

A Northeast Wisconsin Guide to Employment Opportunities



TRAINING THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

Sharon Barclay, left, takes the "blood pressure" of a training dummy while Ellie Petrella monitors its vitals in a simulation lab at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in Green Bay. The healthcare industry is one of many in the New North region that faces a challenge finding enough workers for available positions. SEE STORY, PAGE 4.

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Mission: Finding and keeping the workforce of the future

New North aims to bolster economic development over 18 counties

By **WARREN BLUHM**
Editor-in-chief

Businesses and municipal governments continue to struggle with a basic challenge: There are more jobs available than people to fill them.

“Every discipline that we have, everyone is short of healthcare workers,” said Scott Anderson, dean of health services and education at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. “In some disciplines, signing bonuses are back.”

Not uncommon is the story of a student who became an intern at a local clinic and was asked if she could stay on after the internship was completed, Anderson said.

NWTC has a variety of programs leading to associate degrees or technical diplomas in the field of health care. About 50% of the training is done in clinical settings and the rest is in simulation labs like the one at NWTC’s main Green Bay campus or Regional Learning Centers like the one in Shawano.

New North, the regional organization that provides marketing and economic development services for 18 counties in Northeast Wisconsin, is in the thick of trying to address the challenge.

“There’s just not enough people to fill the roles and the openings that we have here in the state from an employment standpoint,” said Rebecca Deschane, vice president of talent development at New North.

Deschane recently delivered a well-received presentation at the Wisconsin Counties Association annual conference about recruiting and maintaining the work force of the future.

“What are some of the things you can do at the county level to help create that environment where



Rebecca Deschane is the vice president of talent development at New North, the 18-county marketing and economic development organization serving northeast Wisconsin.

WARREN BLUHM | NEW MEDIA

people want to come,” Deschane said. “How do we create a place that’s going to attract people to you but more importantly how are you going to retain those who already call that home?”

Especially in the northernmost counties, New North has an aging population that’s shrinking all the time, she said. That, and the pandemic-related initiatives that kept people working from home for months, have had a debilitating impact on the job market.

Three key challenges were magnified during the pandemic, Deschane said: child care, transportation, and housing.

For many workers, the lack of affordable child care can be a barrier to

employment. Access to public transportation or an alternative is also a challenge, especially in rural areas, and Deschane told the county leaders that understanding housing availability and needs is a key to growing the local workforce.

In the New North region, she highlighted Winnebago Catch-A-Ride, a volunteer program to help people who are not connected to public transportation get to and from work. Drivers are reimbursed for their mileage and can select the schedule that works best for them.

Deschane came to New North earlier this year after eight years with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp., most recently as talent initiatives coordinator in a joint ef-

fort with the University of Wisconsin System.

Her role at the state agency, and now at New North, has been to connect people who have similar challenges and working toward a solution, sharing with each other to reduce duplication of efforts, she said.

“We have a lot of great things that are happening, but a lot of times they’re happening at a very small level with a small group of folks and other people don’t know about them,” Deschane said.

New North, which covers a wide area, has been exploring ways to share ideas, share training opportunities and just have conversations across the region, she said.

“If we all know what each other is doing, all of a sudden you have that organic growth of the engagement that comes from it,” Deschane said.

The organization obtained a \$500,000 CARES Act funding grant to investigate broadband access across the region, identified as a core business need. The first step is a survey open through Nov. 12 that has received a tremendous response, she said.

New North is working with some consultants and will share the results with counties and providers with a goal of ensuring that broadband is accessible, reliable and available for all across the region.

During her presentation Deschane shared several talent-based initiatives in which New North is collaborating with other private and public organizations.

New North Hires Heroes is a partnership with Mission Wisconsin,

a veteran-owned business that supports transitioning service members and their families as they’re getting ready to leave the military, to connect them with communities and job opportunities.

“We know veterans have those skills that many companies are looking for, especially many of the companies and industries here in the New North region,” Deschane said.

Another initiative is Gener8tor Upskilling, a virtual rapid “reskilling” program for people looking for jobs in high-demand roles in their communities or working remotely for companies across the country. The program supports individuals who were most negatively impacted by pandemic – the hospitality sector, restaurant industry, people who lost their jobs – and retrains them in new fields.

The initiative, in collaboration with Microsoft, the Steve Stricker

Foundation and Thrivent, was recognized as the top 2021 talent initiative in Community and Economic Development by the Wisconsin Economic Development Association.

Deschane said New North is also working with the Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA) on a regional career pathway program, to help convince students coming out of high school about their available options.

“How do we help students in our K-12 schools better understand what careers are available to them here in our region across multiple industry areas,” she said.

She worked with CESA and industry organizations to identify four or five key employment areas and job growth opportunities.

The 2020 U.S. Census found that the region’s population has grown by 50,000 over the past decade, and more diverse – a 46% increase in the

Hispanic population and 61% more African Americans, for example, she said.

New North has submitted applications for Workforce Innovation Grant through the state of Wisconsin for building out ONE New North (Opportunity North for Equity). Deschane said the effort would help create a space and engagement strategies for recruiting Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) workers.

“How do we do a better job of recruiting BIPOC and under-represented individuals into manufacturing?” she said.

Deschane said she is working with manufacturing alliances to do specific training for new job seekers, people coming out of pandemic looking for more stable career opportunities, and those pivoting to new careers.



Northeast Wisconsin Technical College student Sharon Barclay works with a “patient” in a simulation lab at the school’s Green Bay campus. About half of NWTC’s training occurs in labs like this one and half in clinic settings, according to Scott Anderson, dean of Health Services and Education.

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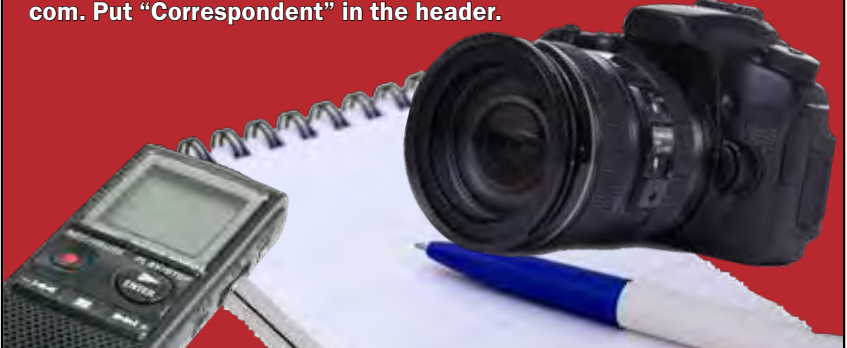
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US employers shrugged off virus and stepped up hiring

By **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — America's employers accelerated their hiring last month, adding a solid 531,000 jobs, the most since July and a sign that the recovery from the pandemic recession is overcoming a virus-induced slowdown.

The Nov. 5 report from the Labor Department also showed that the unemployment rate fell to 4.6% last month from 4.8% in September. That is a comparatively low level though still well above the pre-pandemic jobless rate of 3.5%. And the job gains in August and September weren't as weak as initially reported: The government increased its estimate of hiring for those two months by a hefty combined 235,000 jobs.

All told, the figures point to an economy that is steadily recovering from the pandemic recession, with healthy consumer spending prompting companies in nearly every industry to add workers. Though the effects of COVID-19 are still causing severe supply shortages, heightening inflation and keeping many people out of the workforce, employers are finding gradually more success in filling near record-high job postings.

"This is the kind of recovery we can get when we are not sidelined by a surge in COVID cases," said Nick Bunker, director of economic research at the employment website Indeed. By most barometers, the economic recovery appears solidly on track. Services companies in such

areas as retail, banking and warehousing have reported a sharp jump in sales. Sales of new and existing homes surged last month. And consumer confidence rose in October after three straight declines.

At the same time, though, the nation remains 4.2 million jobs short of the number it had before the pandemic flattened the economy in March 2020. The effects of the virus are still discouraging some people from traveling, shopping, eating out and attending entertainment venues.

In October, the pickup in hiring was spread across nearly every major industry, with only government employers reporting a job loss, mostly in education. Shipping and warehousing companies added 54,000 jobs. The battered leisure and hospitality sector, which includes, restaurants, bars, hotels and entertainment venues, gained 164,000. Manufac-

turers, despite their struggles with supply shortages, added 60,000, the most since June 2020.

And employers, who have been competing to fill jobs from a diminished pool of applicants, raised wages at a solid clip: Average hourly pay jumped 4.9% in October compared with a year earlier, up from 4.6% the previous month. Even a gain that strong, though, is barely keeping pace with recent surges in consumer inflation.

Those price increases pose a headwind for the economy. Higher costs for food, heating oil, rents and furniture have burdened millions of families. Prices rose 4.4% in September compared with 12 months earlier, the sharpest such jump in three decades.

Job prospects are brightening even for people who have been out of work for prolonged periods. The

number of long-term unemployed — people who have been jobless for six months or more — has fallen sharply in recent months, to 2.3 million in October from 4.2 million in April. That's still double the pre-recession total. But it's an encouraging sign because employers are typically wary of hiring people who haven't held jobs for an extended time.

At the same time, disparities in the job market have persisted. The Black unemployment rate was unchanged in October at 7.9%, for example, while for white workers, it fell to 4% from 4.2%. The Latino jobless rate dropped to 5.9% from 6.3%.

And though white-collar jobs in professional services like information technology, engineering and architecture are nearly back to their pre-pandemic employment levels, leisure and hospitality still has 1.4 million fewer jobs.

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