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VALLEYWORKS
CAREER CENTER

The ValleyWorker

A workforce development collaborative between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Career Services (DCS) and the Department of Training and Development (DTD).

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ValleyWorks Partners: The Methuen Adult Learning Center

Over the past year, ValleyWorks Career Center (VWCC) and the Methuen Adult Learning Center (MALC) have developed a strong working relationship through a Memorandum of Agreement, to deliver services to student customers at both Centers.

As part of a joint initiative between the Methuen Community Network and the MALC, a pilot program was developed in January, 2005 to bring ValleyWorks resources to the Methuen Adult Learning Center. Workshops such as *Job Search Techniques*, *Resume Writing*, and *Interviewing Skills* were presented in the pilot program to MALC students by ValleyWorks Workshop Specialist Alan Hamwey.

Over the summer, both parties co-developed a program that enabled MALC General Educational Development and English for Speakers of Other Languages instructors Ruth Byrne and Susan Prior to integrate work readiness themes into the daily curriculum at MALC. Students now not only learn English or improve their skills to obtain a GED, but also learn work-readiness skills and participate in job search activities right in the classroom!

Another important credit to the success of the partnership is that learning takes place at both Centers. It begins with an interactive orientation where students learn all about ValleyWorks services. Students then participate in a hands-on work search exercise in the Career Center's state-of-the-art Computer Lab. Upon completing the orientation, they are officially-registered

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ValleyWorks' Outstanding Performance Earns Regional Incentive Award

Based on the performance of the ValleyWorks Career Center in 2005, the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) was awarded \$20,000 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This incentive award was given to workforce areas that delivered exemplary performance, per the WIA Title-I Performance Report issued in November, 2005.

In 16 of 17 categories, ValleyWorks ranked 100% or higher in meeting its performance goals, *making the Lower Merrimack Valley one of only three regions in the state to do so*. In the 17th category, ValleyWorks met 98.5% of its goal.

In the report, Career Centers around the state were measured in five areas: Adults, Dislocated Workers, Older Youth, Younger Youth and Overall Customer/Employer Satisfaction. Specific performance measures include Entered Employment Rate, Six Months (Job) Retention Rate and Skill Attainment Rate.

The ValleyWorks Career Center (VWCC) is a workforce development collaboration of the Department of Training and Development and the Division of Career Services. Chartered by the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB), the VWCC is funded through the Workforce Investment Act; the Commonwealth Corporation; the Division of Career Services; the Department of Workforce Development; the Department of Transitional Assistance; the Department of Labor; the Department of Education and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. A federal- and state-funded center, the VWCC is designed to provide comprehensive services to job seekers and employers of the Merrimack Valley. The VWCC is an Equal Opportunity Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Lawrence TDD/TTY: (978) 722-7088. Haverhill TDD/TTY: (978) 469-7859.

Quality Program Enhances Center Services

ValleyWorks moves into 2006 with its Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program well underway and is making great strides to improve services. Initiated early in 2005, the custom-designed program is now a permanent part of ValleyWorks operations and helps everyone at the Center — from management to line staff — better define the organization's mission and values as it relates to delivering services to its customers, and facilitates changes in Career Center policies and procedures as needed.

The CQI program focuses on the philosophy contained in the seven Baldrige Criteria for Excellence, which includes: 1) Leadership, 2) Strategic Planning, 3) Customer & Market Focus, 4) Measurement & Analysis, 5) Human Resource Focus, 6) Process Management and 7) Organizational Results. Quality teams have been created to address each criteria and meet regularly to discuss ways in which to improve customer satisfaction.

The Market Focus/Business Customer Team addresses the needs of local employers, and has created and distributed surveys to identify employer needs. Based on this feedback, the team has been conducting events to educate businesses about the Center, as well as identifying new services that could be developed.

The Market Focus/Job Seeker Customer Team has been working with the Marketing Department to create a new brochure that highlights all ValleyWorks programs and services, and eliminates the need to use individual brochures. The team is also redesigning the new Customer

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VWCC Partners

as ValleyWorks members and leave with a membership card.

Additionally, once a month, ValleyWorks Workshop Coordinator Cindy Key delivers a workshop at the MALC, where she coaches students on important information that will help them learn how to achieve their employment goals. Cindy's presence at the MALC has also proven to be of great benefit itself, as she connects with students on both personal and professional levels. Cindy ensures the Methuen students are interacting with the Career Center on a monthly basis. She provides them with additional information that leads to continuous enrichment and access to services at ValleyWorks.

As a result of Cindy's efforts, some MALC students have visited the Career Center after class hours to take advantage of services like the Self-Paced Learning Lab; Workshops; the Resource Room; individual counseling with VWCC Career Services Advisors; job listings and information about Career Center events such as Job Fairs and Employer Recruitments.

Students like Olga Gerasimova are the product of the partnership. Olga began an English as a Second Language program at MALC in September, 2005, to improve her language skills. For the next three months, she took it upon herself to participate in workshops at ValleyWorks, meet with staff, discuss how to upgrade her current employment situation, increase her earnings and find a schedule that would allow her to continue her college education. With help from the staff, Olga was able to identify her skills,

update her resume and focus on how to present her skills to employers.

In December, VWCC Workshop Coordinator Cindy contacted Olga about a job opportunity for a Nanny/Housekeeper. Olga contacted the employer and within two weeks, she



Methuen Adult Learning Center ESOL Instructor Susan Prior; Student Olga Gerasimova; MALC Director Dr. Shirley Callan and ValleyWorks Workshop Coordinator Cindy Key.

had successfully interviewed and was hired for the position. Olga also plans to continue her education and obtain a college degree in the US.

"It's all about the connection I made with ValleyWorks," said Olga of her new position, which began part time in January, 2006. She admits that had she not begun school and the ESOL program to improve her language skills, she would not have used the resources ValleyWorks offers, found her new employer nor would she have a better job today.

"She is not atypical of our students," says MALC Director Dr. Shirley Callan. "They are all as motivated as Olga." With nearly 100% of her

students working at least part time, daily classroom attendance is at or over an astounding 90%...well above the state average of 70%. The MALC also has a waiting list of nearly 300 individuals, most of whom come to the center based purely on word-of-mouth.

"What makes the program successful is that we focus on using these skills everyday, in the real world," reasons Dr. Callan. "We're teaching *employment* skills."

The US Department of Education has even taken note of the MALC's success, visiting the facility in November, 2004 to analyze its operations. The MALC was one of just three Massachusetts adult basic education providers that were visited.

While the MALC offers its students exceptional instruction (for which Dr. Callan credits her teaching staff) its relationship with ValleyWorks offers students a chance to apply their classroom-learned skills with employers. When students connect monthly with the VWCC by taking an on-site workshop, for example, they make even better use of their time at MALC and set themselves up for even greater success.

Partners like this are hard to find, and we are proud to help them offer students another avenue through which to continue their strong tradition of achievement.

Quality Teams Making an Impact at ValleyWorks

Orientation Program.

The Human Resources Team is working on a new performance evaluation tool and is also planning a series of internal focus groups to discuss how to enhance communications at the Center.

Meanwhile, the Leadership Team has been developing charts denoting the Center's progress towards meeting specific objectives, such as job placements and ValleyWorks Business Plan goals.

Suggestions made by the Quality Teams are presented to the Quality Committee, a group comprised of a mix of management and staff who determine whether the suggestions should be implemented, what changes should be made and the resources needed to execute the plans.

So far, this process has helped make the Center run more effectively, and 2006 will see many new ideas incorporated throughout ValleyWorks.

ValleyWorks: The Year in Photos



Youth pursue job opportunities at the *Mayors Summer Jobs for Youth* Job Fair in Newburyport in April.



Peg Ryan, Special Programs Manager, Division of Career Services (DCS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts speaks at the *Salute to Veterans* Job Fair in Haverhill.



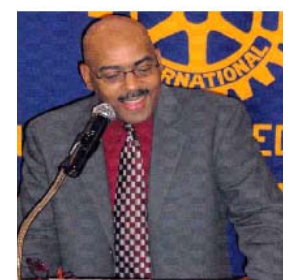
ValleyWorks handled job development for the first graduating class of the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Job Training Grant.



ValleyWorks staff at the *Latino Career Expo* in May, which was held at the Lawrence Elks Club.



Jane C. Edmonds, Director, Department of Workforce Development, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, at the ValleyWorks booth during the *Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce Business Expo* at the Andover Country Club in October.



ValleyWorks Director Kevin J. Parham speaks at a Haverhill Rotary luncheon about ValleyWorks services.

Lucent Career Center Extended Through March 31, 2006

With the help of state funding through the Massachusetts Division of Career Services and the Department of Labor, the Lucent Career Center will continue to provide re-employment services through the end of March, 2006 to approximately 100 active customers enrolled in the grant.

Staff at the Center are calling all remaining active members to provide comprehensive job search assistance and locate suitable jobs in the new year.

Lucent Career Center Manager Fran LaCerte said he hopes the market will continue to improve so that all remaining members will begin working soon. "I feel confident that with the continued operation of the Center, our remaining customers will soon return to work," he said. "We continue to host job recruitments, work with companies and develop jobs and I encourage all former Lucent employees to continue to use our services while they are still available."

For more information or to set up a job development appointment, call the Center and speak to Mary Ellen Lawlor at (978) 469-7802.

A+ Project Update

The A+ Project officially ended on December 31, 2005, but currently-enrolled customers are encouraged to continue using the services at the Lucent Career Center. There will be no disruption in of any of your services during the transition.