

MOHAVE-LA PAZ WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA

WORKFORCE NEWS



MOHAVE COUNTY GOES GREEN FOR ST. PATRICK'S DAY

This St. Patrick's Day, Mohave County residents flocked to Kingman High School for the first ever Renewable Energy Information Fair.

Approximately 700 people attended the fair, the majority being serious jobseekers, according to Mohave County Workforce Development Manager Jen Miles. Participants traveled from Lake Havasu City, Bullhead City, and Dolan Springs, among others.

The event was hosted by the Mohave County Energy Careers Alliance and co-hosted by the Arizona State Building and Construction Trades Council. "This alliance is a collaborative group of employers, educators and workforce development professionals that have come together to advance our common goals," Miles said.

Specifically, their goals were to inform the public of potential incoming solar and wind energy projects and to identify the jobseekers who are interested in working in the renewable energy industry.

Mohave County plans to use the career placement inventories handed out at the fair to "build a database of our local workforce that we'll be able to share with the alliance," explained Mohave County Business Representative Mary Mendola. That database will document skills and barriers regarding employment,

she said.

"We want to know if the workforce is ready for jobs in the short term and the long term, and understand what we can do to make them ready," Mendola said. "With this information, we can give them choices for training, so that they can have the skills they need



Project Engineer Arturo Alvarez discusses Albiaska Solar Corporation with local jobseekers.



Mohave County Energy Careers Alliance

and can go where they want to go.”

Mohave County is not alone in organizing this project. In fact, most of the vendor booths were provided by the event’s other co-host, the building trades. Exhibits ranged from a pipe-fitters booth to a virtual reality crane simulator.

Representing Arizona Building Trades was Torres Consulting Account Executive Jason McDonald, who said that he came to the fair to “make sure that as many jobs as possible go to Mohave County residents. We want local residents to have the right training when these jobs take off.”

Other vendors included businesses like UniSource Energy Services and educational partners like Arizona Western College and Mohave Community College. Many of their representatives were impressed by the public turn-out.

“It’s great to see such diversity in the audience,” said MCC Dean of Student Services Jann Woods. “MCC is proud to be part of the alliance, and we realize that a well-trained workforce is vital to our future.”

Of course, the fair wouldn’t be complete without incoming businesses. Representatives from three major renewable energy businesses spoke to the public: BP Wind Energy, Albiassa Corporation, and Hualapai Valley Solar. If permitting goes as planned, all three projects will break ground in the next few years.

Daniel Runyan, director of business development at BP Wind Energy, was enthusiastic about sharing the benefits of his company. “Wind energy is a great resource for Mohave County. It’s abundant, it’s free, and we just need to put the capital and the jobs together to make it come true.”

Albert Fong, chief project engineer for Albiassa Corporation, said, “We realized that Mohave County



FACES

Raymond Tapia, Kingman

Raymond Tapia returned home to Kingman after getting his associate’s degree in Prescott. He was planning to stay in the area for a few months before returning to classes. His only problem: he didn’t have any more money.

“My scholarships had run out,” he said. “I was planning to take out student loans, but that was definitely not my first choice. I was going through a phase of figuring things out.”

He needed a job, but no one would hire him for such a short period of time. “That’s when I applied for COYOTE,” he said. “I didn’t expect to get a career out of it.”

Raymond, 20, enrolled in last summer’s COalition YOUTH TEam (COYOTE), a youth employment training program that matches young adults with real work training.

As part of COYOTE, Raymond was placed with UniSource Energy Services for training. After eight weeks of COYOTE experience, he continued working for UniSource on a temporary basis, and was officially hired in January. He feels particularly grateful to COYOTE, which matched him with what he called “the absolute right job for me.”

“We really consider Raymond a success story,” said Mohave County Youth Program Coordinator Hannah Sagisi. “He was our guest speaker at last year’s COYOTE Celebration. We’re excited he was hired full-time. He worked very hard.”

Now, he works with the conservation and renewable programs department, “assisting contractors and customers who apply for incentives,” he said.

Raymond hasn’t ruled out finishing his degree while he’s working, but he’s happy with his new position. “I don’t need loans,” he said. “I can save up money. I’m very happy where I am. I feel blessed with everything I’ve been offered.”

He encourages the next generation of teenagers to look into the COYOTE program, but only if they’re motivated.

“With anything in life, this program is what you make of it,” he said. “COYOTE offers a huge listing of summer job opportunities that are very hard to pass up. This is the best way to get your foot in the door.”



Raymond Tapia speaks to COYOTEs at the 2009 COYOTE celebration.

was ideal for our new project because there would be an opportunity to use the local labor force here and really make an impact in the county.”

Like BP and Albiasa, the Hualapai Valley Solar project was also represented in the fair. Greg Bartlett, its managing director, came to discuss his 4,000-acre project. “The momentum is here in Mohave County,” he said. “The fact that this event is happening and that multiple projects are interested in the area just shows that this is a good time to start thinking about training.”

Rosalyn Boxer is also a vocal supporter of renewable energy. Boxer, senior director of workforce and business strategies for the Arizona Department of Commerce, offered a message of optimism and excitement.

“You are on the foreground of developing a new industry here in the state of Arizona,” she told the audience. “Arizona is well-positioned to play an integral part in green development, not only in the United States, but in the world.”

Local leaders agree. “We’re in a unique situation,” Kingman Mayor John Salem said. “Mohave County is a goldmine for potential projects.”

Specifically, Salem mentioned political stability, profitability, and a suitable labor force as the primary reasons that businesses are drawn to the area. In the coming months, expect to hear more about these projects.

For an out-of-work Dolan Springs resident like Darrell Terry, this couldn’t come at a better time. “When I turned in my inventory,” he said, “I just felt this huge release. This is an opportunity that I would never miss. No matter what pathway they put me on, I know that I’ll be better off than I was before.”



Jobseekers line up to turn in their inventories and be scheduled for assessments.



FACES

Veronica Cabanillas, Parker

When Veronica Cabanillas comes home after a long day of chasing kids and changing diapers, she couldn’t be happier. “I really love my job,” she said. “Sure, it gets tiring, but this is the perfect job for me. I love kids.”

Veronica found her perfect job when she was only 19 years old. She works full-time at Wee-care Day Care Center.

“This is my first job,” she explained, “and I got it through the COYOTE Program.”

The Coalition Youth Team (COYOTE) is a work readiness training program for youth aged 14-21. COYOTE helped Veronica get her first job, and she has been working there ever since.

“If not for COYOTE,” Veronica explained, “I’d probably have to work at some fast food place. I’m really glad I get to do what I love.”

Veronica went through COYOTE training last summer, learning about job readiness and life skills. “The most important lesson they taught me was how to save money.”

Now that she has to pay for rent and living expenses, those lessons are definitely coming in handy. “I’m saving up for college,” she said. “My goal is to take classes at Mohave Community College and eventually open up my own daycare center.”

Veronica admits that she may have some hurdles along the way. Her primary language is Spanish, and while she can speak English well, she knows that she needs to improve if she wants to own her own business. “Sometimes I have a hard time (with English),” she admitted. “I want my English to be perfect.” In the meantime, she gets to do what she loves, even if that means changing a few diapers.

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PERFECT JOB FOR ME. I LOVE KIDS.”**



for Green Jobs RENEWABLE

The Mohave County Energy Careers Alliance Co-hosted



ALBIASACORP.



Sunquest Solar LLC

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hualapai valley solar
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ARIZONA WESTERN COLLEGE

MCC Mohave Community College



HILLHEAD CITY

INVENTORY TOP-OFF



Mohave County One-Stop Career Center



TRI-STATE SOLAR AND WIND



PARSONS ELECTRIC

BRIGHT SOLUTIONS
from UnSource Energy Services



Mohave County One-Stop Career Center

THE ENERGY INFORMATION FAIR

Organized by the Arizona State Building and Construction Trades Council MARCH 17, 2010



Superintendent Watson trying out the Crane Simulator



Mohave County is Bowling for Jobs

Mohave County One-Stop can reach a whole new group of people thanks to a partnership with local bowling alleys.

Cerbat Lanes in Kingman and Havasu Lanes in Lake Havasu City have joined forces for a 12-week job fair ending April 28. The weekly event, under the heading "Bowling for a Better Life," allows participants to job hunt in-between rounds of bowling.

Rusty Hanna, director of marketing and operations at Cerbat Lanes, understands that unemployment can be tough, so he is proud of the fair's mixture of



William Hargrove and Kimberly Gissendanner

business and fun. "In a time where people need help, this brings everybody together," he said.

Hanna sees hundreds of guests each day vying for jobs with a rotating list of employers. "We started small," he said, "but once we got the right people helping out, it exploded."

Among those helping out are representatives from REPAC and the One-Stop Career Centers, whose shared booth has given information to over 100 participants in Kingman alone, according to REPAC Specialist Kim Gissendanner.

"The people we see are focused and self-directed," said One-Stop Representative Bill Hargrove. "They're here on their own behalf."

One such applicant is Charles Mungarro, an unemployed worker living at Kingman's Cornerstone Mission. "It's nice to hang out and bowl," he said, "but I'm here for a purpose. I've made good connections and I've told a lot of friends about this event. It's really motivating to see so many people hiring."



FACES

Cathy Danielson, Lake Havasu City

Cathy Danielson is a survivor. After being diagnosed with throat cancer, she was told that she only had four years to live. That was in 1999.

Since then, she has been busier than ever. Not only has she volunteered as a consumer advocate and guest speaker throughout Arizona, but she's now enrolled at MCC and is well on her way to a degree in Medical Assisting.

"I chose a degree in medicine because I knew they would be more accepting of my handicap," Cathy, 48, explained. Cathy can only talk with the use of a voice box, and she needs surgery every three months to stretch out her throat.

That isn't her only hardship. During her treatment, she lost her insurance because she was sixty-six cents over the income limit. A few years later, she suffered the loss of two of her children.

"It's been a roller coaster ride for the last eleven years," she said, "but things are looking up."

In December, she got certified in Medical Billing/Coding through Fast-Track training. Her education is funded by ARRA money.

"The hardest part is time management," she explained. "I go to classes all day, and try to study as much as I can in the off-hours. It's filling up my brain pretty fast."

She may be stressed, but she's definitely not complaining. "This program is good for me both emotionally and physically," Cathy explains. "Before this, I was in a depression. Now I talk so much, the other students are threatening to take the batteries out of my voice box."

Cathy's ultimate goal is to find work at a cancer research center. "They'd be more accepting of my handicap," she said. "Plus, I can bring my knowledge and life experience to the job."



Cathy Danielson in anatomy class.

Fast-Track Reaches the Finish Line

When Kathy Montoya puts on her graduation gown and receives her Medical Assisting certificate in May, she'll look back on the last eight months as some of the most worthwhile of her life. They were also some of her hardest.

"Since September, I've been studying like crazy," she said. "The classes were fast and tough, but I'm very glad I got through it."

She's not the only one.

Since Mohave County started its fast-track training program last fall, over one hundred students have received credentials in Medical Assisting (MA), Medical Billing/Coding, CNA, and Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC). With these credentials, they'll have a much better chance at getting quality employment.

Seventeen students are still in the Medical Assisting cohort, and twenty-six in HVAC. Some have already been hired in their respective fields.

"We are very impressed by the success of these students," said Mohave County Program Representative Kenda Robinson. "We just found out that all the HVAC students in Bullhead and Kingman have passed the EPA exam with flying colors."

That same week, Robinson found out that all MA students enrolled in precollege math classes had advanced to a higher class.

"Boosting my math scores was probably the most challenging part," Montoya admits. "I'm really grateful to my teachers and to all the extra tutoring that Mohave County provided. We did it."

These are just the latest success stories from this group, according to Robinson. "We are excited about all the opportunities that await them once their classes end," she said.

For students like Brent Anderson, this program has not only prepared him for a career, but has given him a huge boost in confidence.

"With HVAC, I can really take pride in my work," he said. "Before Fast-Track, I didn't really have a plan. Now I'm happy to do this kind of work for the rest of my life."



The Medical Assisting cohort poses with MCC anatomy professor Thomas McKinney.



FACES

Lori Shrum, Bullhead City

Lori Shrum has a motto: "It's never too late to start over." With a little help from Mohave County, Lori is living proof that that's true.

"One day, I ran across an ad for the Fast-Track Medical Billing/Coding program," she explained. "Two weeks later, I was in college for the first time in my life. I had no idea that was going to happen."

In a few short months, Lori, 40, finished her classes with a 4.0 GPA and passed her American Academy of Professional Coders CPC certification. "It was difficult, so I had to stay motivated," she said. And she's not done yet.

Lori has already started classes to get her Medical Assisting certificate. "They use medical assistants in a variety of ways," she said, "and there is a lot more room for advancement (than in medical billing)."

The Delaware native has plenty of work experience, but this is her first time in the medical field. "Before Fast-Track," Lori explained, "I owned my own cleaning company. Business really dropped off last year, though, and I had to find work elsewhere."

That's when Fast-Track came in and offered what Lori called "a wonderful opportunity." Not only is she taking medical classes, Lori also attends math classes to help her catch up. "Math is difficult for a lot of people," she said. "Many of us wouldn't be in this program if we didn't have extra math help."

In fact, Lori routinely does her math homework with her son. "My youngest son is learning the same kind of math that I am," she said. "Most nights, we both sit at the kitchen table and do our homework together. I'm sure I learned about all that stuff in high school, but I'm re-learning it anyway."

After all, it's never too late to start over.

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COYOTE IS READY TO HOWL

In March, hundreds of young adults and their parents crammed into the Mohave County building to go through the first orientation for this summer's COYOTE program. And that was just in Kingman.

Thanks to the record-breaking 260 COYOTES enrolled last year, the public is eager to see what this year's program has to offer.

"We've had a huge amount of interested applicants this year," said COYOTE Youth Program Coordinator Hannah Sagisi. "People know about the program and want to get involved."

The COalition YOUTH TEam (COYOTE) is a youth employment training program to help individuals become self-sufficient in the workplace and in life, Sagisi said. The program is successful because it doesn't just focus on job skills, but life skills in general.

The program starts in June, but organizers in all four cities—Kingman, Bullhead City, Lake Havasu City and Parker—are already actively recruiting for the best applicants.

"It's all about finding the right match," said Sagisi. "We look at an applicant's interests, aptitudes and experience before fitting them with a possible employer. Anyone can excel at a job. It's just a matter of finding the right job for them."

This year's program may not have as many participants as last year's record, but it's certainly getting off to a good start.

"All our staff is enthusiastic about working with the youths," said Jackie Gates, Mohave County program supervisor in Bullhead City. "This is such a valuable program for our area."

For more information about the COYOTE program, please call your local One-Stop or visit our Facebook account under the mascot Wiser Yser.



The Kingman COYOTE Steering Committee gathers to accept a \$1000 donation from Kingman Vice Mayor Janet Watson on behalf of the Arizona Youth Partnership (AzyP) – The Coalition for Successful Youth Development. This is one of several donations that COYOTE has received this year.

MOHAVE - LA PAZ ONE-STOP CAREER CENTERS

KINGMAN

MOHAVE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE SITE

Mohave County Community Services Department

700 W. Beale Street, Kingman

PHONE: 928-753-0723 FAX: 928-753-0776 TDD: 928-753-0726

www.co.mohave.az.us/workforce

Department of Economic Security 301 Pine Street, Kingman PHONE: 928-753-4333

SATELLITE OFFICES

Mohave County Community Services Department

1355 Ramar Rd. Ste.3, Bullhead City PHONE: 928-758-0702 FAX: 928-758-0737

Department of Economic Security

2601 S. Hwy. 95, Bullhead City PHONE: 928-763-4154

Mohave County Community Services Department

2001 College Dr. Ste. 122, Lake Havasu City PHONE: 928-453-0710 FAX: 928-453-0728

Department of Economic Security

232 London Bridge Road, Lake Havasu City PHONE: 928-680-6005

REPAC OFFICE—Dislocated Workers PHONE: 928-680-0464

LA PAZ COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE SITE

La Paz Career Center

1113 Kofa Ave., Parker PHONE: (928)669-9812 FAX: 928-669-6326

Department of Economic Security

1032 Hope Ave., Parker PHONE: 928-669-6755

BULLHEAD CITY

LAKE HAVASU CITY

PARKER



Mohave County One-Stop Career Center is an equal opportunity employer and provider of employment and training services. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to persons with disabilities.