

Federal funding assists seniors to return to the workforce

KINGMAN – Mohave County’s Title V Older Workers program has received additional federal grant funding for eight training positions with wages and support services equivalent to a total of more than \$96,000.

The eight Title V job positions will offer seniors re-entry access to the workforce, Title V Program Representative Lynne Steiger said. “I originally asked for funding for 10 or more positions, but eight will fill our capacity. This special funding will put participants into our local workforce for seventeen months of training until they secure unsubsidized employment.”

The Title V program will work in combination with Workforce Initiative Act (WIA) funded programs with adults and older workers, she said. “Title V Senior Community Service Employment assists people 55 and older to return to the workplace.”

Participants will receive training, such as computer skills, and assistance with transportation and other needs, she said.

Becki Wetzel has worked in the Mohave County Community Services Department’s One-Stop Career Center as a Title V resource clerk helping other people get jobs for a year and a half. She has just recently been hired by the Department of Public Health as a clerk.

“Becki is a good example of a Title V success story,” Steiger said. “She did so well in the One-Stop, I hated to see her go; but that is the way the program works. She helped others to gain employment while keeping an eye open to find something better. I enroll



Becki Wetzel (left) and Lynne Steiger

them (participants) right after the eligibility and job-readiness training into the Title V program so we can help them start looking for better-paying jobs. While they are looking, support services, like money for gas, are available if the participant demonstrates a need. We can also help with tires or brakes, and for those who have no transportation, we supply bus passes.”

Wetzel and her husband, Ray, are former Californians.

“We lived in Dana Point in South Orange County,” she said. “I was a secretary for the school superintendent in San Juan Capistrano. I had retired from the school district. My husband became ill and the doctors suggested the desert. My friend who had retired from the same school district had a house in Yuma, so we moved to that city. We were there for about a year and it was just too hot. That summer, we made the decision to move to Kingman.”

The Wetzels didn’t know anyone in Kingman when they arrived, but Becki started meeting people and learning about the area by volunteering at Kingman Regional Medical Center.

“We had both been retired,” she said. “I had been retired for 11 years. We were new in town and opportunities for older workers were limited. My husband came to the County One-Stop and talked to a resource clerk who got him involved in the job club.”

Ray then spent a day discussing jobs for older workers with Steiger.

“After talking to Lynne, he was really excited about his employment prospects,” Becki said. “His first Title V employment was with the Treasurer’s Office. He worked there doing clerical work for six months. Now he is working 30 hours per week in Housing Rehabilitation.”

“He is earning more than \$15 per hour in that close-to full-time job,” Steiger said.

At about the same time Ray Wetzel started with the Treasurer’s Office, Becki was hired as a resource clerk with the Community Services Department.

“I was there for a year and a half,” she said. “During that time, I applied for a few other jobs, including the job with the Department of Public Health. It was posted in August; I was interviewed in October. Then I heard nothing and I figured the job was gone. The department was probably just focusing on the H1N1 flu problem. Then one day they called and told me I had the job. That was a month ago.”

“I really didn’t want to release her,” Steiger said. “She did an incredible job in the One-Stop. She placed a lot of other people in good jobs during her time there. She has excellent customer service skills.”

“This was a great opportunity for both of us,” Becki said. “When one hasn’t been employed in 11 years, it is hard to get back into the daily routine.” The Title V program offered “the opportunity for computer courses. Everything worked out very well. We have a good bunch of people to work with. I couldn’t be happier.”

Many seniors find it difficult to return to the job market, Steiger said.

“When Ray came to the program, he looked really tired and defeated,” she said. “Today he looks and acts like a young man; and Becki has just blossomed. It is an incredible transformation once older workers realize they have value. They have the experience and work ethic. Our program brings back their enthusiasm and self confidence. People 55 and older who are looking for employment can come to us whether they have skills or not. That doesn’t matter because we will train them for jobs. Just the other day I had an 86-year-old lady apply for employment. Seniors have experience and knowledge and make excellent employees.”

“I found the opportunity to be a wonderful experience,” Becki said.

“And with the new grant, we have the ability to assist more seniors,” Steiger said. “The funding is there; the training will be there; and the assistance into positions will be there.”

For more information on Mohave County’s Title V program, call Steiger at (928) 753-0723.