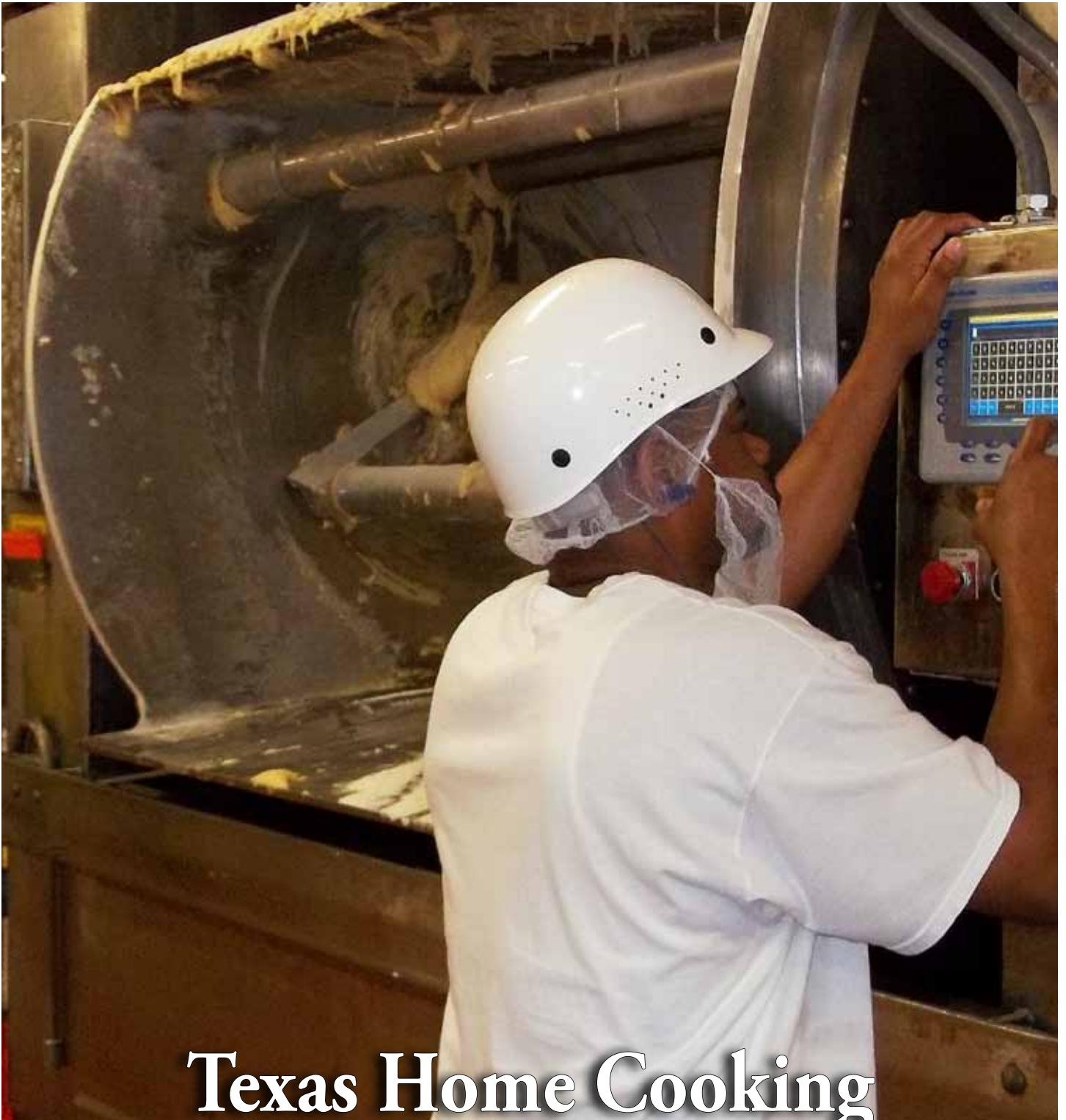


SOLUTIONS

Spring 2013

Vol. 10, No. 2



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On the cover: Skinner Baking employee Corey Mosley conducts mix tests and edits the recipes of a 1,600 pound sponge dough mixer at the company's new facility in Paris, where the first production line is scheduled to open in May. *Photos courtesy of J. Skinner Baking*

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Hope Andrade

Commissioner Representing Employers

In March, I proudly accepted Gov. Rick Perry's appointment as the Texas Workforce Commissioner Representing Employers. As I embark on this new journey, I draw from 30 years of experience as a business owner, coupled with 10 years spent as a public servant in varying capacities. A self-professed entrepreneur, I understand firsthand the challenges business owners and managers face, and I am committed to ensuring that Texas continues to meet the workforce needs of our more than 460,000 employers.

Collaborative partnerships such as the West Texas Innovation Network illustrate the Texas Workforce Solutions system's ability to provide resources and business training to our state's many entrepreneurs in an individualized and effective manner. Supporting Texas entrepreneurs is vital to our continued success. It also is crucial for us to maintain our business friendly environment so that we may continue to grow and attract businesses to Texas—businesses like the J. Skinner Baking Co. and General Electric Manufacturing Solutions—and create more job opportunities.

Job-training programs help ensure our current workforce, and ultimately our state, remains competitive. It's important that Texans have the appropriate skill sets to fill open positions—positions like those found in the energy sector in areas like the Eagle Ford Shale and the Cline Shale.

As a result of my recent economic development efforts as Texas Secretary of State, I understand the importance of programs that support employers' demand for skilled workers. The Skills Development Fund and the Governor's Summer Merit Program are great examples of programs that help Texas maintain a skilled workforce and help prepare the future workforce for in-demand jobs.

In my role as Commissioner Representing Employers, I look forward to partnering with employers and local workforce development boards to develop innovative opportunities that help create, and keep, jobs right here in Texas. ■

Serving Stationed Spouses

New initiatives help open up employment opportunities to military spouses

By Laura Ybarra

Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande (Upper Rio Grande) has joined forces with the U.S. Army Employment Readiness Program and other community partners to provide military spouses stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso with the resources to launch or build their careers.

“A high demand for workforce services exists among military spouses because they face such unique challenges,” said Maria Marshall, workforce development specialist with Upper Rio Grande’s Fort Bliss office. “For example, military spouses often have gaps on their résumés due to frequent moves and short-term duty assignments that make it difficult to find jobs and build a professional network.”

According to Marshall, Fort Bliss’s workforce development office served about 3,500 military spouses last year, resulting in at least 530 hires.

Services available to military spouses include workshops on résumé writing, preparing for job interviews, career exploration and planning, networking, applying for federal jobs, and more. Upper Rio Grande also helps spouses compare labor market information for jobs they performed at previous duty stations to help determine appropriate salary and benefits for jobs they are applying for in the Fort Bliss area. Upper Rio Grande also helps connect spouses with education programs that can provide tuition assistance.

“Fort Bliss is actually the only military installation in the U.S. with a workforce development office on post, and the program has been very successful,” said Marshall. “On average, it takes about three months



More than 77 employers and 900 military ID cardholders networked at a Feb. 14 job fair at Fort Bliss hosted by Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande and the Employment Readiness Program. Photo courtesy Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande

for spouses to find employment once they start the workforce development programs.”

Jessica Alderson is a military spouse and former Army sergeant who served as a signal support system specialist in the Army for nearly seven years. A Purple Heart recipient, Alderson separated from the military in 2011 after being wounded during her third deployment to Afghanistan.

“When I separated, my husband and I were both stationed in Germany and we knew he was about to be relocated to Fort Bliss,” said Alderson. “Since we had to deal with relocating, I wasn’t able to look for work until August 2012.”

Once Alderson and her husband were settled at Fort Bliss, she contacted Marshall to begin her job search.

“Within three weeks of starting my job search, I had multiple job offers,” said Alderson.

On Feb. 14, Upper Rio Grande and the Employment Readiness Program hosted a hiring fair at Fort Bliss exclusively for military ID card holders, attracting more than 900 job seekers and 77 employers. Nearly 100 job seekers have found jobs through the fair.

Art Macias, a recruitment manager with University Medical Center in El Paso, sent representatives to attend the fair specifically to recruit military spouses.

“Military spouses make excellence candidates and many come with healthcare experience,” said Macias. “They are hardworking, structured professionals who are eager to get back into the workforce.” ■

West Texas Innovation Network helps aspiring Abilene entrepreneurs succeed

By Shannon Thomas

Small businesses play a vital role in the economic successes in Texas, employing more than four million and representing more than 98 percent of all employers. Most of Texas' small businesses employ less than 20 people, and more than 83 percent are single proprietor entities.

The West Texas Innovation Network (WTIN) was launched in 2011 with that in mind. WTIN's mission is to help aspiring entrepreneurs in Abilene and surrounding areas determine if they are ready to run their own business and provide resources and training to increase their chances of success. WTIN was initially funded in part by a \$200,000 grant from the Texas Workforce Commission in 2011.

"We are striving to build a culture of entrepreneurship in the Abilene area," said Mike Mikeworth, WTIN project manager. "Free mentorship forums are a key component of what we do; we let aspiring entrepreneurs learn strategies from owners of local, already-established small businesses."

Other key stakeholders for WTIN include Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas, the Texas Tech Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Griggs Center for Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy at Abilene Christian University.

"It's a very good idea for any aspiring entrepreneur to utilize the services offered at WTIN," said Judy Wilhelm, director of SBDC.

WTIN and SBDC collaborate on free workshops to help keep entrepreneurs and small business owners up to date on changing economic trends and current developments in today's business environment.



West Texas Innovation Network (WTIN) Project Manager Mike Mikeworth speaks at a mentorship forum, which is a key component of WTIN's services. Photo courtesy Workforce Solutions West Central Texas



WTIN also provides consulting services and entrepreneur boot camps for participants.

In 2012, WTIN began to utilize the entrepreneurship resources available from Kauffman Foundation—an organization devoted to research, education, technical assistance, and policy for entrepreneurs. WTIN became an affiliate of Kauffman FastTrac® and started offering the 30-hour FastTrac® NewVenture™ program, which is designed specifically for aspiring and early-stage entrepreneurs. Currently, a specialized NewVenture for Veterans class is being offered at a significant cost reduction due to underwriting by a

local foundation and a grant from Accenture, according to Mikeworth.

Small business owner Christine Brockman has utilized WTIN services and is a graduate of the FastTrac training.

"The speakers at the mentorship programs were extremely helpful with all the questions I had," Brockman said. "It was great to network with other business owners and talk about the pros and cons of starting your own business."

Brockman, who owns The Last Remains, an antiques store, said she meets regularly with graduates of the training class to compare notes on their respective businesses.

"The kind of exposure my business gets from the WTIN services would normally cost thousands of dollars," Brockman said. "I would encourage anyone who is interested in starting their own business to take the classes or utilize WTIN's other services." ■

A Recipe for Success

Baking company adds Paris production, plans to hire nearly 400

By Rachael Pierce

J. Skinner Baking Co. (Skinner Baking) is planting its roots deep in the heart of Texas with the expansion of its commercial baking production in Paris. An estimated 400 jobs will be created over the next three years with approximately 100 of those workers employed when the first production line opens in May.

Skinner Baking's investment in the Paris community is estimated to be \$6 million in annual payroll in 2013 and will climb to an estimated \$16.5 million by 2021, according to a recent economic report.

"The stars aligned and everything fell into place," said Audie Keaton, President/CEO of Skinner Baking, of his visit to Paris. "The facility had everything we needed and the workforce of Paris sold me. It's one of the best workforces, and the community has really embraced Skinner Baking."

Nebraska-based Skinner Baking will house its Paris operations in the revamped former Sara Lee facility. Keaton knew that opening a facility in Paris would be a good fit for the company, and he expects the company to develop a strong presence locally.

Partnerships created between the state, Skinner Baking and local partners, including the Paris Economic Development Corporation (PEDC) who helped recruit the company to Paris, are among the many reasons this venture is geared towards success.

"The announcement of Skinner Baking's expansion in Paris is the product of hard work from the company, officials here at the local level and hard-working Texans across our state who have made the phrase 'Made in Texas' a worldwide mark of quality and dependability," said Gov.



Skinner Baking employee Tyson Keys cuts stainless steel grates, which will be used in the company's revamped facility in Paris. Photo courtesy of J. Skinner Baking

Rick Perry.

The incentive plan for Skinner Baking included \$1.8 million in state funds from the Texas Enterprise Fund, which helped secure the deal and the creation of jobs in Paris.

PEDC executive director Steve Gilbert said without the partnerships at the state and local level, and the work of the PEDC, community banks and civic leaders, the expansion wouldn't have been possible. The expansion offers a bright future for the Paris community and Skinner Baking.

"In five years, the Skinner Baking facility will be a beehive of activity—the parking lot will be full, trucks will be coming and going," said Gilbert. "Skinner Baking is a major, valued employer for Paris, and the Skinner family and company will be integrated into our community."

Bart Spivey, business development project manager for Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas (Northeast Texas) agrees. Spivey knows the talent exists in Paris to fill job openings at Skinner Baking, and Northeast Texas has been there to help Skinner Baking with whatever needs arise, including collecting more than 2,500 applications for jobs at the facility and screening applicants. Northeast Texas also has assisted with posting jobs on WorkInTexas.com, spreading the word through advertisements and workforce centers, and providing the company with wage reports for the local region.

"Skinner Baking's expansion in Paris is having a significant impact on the local market," Spivey said. "Paris has the workers with the right manufacturing skills to meet the company's needs." ■

Putting Cline on the map



Poised to become a major shale play area in the state, Cline Shale-area employers are meeting challenges head on.



By Mark Lavergne

A new chapter is beginning in Texas' ongoing energy developments. Beneath a cluster of counties east of the Midland-Odessa area lies the Cline Shale, an oil and gas formation about 140 miles long and 70 wide, estimated to contain about 30 million barrels of recoverable oil. Like the Eagle Ford Shale and Permian Basin before it, energy companies are moving in droves to the area to mine those resources.

"The oil and gas industry continues to provide the State of Texas with economic growth and good jobs," said Texas Workforce Commission Chairman Andres Alcantar. "The Cline Shale with its enormous potential will contribute to the economic expansion and create employment opportunities that the Workforce Solutions System is already preparing to meet."

The Cline Shale area is expected to face two big challenges: workforce development and housing.

"There's no question workforce and housing needs will be a challenge for us because of our sparse population," said Cathy Ballard, director of planning for Workforce Solutions Concho Valley. "But if we can come together to meet these needs, we could be looking at real growth and prosperity here."

Local Workforce Solutions offices are indeed working together, and partnering with local high schools and community colleges, to ensure employers' needs are met as efficiently as possible.

"Workforce Solutions plans to approach the employer needs as a region," Ballard said. "Rather than each of us doing our own thing, we want to work together to help businesses."

The primary needs of Cline Shale



A welder for Fox Tank Co. in Kerrville, Texas, helps to build an oil field storage tank. Fox Tank is one of many oil- and gas-related employers whose shops may expand thanks to the Cline Shale. *Photo courtesy Fox Tank Co. Photo Ltd.*

employers in oil and gas, like those in Eagle Ford and other plays, are for truck drivers and welders. Workforce Solutions boards are partnering with local colleges to facilitate and fast track training for those occupations and others.

However, energy-related jobs are just the beginning. Many workers are moving from positions in industries like retail and leisure and hospitality into higher-paying energy-related occupations as a result of the Cline Shale developments.

"One challenge is back-filling those positions that have been vacated," Ballard said.

Nathan Fox, vice president of oil tank-builder Fox Tank Co., said it would be difficult to quantify just how many opportunities will be available for those entering the workforce.

"The industries benefitting

indirectly from this kind of growth are phenomenal—restaurants, retail stores, and more," Fox said. "And from the oil production side there are hundreds of different types of occupations that will see growth, including oil field workers, truck drivers, and my profession, welders. There are opportunities for all different levels of education and skill."

Ballard said her local workforce development board was encouraging employers in retail and other industries to focus on particular demographics like young professionals, high school-age workers, older workers, military spouses, and college students.

Steve Collins, business resource consultant for Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas, said local workforce boards are educating area high schools and secondary schools about employer needs in the region. He said some students may wish to enroll in dual credit courses to take advantage of the openings in different industries.

Local boards impacted by the Cline Shale developments also are working to address incoming workers' housing needs. The local workforce boards for Permian Basin, South Plains, Concho Valley, West Central Texas, and North Texas have formed a "Regional Partnership Committee" to examine and find ways to meet the housing need for workers moving into the area.

"Between finding workers and finding places for those workers to live, it will take coordination among the workforce system, employers, high schools, colleges and others," Collins said. "Working together, this can be a great chapter in the history of the Texas workforce." ■

Revving up a new career

New training program focuses on higher fuel-efficient vehicle propulsion systems

By Debbie Pitts

With more alternative fuel vehicles hitting the roads, the demand for automotive technicians with the expertise to service them is growing. To address this need, Texas State Technical College (TSTC) West Texas in Sweetwater recently added training in diagnostics, service and repair of light duty diesel, hybrid fuel/electric and compressed natural gas vehicles to its Automotive Technology program.

The training was made possible through a \$295,000 federal Wagner-Peyser grant for workforce training projects awarded by the governor's office and managed by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) which provided curricula and equipment for training students in the new higher fuel-efficient vehicle propulsion systems. The training will be added to the school's automotive technology program which offers an Associate of Applied Science degree, Level-One Certification and Technical Skills Mastery Certification.

The grant enabled the college to purchase diagnostic equipment, curriculum and tools for the Chevrolet/General Motors and Ford light diesel systems and covered the cost of vehicles for hands-on use in laboratory instruction, as well as a hybrid fuel/electric vehicle and



Students Alonzo Flores (driver's seat), Ryan Lupton, (passenger's seat) and Jarrod Garcia (standing left) and TSTC West Texas Automotive Service Instructor Joseph Corne (standing right) check out new equipment. The three students completed TSTC's new alternative fuel training program in 2012. Photo courtesy Texas State Technical College

compressed natural gas training equipment.

"With this equipment, our students are able to learn the diagnostics on these vehicles, understand how the systems work and how to repair the components so that they can fix any problem that comes up," said Si Acuña, automotive program chairman and instructor at TSTC West Texas. "We are the only college that I am aware of in this region that provides training on these greener fuel systems."

The training using the new equipment and curricula began in the fall semester of 2012 and 24 students participated in that initial offering. Those students were either in the existing automotive training certification program at TSTC West Texas or the TSTC Waco Automotive Technology program.

Eighteen students are enrolled in the training for the spring 2013 semester. One of them, Hector Rodriguez, is pursuing both an associate's degree and Automotive Service Excellence Certification from TSTC and hopes this training will lead him to a good job with good pay.

[This training] will open up many more options for me," Rodriguez said. "From training on hybrids to

diesels all the way up to compressed natural gas (CNG) engines, employers will see that I have this training and it will make me more valuable in an automotive service shop."

Automotive service technicians and industrial machinery mechanics in Texas earn a median annual wage of nearly \$40,000, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and TWC labor market data. The number of automotive and diesel technician employment opportunities in West Central Texas is projected to increase by nearly 20 percent between 2006 and 2016.

TSTC West Texas plans to begin promoting the program to employed technicians later this spring as a continuing education opportunity for those wishing to gain skills on the newer technology.

"One of the niches we can fill with this new program is training for incumbent workers who are employed by independent garages that need these skills," said TSTC West Texas Automotive Technology Director Rick Denbow. "New car dealerships receive training from factory representatives, whereas independent garages rely on other resources such as TSTC to provide training." ■

Board collaborations help bring new manufacturing plant to Fort Worth

By Rachael Pierce

Together, two Texas Workforce Solutions offices, two community colleges and a major employer are giving Fort Worth's manufacturing industry a boost thanks to a \$744,845 Skills Development Fund (Skills) grant from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). This grant, which began in June 2012, will be used to custom train 275 new workers for the new General Electric (GE) manufacturing plant.

Machinists, operators, and welders trained under this grant will receive training on the highly-specialized technical skills needed to manufacture GE's rail and transportation-related products, and will earn an average hourly wage of \$17.00.

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County (Tarrant County) was one of two local workforce boards involved and has worked closely with GE to staff their new facility. Tarrant County took the lead on developing a hiring strategy, posting job listings, and hiring and holding job fairs, including a veterans-only job fair in January, according to Sal Adamski, workforce improvement director for Tarrant County.

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (North Central) helped Tarrant County facilitate the partnerships between the workforce boards and college systems. For Kent Andersen, business development manager for North Central, the impact of GE's expansion in north Texas is very positive.

"GE's expansion changes the dynamics of the entire region," Andersen said. "Establishing a manufacturing operation like GE has done in Fort Worth—a region that has mostly been focused on logistics—will only help this area for these types of future operations."



Gerald Randal participates in hands-on computer numeric controls training at the Tarrant County College Opportunity Center as part of the training provided by the Skills Development Fund grant awarded to GE Manufacturing Solutions and Tarrant County College. *Photo courtesy Tarrant County College*

Most of the 275 workers have begun, or already completed, their four- to nine-week training through the two community college partners—Tarrant County College (TCC) and North Central Texas College (NCTC)—in classes handpicked by GE. TCC is providing the machining and computer numeric controls (CNC) training, while NCTC is focused on the welding portion of the curriculum. Training will be completed by the summer.

"The training through the colleges is a local, business-driven curriculum," said Amber Gosser, business services director for Tarrant County. "It's a unique program, and GE loved it because it's customized to their needs."

Jennifer Hawkins, director of corporate services for TCC, noted the emphasis for this training is to provide workers with hands-on learning experiences catered to GE's needs for

their workers.

"This training is creating a pool of employees for GE to hire from locally," said Hawkins. "As a region, we don't have a large pool of machining workers. This grant is building a skilled workforce that employers can hire from."

Skills grants are designed to meet Texas employers' customized training needs, while allowing workers to garner the skills needed to successfully perform these jobs.

"Through strong partnerships, we provide solutions that prepare new and existing workers with the in-demand skills identified by employers," said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar. "This grant with GE Manufacturing Solutions is another example of key stakeholders working together to train workers and meet employer needs as businesses create new jobs for the local economy." ■

TWC building Earns EPA's ENERGY STAR® certification

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) recently announced that its main building, located at 101 E. 15th St. in Austin, has earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) ENERGY STAR® certification. Buildings that earn EPA's Energy Star use 35 percent less energy and generate 35 percent fewer greenhouse gas emissions than similar buildings from around the country. The building is the first in Texas' Capitol Complex to receive this certification, and one of only 6,800 buildings across the country. Additionally, the 170,000-square-foot building's energy consumption has been reduced by more than 30 percent for an estimated savings of \$354,893 over the last five years.

This achievement highlights an even larger milestone for all TWC-managed buildings. In the 14 buildings for which TWC managed utilities over the last 10 years, the agency:

- Reduced electricity consumption by 24 percent from 2002 to 2012; and
- Reduced gas consumption by 50 percent from 2002 to 2012.

TWC improved its energy performance by successfully integrating the use of energy-saving materials, systems design and power management strategies into TWC's regular facility master plan and maintenance schedule.

Heart of Texas honors employers, contractors, program participants

Workforce Solutions Heart of Texas (Heart of Texas) recognized employers, contractors, program participants and other stakeholders who support the workforce system and efforts of Heart of Texas at its 15th Annual Awards of Excellence Banquet in January. The event honored regional employers, partner entities and program



(From left to right) TWC Director of Construction Management Bob Bauer, TWC Director of Infrastructure, Planning, and Budget Jeanette Bradfield, TWC Director of Infrastructure Services and Risk Management Michael Farrell, and TWC Director of Business Operations Cindy Silberman proudly display the Energy Star certification plaque in front of the TWC Main Building in Austin. Photo by Laura Ybarra

participants for their commitment to a strong economic environment, quality education, emergent industries, competitive business, skilled workers, and growing thriving communities. It included awards for regional employers who go the extra mile to benefit their workforce and their communities and for youth and adults who overcame adversities to better the lives of their families and themselves.

2013 Annual Award of Excellence Honorees included:

Employer of Excellence for Bosque County – Double B Foods

Employer of Excellence for Falls County – Jimi Lynn State Farm Insurance

Employer of Excellence for Freestone County – Green Energy Oilfield Services, LLC

Employer of Excellence for Hill County – PETRO Travel Centers of America

Employer of Excellence for Limestone County – SWARCO-Reflex Industries

Employer of Excellence for McLennan County – The Exchange
Employer of the Year – Customer Contact Channel-C3

Outstanding Childcare Provider – MCC Child Development Center

Outstanding Program Participant – Maria Cristina Cleveland

Outstanding Youth Participant – Frederick Daniel Boswell, III

Outstanding Workforce Professional – Tamera Carter

Honorable Elenor Holmes Service to Community Award – Virgil Teter, KWTX

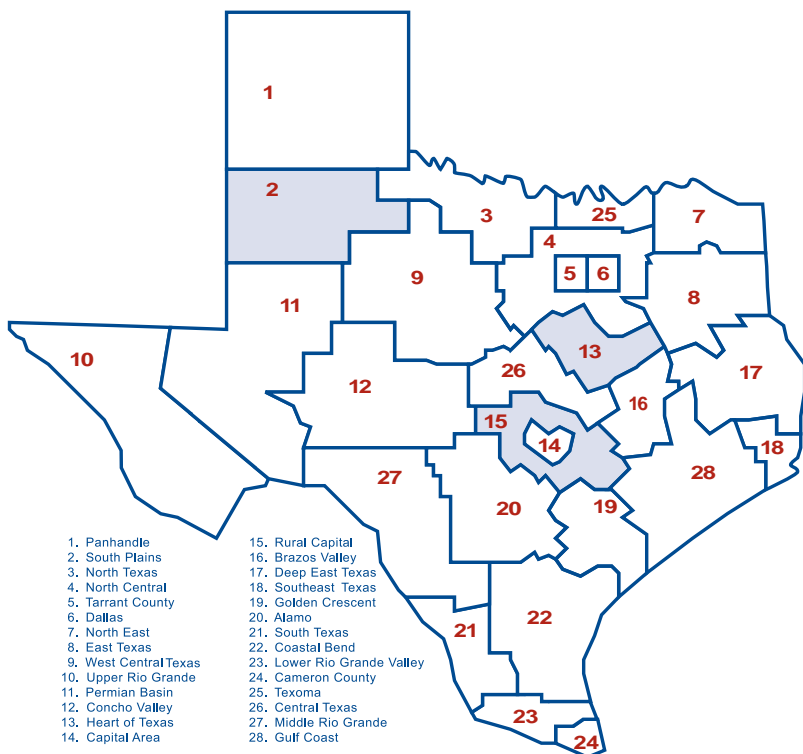
Eagle Ford Shale Consortium conference draws hundreds

More than 1,000 attendees from across the United States gathered in San Antonio for the second Eagle Ford Shale Consortium conference in March.

Themed 'Shaping a Sustainable Pathway,' the conference featured guest speakers from area economic development boards, workforce and state officials, and industry experts. Texas Workforce Commission Chairman Andres Alcantar delivered the opening remarks to state leaders at a roundtable discussion, which included Sen. Leticia Van de Putte and Sen. Carlos Uresti.

Breakout sessions featured topics like "Current and Future Workforce and Education in Shale Development" and "Public and Private Investment Opportunities in the Eagle Ford Shale." Participants also discussed infrastructure issues for the area and local government planning. Employers from a variety of industries also attended the conference to network and share information about their businesses.

Workforce News Around the State



with the Texas Veterans Commission, American Legion Post 54, and the Amarillo VA Healthcare System. Walmart was the corporate events sponsor.

DOL awards NEG grant for Bastrop wildfires

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) announced in March that the final \$406,101 National Emergency Grant (NEG) amount had been



awarded to Workforce Solutions Rural Capital (Rural Capital) to fund temporary disaster recovery jobs related to

the 2011 Bastrop County wildfires.

In September 2011, wildfires in Bastrop County destroyed 35,000 acres, including 1,600 homes, took two lives and left many residents out of work. In response, DOL awarded the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) a \$1.2 million NEG to assist in recovery efforts. The contract for this award was initiated with Rural Capital on October 1, 2011 and was incrementally funded based on demonstrated need and performance. Bastrop County continued to qualify for the remaining NEG funds.

Since the fires, the NEG enabled more than 70 dislocated workers to support their families while aiding their community's recovery efforts, performing jobs related to fire cleanup, setting up food pantry operations, performing technical and office support, and disaster archiving recovery. The last payment will continue to fund 31 remaining positions through the end of June. Rural Capital will assist the remaining workers in finding permanent employment.



(From left) Sen. Carlos Uresti, Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, Eagle Ford Shale Consortium Chairman Leodoro Martinez, TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar, and Lewis Energy spokesperson Michael Garcia attend the Eagle Ford Shale Consortium conference in San Antonio. Photo courtesy Workforce Solutions Middle Rio Grande

Vets-only job fair draws large crowd in Amarillo

Workforce Solutions Panhandle (Panhandle) hosted a free veterans-only job fair in March at the American Legion Post 54, drawing a crowd of approximately 125 veterans and more than 50 vendors, which included employers, colleges and universities, and benefits providers. This event marked the

16th veterans-only job fair hosted by Panhandle in the last five years.

Panhandle typically hosts three veterans-focused job fair events each year with two more planned for 2013.

Terry Bentley, veterans employment representative for Panhandle, said the goal of the fair was to show veterans what benefits are available to them, as well as showcasing different employment and educational opportunities.

Panhandle sponsored this event



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Lower Rio Grande Valley
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www.wfsolutions.com

Southeast Texas
(409) 719-4750
www.setworks.org

Alamo
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Rural Capital Area
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The Texas Workforce Commission, in partnership with 28 local workforce development boards, forms Texas Workforce Solutions.



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