

Solutions

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myAlamoCareer.org
empowers new job seekers

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Strong Partnerships Build on Success in Texas

By Chairman Andres Alcantar



Texas is an exciting place to live, work and build a business. Our state's economy added more than 1 million jobs in the last four years. There has been consistent growth across every major industry, providing opportunities for Texas families and businesses.

As we look forward, we must continue to find innovative approaches to fulfill our mission and leverage the foundation for growth and success in Texas. We maintain our commitment to a workforce system that is market-driven and fosters partnerships around local priorities to maximize effectiveness.

To build on our success, we look to expand and make our partnerships more robust at all levels. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) are working together, finding new ways to benefit Texas' future workforce, job seekers and employers. Our local workforce boards are seeking new ways to leverage resources with local stakeholders.

Through dynamic partnerships we discover new successes.

I look forward to the forging of new partnerships in the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program. AEL is a great fit for TWC, as our local Workforce Solutions partners already work with the population eligible for this program.

We continue to develop and expand coordinated education and workforce training projects. Thanks to TEA and local stakeholders for working diligently with us to ensure a smooth transition.

We will continue to launch innovative strategies that prepare our current and future workforce for the opportunities created by our world class companies. These strategies must be aligned and responsive to the changing skills requirements needed to

succeed in the workplace and compete in a global economy.

We will advance efforts to enhance completion so that more students can finish what they start, including high school, an industry-recognized credential, a two-year community or technical college or a university program. Our partnerships will also strive to replicate best practices in workforce service delivery, career counseling, services to veterans, early learning, career and technical education, and in science, technology, engineering and math programs.

TWC's partnerships with TEA, THECB, Workforce Solutions, employers and our local partners will leverage our unique strengths to generate positive outcomes for the people and communities of Texas. I look forward to a successful year! ■

Andres Alcantar | Commissioner Representing the Public



By Macy D. Hurwitz

An innovative virtual career center has garnered national attention by allowing access to jobs, training and education information 24-hours a day on a video game-like platform.

MyAlamoCareer.org allows visitors to go to different virtual rooms and find online employment tools, videos, links and interactive components that connect them to services and information through a partnership between Workforce Solutions Alamo (Alamo) and Alamo Colleges.

Eva Esquivel, Alamo's communications manager/industry liaison, said the idea of a virtual center came about after the local workforce board faced challenges in serving all 12 counties in Alamo's board area after budget cuts were implemented.

After seeking input from focus groups, Alamo settled on the Unity 3-D gaming platform to make the center an interactive experience that would appeal to younger visitors. Alamo's partnership with Alamo

Colleges helped to make the project more feasible than it would have been individually, due to being able to share costs.

"Each organization was separately developing an online career center and by aligning our mutual vision and resources, we were able to take the product to a level that individually neither imagined possible," said Patricia Parma, district director of student success initiatives for Alamo Colleges.

Parma said feedback on the site has been positive from students, faculty, high school counselors, and other members of the community.

"MyAlamoCareer.org helps me to formulate strategies and action plans to achieve career and educational objectives," said Jo Garcia, career center coordinator for the Northwest Vista College campus. "The resources that Workforce Solutions Alamo provides enhance what I can do to help students that have other needs

like childcare, financial issues or personal issues."

MyAlamoCareer.org caught the attention of Albert Palacios, education program specialist in the College and Career Transitions Branch in the U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Palacios was intrigued and contacted Alamo to get more information about the site and its configuration.

"The federal departments are familiar with Geographic Solutions Virtual One Stop concept, but had never seen one built on a platform such as ours," Esquivel said.

Esquivel will speak about MyAlamoCareer.org in the Delivering Services in a 3-D Environment workshop at the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals conference in Denver in May. By then, Esquivel said she hopes to have launched an employer services component, tentatively called MyAlamoBusiness.org. ■

“Building Successful Communities” in Tarrant County

By **Debbie Pitts**

Innovation, collaboration and partnership are ideals that often create a formula for workforce success in today’s fast-paced world.

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County and its community partners used these principles to develop a model they call “Building Successful Communities.” The model focuses on developing close, ongoing, mutually-beneficial relationships among local government and economic development entities, faith-based and community organizations, and education and training providers.

The “Building Successful Communities” plan seeks to increase capacity in the Tarrant County business community through business-validated training and employment-related services, increase the awareness of each business sector and create a “build-our-own” workforce program by engaging and connecting Tarrant County Independent School District career centers to local businesses. Application of the design in

Tarrant County is reaping impressive results.

By connecting employers to resources, including available training grants, site locators and a skilled workforce, Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County (Tarrant County) has attracted new companies to the area including GE Manufacturing Solutions, Flextronics, Klein Tools, and fulfillment centers for Amazon and Wal-Mart Stores Inc.

These companies have brought approximately 4,000 new jobs to the area and approximately \$250 million in capital investments, \$200 million in payroll and ultimately \$50 million in taxable sales.

“This campaign is a prime example of our community’s efforts to promote our motto — ‘Keep Tarrant County Working,’” said Tarrant County Executive Director Judy McDonald.

“Specifically, our strategy is to be creative, collaborative and resourceful in seeking ways to recruit and retain employers and provide business solutions and talent needed to keep them competitive.”

Efforts to retain and support expansion efforts of

existing employers have also proven successful. These include 250 new positions added at General Motors Arlington and 300 new positions at Mouser Electronics in Mansfield.

“These relationships are enhanced and closely fostered through our Employer Network,” McDonald said. “Our Employer Network was created to ensure that all appropriate partners in the community with any possible impact on business recruitment, retention and capacity building were identified and included in the collaborations.”

The “Building Successful Communities” model is now being shared with other workforce development boards throughout the state and nation.

Application of the plan will enable local communities to realize larger scale successes due to the design’s collaborative approach.

The program will also allow for a proactive and comprehensive way to address the needs of businesses, workers, and local school districts who are developing students for future careers within their community. ■



The “Building Successful Communities” campaign helped connect new employer GE Manufacturing Solutions with the Skills Development Fund training program which provided customized technical training for 275 new workers which provided them with the highly specialized and technical skills necessary to manufacture the company’s rail and transportation-related products. Photo courtesy of Tarrant County College



COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HEROES

»»»»» GAINS MOMENTUM

By Laura Ybarra

The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) College Credit for Heroes initiative gained momentum with a new wave of partners throughout the state — growing from 11 to 33 participating colleges and universities.

“When our sons and daughters complete their service and return to civilian life, they deserve a leg up, and that is what College Credit for Heroes gives them,” said TWC Commissioner Representing Labor Ronny Congleton at the Military Friendly Symposium hosted by Texas A&M University in October.

“College Credit for Heroes is now allowing veterans to earn up to a year of college credit, and tremendous praise is due to the partner colleges that worked hard to make this happen.”

Now, colleges and universities from around Texas have joined TWC, Central Texas College (CTC) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board by committing to review all www.CollegeCreditforHeroes.org transcript evaluations, and make every effort to maximize the award of college

credit to veterans for their military experience and training.

The first universities to sign these agreements include all 13 Texas A&M University System campuses, National University, Parker University, and Western Governor's University – Texas (WGU Texas).

“Recognizing our veterans' talent, WGU Texas partnered with College Credit for Heroes to help veterans and service members build the knowledge and skills they need to obtain their degrees quickly and re-enter the workforce,” said WGU Texas Chancellor Ray Martinez III.

“Thanks to our flat rate tuition, veterans who work harder and apply their prior education and experience can accelerate through our degree programs faster, saving money in the process.”

According to Martinez, approximately 460 out of 4,500 WGU Texas students are veterans or service members, and the university has seen a 12 percent increase in veteran and service member enrollment since they announced their partnership with College Credit for Heroes.

CTC also reports more activity on www.CollegeCreditforHeroes.org since

the partnership program expanded.

“We have seen more requests for transcript evaluations from veterans since announcing the new partnership program, and two major state universities and one state technical college have expressed interest in joining the partnership,” said Johnelle Welsh, CTC's dean of student services.

“We continue to share the findings of the College Credit for Heroes initiative and recruit more partners by presenting at workshops and conferences and participating in education fairs attended by other institutions of higher education.”

CTC developed the College Credit for Heroes website to standardize the evaluation of college credit for military training and experience across Texas institutions.

Veterans can set up an account at www.CollegeCreditforHeroes.org to access an evaluation of their military experience and training, and request a military transcript from their branch of service to be sent to College Credit for Heroes staff for review.

Users may also request that a transcript of awarded credits be sent to a Texas college of their choice, check the status of evaluations and/or transcript requests, participate in a live chat online with a representative, and more.

Since its launch in April 2012, more than 26,000 veterans have created accounts through the College Credit for Heroes Web portal and more than 3,400 veterans have requested transcripts.

In the first year of operation, www.CollegeCreditforHeroes.org evaluations awarded an average of 25 credit hours per veteran.

More information about College Credit for Heroes and other workforce programs for Texas veterans is available at texasworkforce.org/veterans. ■

Former U. S. Navy Reserves Lieutenant Commander Monica Moss (right) received an accelerated certification in surgical technology from Houston Community College through College Credit for Heroes. Photo courtesy of Houston Community College





TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Hope Andrade meets with a soldier during the Second Annual Hiring Red, White & You! job fair event hosted by the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas. Photo courtesy of the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

Second annual

Hiring Red, White & You!

Statewide Job Fairs

By Macy D. Hurwitz

The Second Annual Hiring Red, White & You! job fairs helped connect military veterans and their spouses to employment opportunities, and helped employers find qualified workers as well.

This year's event included 27 job fairs with 1,562 employers. More than 11,000 job seekers attended the Nov. 14 events, resulting in 67 onsite hires and many more connections made that resulted in interviews and post-event job offers.

Veterans who served in the military post 9/11 have an unemployment rate of 10 percent, contrasting with a 6.2 percent unemployment rate for all veterans. Bart Naciancenov

of the Texas Veterans Leadership Program was able to facilitate a connection at a Hiring Red, White & You! event in Brownsville that helped retired U.S. Army SNCO Gilbert Rebollozo, recipient of the Bronze Star and veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, secure employment.

"One of the employers in particular, Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District, was in serious need of a nighttime security guard officer due to the construction of a new facility," Naciancenov said. "The supervisor asked me specifically to find him a veteran since his experience with other veterans has been great. After the

conversation with the employer, I went looking for our veteran and fortunately I was able to find him."

HCISD gave Rebollozo an application at the event and subsequently offered him a choice between work as either a nighttime security guard or a bus driver.

Employers that participated in the events were excited to be able to connect with veterans, touting the skills veterans bring to the workforce after serving.

"Military candidates have an amazing ability to get things done," said Jennifer Hackel, an Austin-based recruiting manager at Luminex who attended Workforce Solutions Capital Area's Hiring Red, White &

You! event in Austin. "They overcome many obstacles and are very much willing to roll up their sleeves and do the job."

Cole Denckla, sales manager at Bert Ogden Auto Group in McAllen, echoed that sentiment, explaining that veterans have skills that make them well-suited to the sales jobs he was looking to fill at the Hiring Red, White & You! event hosted by Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley.

"In this line of work you need to be self-motivated; you need to be able to come to work and work on your own," Denckla said. "Veterans are driven like that. They come in early, they stay late – their work ethic is unparalleled." ■



Quality Connections

Celebrated at Annual

Workforce Conference



Photos by TWC Staff

By Mark Lavergne

Workforce professionals and employers from across Texas connected in San Antonio, Dec. 4-6, 2013, for the 17th Annual Texas Workforce Conference.

The conference was themed “Quality Connections” to emphasize the importance of serving customers well and forging strong partnerships between Texas Workforce Solutions, local employers, economic development entities, educational institutions and more. Nearly 1,200 attended the event, including workforce professionals, employers and guest presenters.

Held in downtown San Antonio, the conference featured nationally recognized keynote speakers who presented new methods of service to meet the changing needs of one’s customers, by improving relationships inside and outside the workplace, and meeting challenges head-on.

Keynote speaker Randy Pennington, president of

Pennington Performance Group, summed up the formula for establishing and maintaining quality connections, “The fact is, and it doesn’t matter what size business you’re in today, it’s all about ‘Faster, Better, Cheaper, Friendlier.’ That is the mantra, and if that is what your company is facing in your communities, that means that’s what we have to be able to do as employees of those companies.”

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Chairman Andres Alcantar spoke about the importance of the Workforce Solutions offices.

“The work that you do is critical in terms of building the reputation of this system as one that is committed to its core mission, one that aligns with economic activity in our areas, and one that is committed to producing positive outcomes for the job seekers,” Alcantar said.

TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Hope Andrade commended

the workforce professionals for their “successful, groundbreaking workforce initiatives all across this great state.”

“As I’ve traveled throughout the world representing the state of Texas, and meeting with companies of all sizes and industries, there is a clear consensus: Workforce has certainly become the most important issue for employers,” the San Antonio native continued. “It is the number one question that is asked at every meeting that we sit in with a prospective employer, so there’s no doubt that we must build on the opportunities that have been created in our state over the past few years, with a high-skilled, well-prepared workforce.”

The conference recognized employers across the state for establishing quality connections with Workforce Solutions and with other local partners to strengthen their local workforce and economies.

ExxonMobil Corporation (ExxonMobil) in Baytown received the top honor of 2013 Texas Workforce Solutions Employer of the Year.

ExxonMobil has invested extensive time and capital to foster interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) activities and occupations among students across the state. ExxonMobil’s work includes partnering with nine Houston-area community colleges in the Community College Petrochemical Initiative to promote training and recruit workers for high-paying jobs – in which the company has invested \$500,000.

The company has also partnered with TWC to sponsor the ExxonMobil Science and Engineering Fair every year since 2002.

“Being in the energy industry, ExxonMobil certainly understands the importance of creating strong connections to deliver products and services,”

said ExxonMobil Baytown Olefins Plant Manager Woody Paul.

“That’s why we’ve partnered with so many friends here in the Gulf Coast area and across Texas, including TWC and Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast, to foster young people’s interest in STEM jobs. To be recognized for those connections by TWC is a real honor.”

Awards were also presented to workforce boards for outstanding service to business, workers, community and industry sector outreach. A complete list of winners may be found on page 10.

TWC Commissioner Representing Labor Ronny Congleton was unable to attend the conference. He sent his greetings and regrets to attendees.

Workforce professionals will gather for the 18th annual Workforce Conference at the Gaylord Hotel in Grapevine, Nov. 19-21. ■



ExxonMobil was named Texas Workforce Solutions 2013 Employer of the Year at the Texas Workforce Conference. Pictured from left to right are: Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Commissioner Representing Employers Hope Andrade, TWC Executive Director Larry Temple, ExxonMobil Baytown Area Public and Government Affairs Manager Deedra Moe, ExxonMobil Baytown Olefins Plant Manager Woodie Paul, ExxonMobil Chemical Co. Public and Government Affairs Regional Planning Manager Russ Roberts, ExxonMobil Baytown Area Human Resources Manager Ernie Richter, ExxonMobil Baytown Area Public and Government Affairs Advisor Connie Tilton and TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar.

TWC launches mobile-friendly WorkInTexas.com

In late Summer 2013, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) launched a mobile-friendly version of its online job-matching resource, WorkInTexas.com. TWC worked with Texas.gov, the Texas Department of Information Resources and Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas to develop the mobile website, which automatically detects mobile phones and some tablets.

WorkInTexas.com Mobile offers the most frequently used features of the full WorkInTexas.com website, empowering users to run job match queries, search and apply for jobs, maintain lists of pending job applications, view and manage correspondence and alerts from the site, and stay informed on local Workforce Solutions events.

The free online job-matching resource was launched in 2004 and hosts approximately 135,000 active job listings and more than 500,000 registered users.

Skills Development Fund to help needs in shale regions

To meet the demand for skilled oil and gas workers to serve the Eagle Ford, Permian Basin and Cline Shale play regions, TWC partnered with local community colleges to create a unique training opportunity to serve employers in the regions.

Two Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Building initiatives will leverage the state's Skills Development Fund to enhance the colleges' ability to expand capacity and address the specific training needs of the regions. Eight colleges in the Cline and Permian Shale play and six colleges in the Eagle Ford Shale play received a total of \$3 million in Skills grants to develop customized curriculums



TWC partnered with the Cline and Permian Shale Area Community College Consortium to create a training opportunity to serve employers in the Eagle Ford Shale, Permian Basin and Cline Shale play regions. Photo courtesy of Odessa College

2013 Texas Workforce Conference Award Winners

Service to Business Award

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

Service to Workers Award

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas and
Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas

Service to Community Award

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County

Industry Sector Outreach Award

Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Exemplary Awards

(First) Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent

(Second) Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area

(Third) Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

Performance Incentive Awards

Claimant Reemployment

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas

Workforce Solutions Capital Area

Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas

Workforce Solutions Concho Valley

WIA Adult/Dislocated Worker Training-Related Employment

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley

Workforce Solutions Capital Area

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas

WIA Youth Preparedness

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley

Workforce Solutions Capital Area

Workforce Solutions Panhandle

Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent

Partnership Awards

Alamo Colleges

Navarro College

Employer of the Year: Top 5 Finalists

Exxon Mobil Corporation

Caterpillar Inc.

Durcon Incorporated

GE Manufacturing Solutions

Village Farms

Winter 2014 Texas Star Award Winners

The Texas Star Award recognizes TWC employees who perform above and beyond at promoting agency systems and solutions and provide outstanding customer service and support. The following distinguished professionals received the Star Award in Winter 2014.



Photo by Macy D. Hurwitz

Group Winner –

TWC Financial Operations

Randy Townsend, Kimberly R. Emmerich, Enyuh Y. Hsu, Anna Y. Ramirez, Daniel W. Ruth, Eric I. Lugo, David Torrez, Timothy A. Urbanovsky, Daniel Fierro, Brett Kleen, Richard Brewer, Thomas J. Manning III, Cheri Kim Vanzant, and Chris Nelson

Workforce Solutions Alamo

Workforce Development Specialist
Annette DeFrees

TWC Communications

Information Specialist
Debbie Pitts (Not pictured)

TWC Strategic Workforce Initiatives

Program Specialist
Jason Vaden

TWC Workforce and Board Support

Manager
Richard Woessner

and purchase equipment and simulation software used to train individuals for in-demand occupations in oil and gas exploration and production.

Just In Time program recognized for innovation in business and industry

Workforce Solutions Alamo and Alamo Colleges were honored for “Excellence in the Innovative Practices in Business & Industry” by the international association Learning Resources Network (LERN) in November 2013, for their partnership in the Just In Time (JIT) short-term training program. JIT was included in a showcase of internationally recognized exemplary programs at the LERN Annual Conference in San Francisco Nov. 21-23, 2013.

The JIT program is a short-term skills development program for adult workforce training in information technology, manufacturing and aerospace in collaboration with Alamo Colleges. The program was selected for the award from

more than 100 nominations, which were judged based on originality, innovation, appropriateness as a model for other programs, replicability, and measurable outcomes.

Soldier Employment Initiative getting results

Since the State of Texas Soldier Employment Initiative (STSEI) first began in September 2012, the program has shown remarkable results.

Prior to its launch, the amount of time a claimant would receive unemployment insurance benefits, specifically for Army veterans (Army UCX), averaged 20.1 weeks. From October 2012 to September 2013, the number decreased to 16.6 weeks, resulting in an overall savings of close to \$20 million in Army UCX costs.

Bob Gear, director of the Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP) at the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), believes this is at least partly the result of focused outreach and

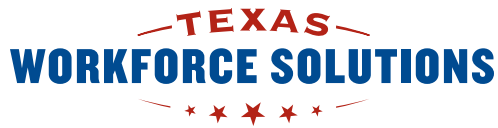
service efforts by all parts of the Texas Workforce Solutions system working together.

“We have STSEI staff from TVLP and the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) working together directly with the transition centers on Fort Hood and Fort Bliss,” Gear said.

“We’re helping them register on WorkInTexas.com, helping them out with résumés, and a lot more. It’s a great team effort.”

TWC developed STSEI in partnership with the TVC as part of a \$750,000 U.S. Department of Labor funded pilot project to help returning U.S. Army veterans find employment prior to separating from service, particularly in growing Texas industries such as the medical, energy and technology fields.

Since September 2012, the TVLP has conducted outreach to more than 12,000 Army UCX claimants, informing them of the employment services offered at their local Workforce Solutions Offices.



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www.texasworkforce.org

Concho Valley
(325) 653-2321
www.cvworkforce.org

Lower Rio Grande Valley
(956) 928-5000
www.wfsolutions.com

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

Alamo
(210) 272-3260
www.workforcesolutionsalamo.org

Greater Dallas
(214) 290-1000
www.wfsdallas.com

Middle Rio Grande
(830) 591-0141
www.mrgwb.org

South Plains
(806) 744-1987
www.spworkforce.org

Brazos Valley
(979) 595-2800
www.bvjjobs.org

Deep East Texas
(936) 639-8898
www.detwork.org

North Central
(817) 695-9184
www.dfwjobs.com

South Texas
(956) 722-3973
www.southtexasworkforce.org

Cameron County
(956) 548-6700
www.wfscameron.org

East Texas
(903) 984-8641
www.easttexasworkforce.org

North East Texas
(903) 794-9490
www.netxworkforce.org

Tarrant County
(817) 413-4400
www.workforcesolutions.net

Capital Area
(512) 597-7100
www.wfscapitalarea.com

Golden Crescent
(361) 576-5872
www.gcworkforce.org

North Texas
(940) 767-1432
www.ntxworksolutions.org

Texoma
(903) 957-7408
www.workforcesolutionstexoma.com

Central Texas
(254) 939-3771
www.workforcelink.com

Gulf Coast
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Panhandle
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www.wspanhandle.com

Upper Rio Grande
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Coastal Bend
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www.workforcesolutionscb.org

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Permian Basin
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www.workforcepb.org

West Central
(325) 795-4200
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www.workforcesystem.org

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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