

Iowa Workforce Monthly

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Voluntary Protection Program

Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) promote effective worksite-based safety and health. In the VPP, management, labor and OSHA establish cooperative relationships at workplaces that have implemented a comprehensive safety and health management system. Approval into VPP is OSHA's official recognition of the outstanding efforts of employers and employees who have achieved exemplary occupational safety and health.

In practice, VPP sets performance-based criteria for managed safety and health system, invites sites to apply and then assess applicants against these criteria. OSHA's verification includes an

application review and a rigorous onsite evaluation by a team of OSHA safety and health experts. OSHA approves qualified sites to one of three programs: Star, Merit and Star Demonstration. Sites that make the grade must submit annual self-evaluations and undergo periodic onsite re-evaluations to remain in the program.

VPP benefits employers by resulting in fewer injuries and illnesses which mean greater profits as workers' compensation premiums and other costs plummet.

Over 39 sites have been approved in Iowa. For more information, visit www.osha.gov/dcsp/vpp/index.html.

Statewide Unemployment Data

Iowa's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose slightly to 6.6 percent in January from a revised December rate of 6.5 percent. The state's jobless rate was 5.2 percent for the same month one year ago. Meanwhile, the U.S. unemployment rate took an unexpected turn for the better in January, dipping to 9.7 percent.

"Iowa has started the long journey back from a deep and prolonged recession," said Elisabeth Buck, director of Iowa Workforce Development. "Recent indicators show that confidence

is beginning to rebuild among the state's employers, which will gradually lead to hiring activity."

Iowa's pool of unemployed workers increased to 111,000 in January from 109,800 in December. The estimate of unemployed persons was reported at 86,900 for January 2009. The total number of working Iowans increased to 1,570,200 in January from 1,567,600 in December. Total employment was 18,900 higher one year ago at 1,589,100.

One On One



with Elisabeth Buck, IWD Director

It's hard to believe that March is here already! Feels like the year just started. Thankfully the weather has warmed up a little - spring is almost here.

This month, we are focusing on Workplace Safety and Health. Nothing is more important than safety and health in the workplace. Many accidents can and have been avoided by just taking a few moments

to look around your work area. We have included information on the Voluntary Protection Program. This is a great program that allows the employer to be proactive in providing a safe work environment.

You're also able to read about our jump into using Social Media. We hope that you will follow us or take a few minutes to watch the clips we've provided

on YouTube. We think you'll find them very informational and helpful for your job search.

Finally, we are continuing to provide you information on the changes in the UI Tax Filing System: My Iowa UI. Please take a minute to read about the updates or attend a presentation.

IWD begins using Social Media Websites

Want to stay up-to-date on the latest job information? Know when the next job fair is going to be? IWD has begun using Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

YouTube features a number of segments from the TV Show partnership, Iowa WORKS, that aired last fall. The show features experts that help guide you through a job search; tips on everything from networking

to interviewing. Segments also include advice on how to use social media to aid your job search. For a link to IWD's YouTube Channel, visit www.iowaworkforce.org/connect/index.html

Check out Facebook and Twitter for the latest updates on what's going on in Iowa. Events and Job Fair announcements around the state are

posted. Search for Iowa Workforce Development on Facebook and start getting updates today!

Visit our social media page, www.iowaworkforce.org/connect/index.html, for links to all of our social media pages. You can also find a link to the IWD Event Calendar and all the latest IWD News.

RES Success Story

In January, Johanna Hofmeister attended Re-Employment Services (RES) training. After hearing all the information presented in the class, she updated her résumé with the help of the IowaWORKS skills lab. She found a job posting on www.iowajobs.org at a bean plant in Creston as a scale house operator.

RES Advisor Heather Semke worked with Johanna and helped her get in contact with the Creston plant. Johanna personally delivered her résumé. Instead of wearing the usual interview apparel, Heather instructed Johanna to dress down a little to show she wasn't afraid to get her hands dirty. She wore a nice button down shirt, jeans, tennis shoes and pulled her hair in pony tail. Johanna was instantly put in the top tier of their candidates and after interviewing, Johanna was offered the job. Johanna called to express her thanks to everyone and said that without being "forced" into a 6-hour RES orientation/workshop, she never would have known what she was doing wrong, what she could have done better and what great services IowaWORKS can provide. She is convinced that without the help of RES and IowaWORKS, she may have been out of work far longer.

Iowa Safety & Health Training Calendar

Stay up-to-date on all the training opportunities available in your area. Visit the Iowa Safety and Health Training Calendar at www.iowaworkforce.org/labor/calendar/calendar.htm



My Iowa UI Presentation Schedule Update

We are three weeks into the My Iowa UI presentation schedule and response has been tremendous! We appreciate the attendance and feedback we are receiving from the attendees. Each presentation is an opportunity for employers to learn about the new online tax system. The PowerPoint provides actual screens from My Iowa UI, in addition to some helpful handouts. Those in attendance have been encouraged to ask questions about the system and unemployment tax changes that are coming.

Overall, we have had a positive reception from our employers and third-party filers. This positive feedback

is encouraging as our Tax Redesign Team has dedicated an enormous amount of time and effort to be able to offer a quality online tax system. This is an exciting part of the project and shows how dedicated Iowa Workforce Development is to making sure Iowa employers are comfortable with the changes taking place.

The schedule of remaining presentations is as follows:

Spencer

Tues., March 16th
10:30 - 1:30pm.
Hy-Vee Meeting Room
819 Grand Ave
Spencer, IA 51301.

Ft. Dodge

Wed., March 17th
9:00 - 11:00 am
Fort Dodge Public Library,
424 Central Ave,
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

Burlington

Tues., March 23rd
2:00pm - 4:00pm.
Burlington Public Library,
210 Court St,
Burlington, IA 52601

Ottumwa

Wed., March 24th
1:00 - 3:00 pm
Bennett Student Services,
Indian Hills Comm. College,
623 Indian Hills Dr, Bldg 12,
Ottumwa, IA 52501

Mason City

Tues., March 30th
9:00 - 11:00am.
North Iowa Area Comm.
College
500 College Dr.
Mason City, IA 50401

Waterloo

Tues., March 30th
2:00 - 4:00pm.
Tama Hall Conference
Center,
Hawkeye Comm. College,
1501 E. Orange Rd,
Waterloo, IA 50704

IWD Raises Money for Toys for Tots and other Charities

In 2009, IWD Employees raised over \$7,200 for the Toys for Tots program.

The fund-raising activities included three farmer's markets, an ISU football ticket raffle, a pumpkin carving contest and two silent auctions.

Staff donated all the produce/plants and homemade items that were included in the farmer's markets.

Of the proceeds, \$500 was given to Capital View Elementary School to help the children receive new shoes.



Noteworthy Employee Acknowledgements and Accomplishments

We appreciate the feedback we get from our customers. Here are a few noteworthy comments we've received:

– Randy Becker sent in a note thanking **Jean Holbrook**, **Sioux City**, for leading a great RES

orientation session.

"I have to admit I thought it was going to be just another hoop to jump through, but I was wrong. I found the information very helpful, especially the résumé, cover letter and interview strategies." Great job Jean!

– Greg with Windsor Woods Company called to thank **Susan Johannsen**, **Des Moines**, for the

fantastic job she did in helping him get a contractor registration number. After a long time of trying to figure out what to do, he said Susan was able to assist him and had the problem resolved in two days. Way to go Susan!

– Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Coordinator **Joan Koffler**, **Waterloo**, worked to place a veteran ex-offender who had just been released

after serving 35 years in federal lockup. He is now working full-time. He said he never thought anyone would ever hire him. Congratulations, Joan!

If you would like to send us your noteworthy comment, send it to: kathryn.hommer@iwd.iowa.gov or 515-281-5407.

Iowa Workforce Monthly

1000 E. Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50319
(800) 562-4692

For Deaf or Hard of Hearing, call Relay 711

Iowa Workforce Monthly is intended to help keep Iowa employers, job seekers and IWD employees informed about critical employment issues affecting Iowa. For more information, contact Kathryn Hommer via e-mail at kathryn.hommer@iwd.iowa.gov or 515-281-5407.

Chet Culver
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Mark French
Web Master

Kathryn Hommer
Marketing/Communications Coordinator

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

Auxiliary aids and services are available to individuals with disabilities upon request.



Employee News

New Hires

Janet Bannister
Dale Clark
Bradford Edaburn
Christal Finck
Heather Garcia
Jenifer Godwin
Denise Hayes
Jamie McLaughlin
Joan Oyibo
Rhonda Peck
Kenneth Pirc
Erin Thomas
Jennifer Toenjes
Jennifer Tornow

Retirements

Dixie Clary
Edith Zavaleta

Anniversaries

5 Years

Jamie Cook
Cynthia Crawford

10 Years

David Ecklund
Ted Harms
Geraldyn Lainson
Nagasri Ravi
Rhonda Chodur
Jing Zhang
Dennis Reichardt

25 Years

Ann Snowgren

30+ Years

Linda Anderson
Clair Cramer

Promotions

Patricia Galvan