

## SW Washington Workforce Development Council News

February 2009

### **Mentoring Advanced Programs for Students receives funds to expand services**

*New BizConnect program designed to encourage students in Southwest Washington to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math-related fields.*

Senator Patty Murray secured \$143,000 in federal funds over two years for the SWWDC and Mentoring Advanced Programs for Students (MAPS) to implement a new program that will connect students and teachers in Southwest Washington to local science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) industry professionals. The

### **\$2 million Department of Labor grant funds regional workforce efforts in science, technology, engineering and math education and training**

The Department of Labor recently awarded one of five national Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) grants to the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC) and its regional workforce partners. The grant will bring \$2 million dollars over three years to a nine county region in Oregon and SW Washington to build the workforce system's capacity to recruit and train individuals in careers in STEM fields.

Specifically, the goals of the grant are to expand the capacity of the WorkSource Centers to train and prepare individuals in STEM fields; to leverage and align STEM education and training resources; to better understand and meet the needs of STEM employers; and to provide a replicable model as a resource for other workforce employment centers. The project expects to serve 300 disadvantaged youth ages 16-24 and 315 dislocated workers across the region and will involve 150 volunteer mentors from industry.

Primary workforce partners SWWDC, Enterprise for Employment and Education, MTC Works, WorkSystems Inc., Mentoring Advanced Programs for Students and all WorkSource centers in the nine counties are working together to meet these goals to strengthen the region's long-term economic vitality and competitiveness. SWWDC is the fiscal agent and project manager for the project.

"It is essential for our region to have a workforce with STEM skills. We need to help our local employers find skilled workers locally rather than searching outside of the US borders," said Brandi Stewart-Wood, SWWDC's Director of Strategic Initiatives. Funds for this project come from H-1B visa fees which are paid by companies who receive visas for foreigners to come work in the United States when they cannot find the skilled workers then need locally.

One of the first steps is to hire three STEM coaches for

### **SWWDC receives additional funding to support worker retraining**

SWWDC recently received an additional \$300,000 in Workforce Investment Act dollars to support dislocated workers in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. The "rapid response" money is outside of the state's regular funding stream and is intended to address more urgent workforce needs due to the current economic situation.

The funding will primarily be used to train and reemploy dislocated workers-- those who are unlikely to return to their previous industry or occupation or who have limited opportunities for employment or reemployment.

SWWDC will contract 100 percent of the funding out to regional WorkSource centers. According to WorkSource partners, traffic within WorkSource centers has increased 40-60% over a year ago, and enrollments have

new program, called BizConnect, will help prepare today's students to become future leaders and innovators in the global economy through career related learning opportunities with local businesses.

As part of the program, MAPS will coordinate business outreach efforts to offer schools in Clark and Cowlitz counties a database of STEM related career opportunities such as guest speakers, company tours, job shadows, informational interviews, internships and mentors. The program will pilot in five schools this September but aims to reach 10 high schools and over 150 businesses and 400 students within two years.

"Access to real world career opportunities will make classroom learning relevant and expand the number of high school students succeeding in STEM subjects," said Natalie Pacholl, MAPS Program

the region who will promote STEM occupations and work with participants to develop long-term career plans, identify and coordinate training and resources, and link with mentors and other supports to help ensure success. The project will also build upon the STEM Resource Inventory that SW Washington completed last fall by expanding the STEM Inventory to identify STEM education and training resources and gaps in the Oregon portion of the region. The project expects to begin recruiting participants in May, 2009.

## Shelly Parker joins SWWDC to lead STEM Grant



Shelley has joined the SWWDC as the STEM Grant Project Manager. She will work with regional workforce partners to manage the \$2 million grant and to ensure project goals and performance measures are achieved.

Shelley has nearly 20 years of marketing communications and project management expertise. A native Californian and recent transplant to Oregon, Shelley has worked in a variety of organizations including a software publishing company, a full-service integrated marketing agency where she represented private sector and non-profit clients in the areas of hardware and software manufacturing, enterprise solutions, imaging, telecommunications and medical devices, and a Portland-based public relations firm where she honed her skills related to government affairs.

Shelley has a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing from California State University, Long Beach.

## STEM Summit a success

In response to a national, regional, and local demand for students and workers who have strong skills in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), SW Washington workforce and economic development partners held the region's first STEM program summit in early December. Coordinated by the Clark College, Educational Service District 112, Mentoring Advanced Programs for Students, SWWDC, and Vancouver Public Schools, the goal of the summit was to share information on the region's STEM programs and to discuss gaps and explore ways to solve common challenges.

nearly doubled.

"It's important to use this period of unemployment to maximize skill gains by our workforce, so getting people into training is critical and additional funding was needed to make this happen," said Lisa Nisenfeld, SWWDC Executive Director. "We now have an opportunity to up-skill the workforce to be ready to meet the needs of industry as the economy recovers."

## Free business seminar on getting through tough economic times

The Columbia River Economic Development Council, Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council and Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce are sponsoring the event, *Downsizing: Tools for Tough Times*, for business leaders in Southwest Washington. It is a free workshop and registration is not required.

Topics covered at the workshop will include: *Rightsizing the Downsizing* by Natalie Miller, SPHR, Vice President, Business Development, Lee Hecht Harrison; *Legal Considerations & Risk Management* by Elizabeth A.

Manager. "It will expose students to career options, business culture and employer expectations, and hopefully inspire students to pursue necessary postsecondary education to compete for STEM related jobs."

Businesses benefit as well. BizConnect will provide businesses an opportunity to market careers to students and will provide access to local young people interested in pursuing careers in their field. It will also provide a coordinated and simple way for businesses to connect with the educational community.

"All around the program is a win-win situation for students, teachers, schools and businesses," said Pacholl. "It will create an easy to use system for all parties that will leverage the business community to enhance the educational and career exploration process for young people in an area of high demand."

More than 85 participants made up of staff and educators directly connected to STEM programs attended the all day summit. According to a follow-up survey, participants felt the program was interesting, relevant and well worth their time.

Increased collaboration on delivering services and attaining goals is an outcome of the summit. To this end, SWWDC will continue to update and maintain the SW WA STEM Inventory of Programs. It is currently posted on their website at [www.swwdc.org](http://www.swwdc.org). A companion document for the Oregon side of the region will be available by June. SWWDC will also take the lead on establishing a list serve that those working within in STEM programs can use to dialogue with one another.

Other partners will take the lead on key topics such as developing an engineering fair; developing recommendations on how to keep K-8 students engaged in math and science; engaging employers to support students interested in STEM; partnering on grants; communicating connections to students about K-12 and post-secondary transitions; and aligning K-12, community college, and university articulations. For more information, contact Brandi Stewart-Wood at [bstewart-wood@swwdc.org](mailto:bstewart-wood@swwdc.org).

Schleuning, Chair of Employment & Labor Law Group, Schwabe Williamson & Wyatt; and *Tips & Tools* by Lisa Nisenfeld, Executive Director, Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council.

The event will be held this **Thursday, February 26, from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.** at the Fisher's Landing Passenger Service Office at 3510 SE 164th Avenue, Vancouver, WA 98683. Participants should meet in the Rose F. Besserman Room.

---

## **SWWDC proposes minor amendments to strategic plan**

As part of the State's High Skills High Wages Strategic Plan update process, SWWDC is proposing a few additions and amendments to its 2008-2013 Strategic Plan. To review the proposed changes, please visit [www.swwdc.org](http://www.swwdc.org) and provide any comments to the SWWDC no later than March 23, 2009.

[www.swwdc.org](http://www.swwdc.org)

[info@swwdc.org](mailto:info@swwdc.org) • Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council