

**Leaders in Government, Business and Education Face Workforce Training Issues
At Gloucester County Workforce Investment Board Summit October 22, 2010**

Sewell, NJ – In the shadow of a slowly recovering economy and the threat of double-digit unemployment in New Jersey, the face of the state’s workforce is changing. Are our children ready for it?

The issue of workforce development in schools, colleges and training programs was tackled by leaders in the areas of government, business and education during a workforce summit on Friday, October 22, beginning at 8 a.m. at the Gloucester County Institute of Technology, 1360 Tanyard Road. The event was sponsored by the Gloucester County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Gloucester County Workforce Investment Board (WIB).

“This was an excellent opportunity for business owners and managers to tell educators and government leaders the skills their employees need to survive and thrive at their companies,” said Hosea Johnson, Workforce Investment Board Chair. “It’s an opportunity for educators to learn the direction their students need to succeed. It’s an opportunity for legislators to learn workforce training needs that will enable them to write and support legislation that will help strengthen our workforce.”

“We wanted all the parties to come together and take the steps needed to maintain a strong workforce in Gloucester County,” added Joseph Frattali, Workforce Investment Board Executive Director.

The panel, moderated by Richard Bellamente, retired Director of Community Relations for Underwood Memorial Hospital, included NJ Senator Fred Madden, 4th District; Acting President of the NJ Chamber of Commerce Dana Egreczky, who also serves as Vice-President of Workforce Development for the Chamber; Sally Nadler, College Relations Manager of PSEG; Mary Ellen Clark, Assistant Commissioner of Workforce Development for the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Dr. Mark Stanwood, former Gloucester County Superintendent of Schools and current Director of Professional Development - College of Graduate and Continuing Education at Rowan University, John Barna, Editor, Gloucester County Times and Eileen Cardile, President and Chief Executive Officer of Underwood Memorial Hospital.

The summit was open with comments from Hosea Johnson, Gloucester County Freeholder Director Stephen M. Sweeney and Gloucester County Freeholder Liaison Joseph A. Brigandi, Jr. US Rep. Rob Andrews, 1st District, will offer opening comments and Jane Oates, Assistant Secretary with the US Department of Labor, will provide comments via videotape from her office in Washington DC. It was followed by a presentation of workforce issues facing Gloucester County and the nation by Dr. Charles M. Ivory, Executive Director of the Educational Information and Resource Center (EIRC) of Washington Township. Dr. Ivory also serves as Chair of the WIB’s Youth Council Committee.

“The United States is falling behind in the global marketplace when it comes to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics careers,” Dr. Ivory said. “Developing a workforce to compete, not just on the local level, but against global players, will require a collaborative effort from government, educators and community leaders.”

The challenges related to education and training of skilled workers was discussed and debated. When, how and what to teach future workers was the focus of the forum, which faced issues that have grown to be a concern nationwide.

YTTW CNA Grant

At the end of September, ten recent Gloucester County high school graduates will be qualified to become Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) through a State Youth Transition to Work (YTTW) training grant at Gloucester County College (GCC). Per the State Department of Labor, there will be more than 1,800 job openings for this position throughout the State.

Through this grant, GCC was able to provide the training at no cost to these students. While in high school, the students participated in work readiness training and career exploration activities, as they toured local hospitals and nursing homes to gain a better understanding of their career path potential. After graduation, the students entered into their formal training at GCC in the Certified Nurse Assistant Program, which includes 50 hours of classroom training and 40 hours of clinical instruction. Once completed, they will then take the State CNA License Examination.

Students that are employed at the completion of the program will have the additional benefit of participating in a qualified State Apprenticeship Program for Certified Nursing Assistants. This will provide the newly hired CNA's with additional on-the job training, further enhancing their value and marketability in the workforce. The grant by Gloucester County College was provided by the State Department of Labor and Workforce Development, in partnership with the United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training, Office of Apprenticeship.

High school juniors and seniors interested in participating in this program should contact Wendy Venable, YTTW Grant Administrator, at 856-468-5000 (5502), or wvenable@gccnj.edu.

WorkPlus

In less than 30 years, the prison population in NJ has more than quadrupled from 6000 to 27,000 despite an overall decrease in crime. In Gloucester County where the prison population is between 250 to 350 inmates, (a fraction of the state) but with a recidivism rate of 60%, there is a program that will help the re-incarcerated, which is called "WorkPlus." The WorkPlus program has been operating since June in the county facility and will have or had its first "graduation" on July 14, 2010.

"The goal of the program is to keep people from returning to jail by preparing them with job skills and connecting them to employment and transitional services upon release. There are a lot of people who are dedicated to helping these men turn their lives around including the volunteers and our professional Corrections staff," said Freeholder Frank J. DiMarco.

Housing the inmates is costing local taxpayers around \$36,000 per year. By teaching the inmates skills in pursuing, locating and enjoying post-release employment, they are less likely to return to a "street survival" way of life, DiMarco said.

The Gloucester County Correctional staff are well aware that the highest risk period of the formerly incarcerated is within that initial period following their release from prison, with the WorkPlus program, they hope to confront that cycle of re-incarceration. The WorkPlus program targets inmates to help shape their post-release into the community by giving them the tools to find, land, and keep fulfilling employment. "Fulfilling" is the keyword in breaking that familiar cycle of crime, said Mid-Atlantic Contract Director Benjamin Wood. "Lack of meaningful employment is the single most important factor causing repeat offenses," said Wood, "and overpopulated prisons."

The inmates start the program 90 days before they are released. WorkPlus provides job skills inmates need to be successful in the workforce. The curriculum includes: Completing a Job Application; Resume Preparation; Interview Do's and Don'ts; Job Tips of Ex-Offender; Seven Ways to wreck an interview; Workplace Etiquette and Mock Interviewing. Inmates receive lists of companies in New Jersey known to hire ex-offenders.

Gloucester County Jail Administrator Ray Childs is now going beyond just "WorkPlus." With help from the Workforce Investment Board (WIB), Ray has connected the services at the One-Stop Career Center and Social Services. Upon graduation the inmates witness a short presentation from each agency as well as partake in a question and answer period. "Inmates have a lot of questions concerning bonding, housing, welfare, and food stamps, which the Social Workers at the jail may not be able to fully answer. This way they hear it straight from the providers," said Ray Childs. Dr. William King, Chair of the WIB's, Community Needs Assessment Committee, added "With WorkPlus connected to the One-Stop and Social Services, as well as Gloucester County College providing GED/Adult Literacy, that is funded by the Workforce Investment Board, it is our hope the inmates take advantage of services and once they leave, they will stay the course and never return."