitations were sent to local employers and emailed to all job seekers in our social media channels.

In addition to providing information on AFWD services and current job leads, the Virtual Rapid Response webinars included an overview of the Unemployment Benefits Application process, and information on county assistance programs such as Cal Fresh, CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, and General Relief. AFWD staff also provided information on various local resources for housing, utility payments, and food assistance. All attendees were provided with a list of local resources complete with phone numbers and websites. The webinars for each of our service counties are now posted to our website as are the links to state, county, and nonprofit assistance programs at www.afwd.org.

Understanding the COVID-19 Economy

In April and May, Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. (AFWD), in partnership with Chabin Concepts, hosted Robert Eyler, Ph.D., for a series of webinars to help businesses, local officials, and community members gain an understanding of the local and regional economy in light of the global pandemic.

Dr. Eyler is an Economist and Director of the Center for Regional Analysis at CSU, Sonoma and President of Economic Forensics & Analytics, Inc. in Petaluma, CA. Dr. Eyler previously assisted our region with economic analysis of the Camp Fire and Carr Fire, and as a featured speaker at the CSU Chico Center for Economic Development (CED) North State Economic Forecasts Conferences for the past several years.

While Dr. Eyler pointed to the social and financial policies developed by Federal, State, and Local governments as both timely and at least marginally effective, he also offered several warnings for the short-and-long term future:

- **Municipal revenue losses from hotel occupancy and sales tax will likely have long term impacts on budgets for development projects and local services.**
- **Micro businesses, especially those that cannot pivot to an online platform will likely not be able to weather continued or renewed isolation orders.**
- **Inability to produce a vaccine, or unwillingness of the public to comply with measures to curb contagion, will lengthen the economic downturn or recession.**

Dr. Eyler expressed three possible scenarios for economic recovery:

- **A reduction in new cases by vaccine or social policy leads to a quick recovery, with signs of recovery visible as early as 2021.**
- **A “deeper dive” brought about by renewed rise in COVID-19 cases that slows any real recovery to 2022.**
- **A long-term recession caused by widespread business closure, unemployment, and spread of disease, that takes years to rebound from.**

Dr. Eyler warns businesses and local governments to prepare for a lean few years and encouraged businesses to explore funding from the Small Business Administration to keep afloat until the pandemic subsides. “Please talk to your banker about a U.S. Small Business Administration loan. Some are forgivable, some not, but make sure they’re good plans for you. Know that the money is there.”

As North State communities, businesses, and local governments try to weather the next uncertain months and years, AFWD will continue to bring expertise, like that of Dr. Eyler, to help us make informed decisions as a community. AFWD Business Service Representatives can be reached any time for assistance with HR consultation, financial incentives to hire local workers, and access to government resources, at www.afwd.org



**COVID-19 Economic Update
for Plumas County
April 23, 2020 - Webinar**

Sponsored by:
Alliance for Workforce Development (AFWD)



Presented by: **Robert Eyler, PhD**
President, Economic Forensics and Analytics
Professor, Economics, Sonoma State University
eyler@econforensics.com



AFWD America's Job Center of California

Statistics

PY 2019-2020



Plumas County

One-Stop Visitors:

3,566

Business Serviced:

120

Business Services:

901

AFWD

Clients Enrolled:

1,900

Unemployment Rate

(As of: May 2020)

16.9%

