

# For many workers, the right job has to be the right fit

## Challenges during a labor shortage

By SUZANNE ROIG  
The Bulletin

**SISTERS** — Donna Lee Bolt will work for hay. Seven bales of hay a year to feed “C.K.,” “Lightning,” “Charmarie” and “Tote” — Bolt’s four horses.

The 74-year-old retired educational assistant said she doesn’t need much for herself. But her four-legged “babies” need food and supplements to the tune of more than \$2,100 a year.

Retirement always included part-time work, Social Security checks and selling real estate, which is why Bolt took a job a week ago, working six hours a week at a retail store in Sisters.

But it took several weeks and several job interviews to find the right employer. She didn’t want to travel outside of Sisters. She wasn’t willing to work for less than \$12 an hour and she didn’t want to work in food service.

“I’ve always had it in my mind that I’d move to Sisters and retire here,” Bolt said. “I live off my Social Security and I struggle to make ends meet, at the moment. The horses are a big factor in my being poor right now.”

At a time when Oregon employers are in a crisis finding workers to fill vacant positions, job candidates, too, are struggling to find the right job. Job seekers like Bolt say even with incentives, such as signing bonuses and benefits, the job, the location and the work environment have to be a good fit.

### Seeking a perfect match

Companies such as Newport Market offer benefits and increased wages and tout that candidates don’t need a college degree, but still can



A small sign at a checkout stand advertises jobs at Newport Market in Bend.

make a career out of the job. As an employee-owned company, the market offers employees a stake in the business’ success through the profit sharing.

“We hire the best person for the job,” said Lauren Johnson, Newport Market’s CEO and president. “With younger workers, we’re limited with the hours they can work. When it comes to hiring adults, we look for the best person for the job. We want people with a great attitude who want to be there and work at building community.”

The central Oregon unemployment rate now hovers around 5%, near the state and federal levels and far lower than at the start of

the coronavirus pandemic. Oregon has added more than 80,000 new jobs over the past eight months, according to the state employment data.

With people living longer, some have to find a second career to not only keep them engaged in the community, but also to flesh out retirement benefits.

People over 65 make up 22% in the Bend-Prineville metro area, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s estimates. And people 18 to 64 years of age make up 58% of the population.

David Shirley, a Redmond resident, had his web design business helping finance him in post-retirement. But the pandemic put

the kibosh on future business, said Shirley, 71.

“The last paying gig I had was about a year ago,” Shirley said. “I haven’t gotten any bites since then. The business was helping quite a bit, but now I don’t have much income from there. We’re getting by. It was nice to have the extra income.”

While older workers have years of life experience as well as time on the job, young people often have fresh ideas and perspectives. The age distribution of the workforce in central Oregon in 2020 for those 55 and older was 23.6% and for those 25 to 54 it was 63.8%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those 55 and older are projected to

grow their workplace participation to 25% by 2030.

Shirley said the competition for web business has heated up over the years. When he first arrived in Redmond in 2004 there were few web designers.

### Making connections early

Working from home and developing a freelance business is the fallback position for student Daphne Lara Luna, who’s working toward a master’s in business. While she’s obtaining her degree at the Oregon State University-Cascades, Lara Luna is working at CoLab, advising businesses and making contacts in the community.

When Lara Luna, 23,

## Worker Shortage



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graduates in June, she wants to get into a corporate management job, but she knows that she could always fall back on her knowledge and contacts and freelance in town.

“I love the opportunity to take an idea and come up with solutions,” Lara Luna said. “I love talking to people on the phone or in person. I’m an ambivert.”

Lara Luna said it took some retooling on her part to fit into the corporate world. She had to learn how to answer the phone without knowing who’s on the other end and act professional.

“I’ve enjoyed all the jobs I’ve worked at,” Lara Luna said. “I’m starting to look for work now. I’d like to stay close, something in the West Coast, but I’m willing to travel.”

During Bolt’s job search, she thought she’d done well during a job interview and had a tour of the business, only to be told that the company decided to “go in another direction,” Bolt said. In another interview, she was told that the company had others they wanted to interview.

“I don’t know what happened, or if it was because of my age, or the company wanted someone younger who would stick around and move up,” Bolt said. “It would help me to know what it means when a company says they’re going in another direction so I could improve.”

Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

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