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What's on your list today?

LOCAL NEWS

Steady Job Growth Seen

Unemployment rate finally falls below 10 percent

BY MINDY COOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

After years of double-digit unemployment statistics, Oregon has finally fallen below 10 percent in its unemployment rate for the months of March and April, which could be a positive sign of spring and summer job growth within the Portland community.

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the seasonally adjusted jobless rate fell to 9.6 percent in April, which was the lowest rate since 9.2 percent in December 2008.

As a hovering effect of the recession, the unemployment rate lingered in the mid-10 percent range for almost a year after hitting a high of 11.6 percent in June 2009.

Nick Beleiciks, an employment economist for the state's employment department, explained the 9.6 percent rate is a good sign that more and more people are able to find jobs.

"We've seen really steady job growth since October, and it's just taken a little while for the unemployment rate to catch up and start dropping because of these new jobs," he said.

At one point during the recession, he explained, Oregon had the second highest unemployment rate in the nation. Although last month, Oregon was ranked 8th highest, the April number will definitely make changes to the rankings.

"It's hard to predict, but if industries keep adding jobs at the same rate they have been over the past six months, the unemployment rate will continue to come down," said Beleiciks.

Certain industries have seen particularly large job growth over the past several months, including leisure and hospitality, which experienced major cut-backs from individuals during the past few years of economic hardship. Recent figures showed the leisure and hospitality sector gained

4,600 jobs when around 1,600 is the usual increase.

"Another industry that really grew, and is still growing, is education and health services," he explained. "Demand for education has increased throughout the recession, and the aging population is creating more demand for health services."

The manufacturing industry also showed growth by adding 700 employment opportunities in April, when a loss of 500 jobs is the average for the month.

Although these statistics show Oregon's economy is gaining momentum in its recovery, the recession and recent budget cuts are still playing a toll in the lives of Oregonians.

Still, industries are growing, and according to the survey data, April marked Oregon's lowest unemployment rate in 28 months.

"This is a good thing," Beleiciks said. "I think everyone is ready to see Oregon's unemployment come down."



Nick Beleiciks

Three Injured in Weekend Shootings

Portland police suspect gang-related activities are behind two shootings that happened over the weekend that left three people with gunshot wounds.

On Saturday, May 21, officers and a gang enforcement team responded to reports of a gun fire at Raymond Park in southeast Portland where a 16-year-old male was shot in the leg around 10:42 p.m. The shooter was described as a

black male teen wearing a red hat.

The next day, officers responded to another report of gunfire at the Interstate Bar and Grill, located at North Interstate and Skidmore. Once on the scene, officers found Paul Anthony Hall, 32, suffering from two gunshot wounds, one to the leg and the other to the abdomen.

A second victim, 25-year-old Christopher Byron Hammick,

walked into a local hospital later that morning with a gunshot wound to the leg.

According to the police, there is no apparent connection to the people involved in the shootings, but Gang Enforcement Teams are currently investigating both cases.

Detectives ask anyone with information about either shooting to contact the Police Bureau.

Airline Pilot Saves Man on Fire

On Sunday, shortly after 7 p.m., an off duty airline pilot noticed a sleeping bag on fire with a man inside while driving along Northeast Lombard Street at 42nd Avenue.

Guard helicopter pilot who now flies jet airplanes for Alaskan Airlines, pulled his car over and managed to put the fire out. He used a fire extinguisher from his car, but the victim was badly burned.

John Filipowicz, a former Coast

The man was taken to Legacy

Emanuel Hospital where his injuries have been described as life threatening. Although the identity of the man in the sleeping bag remains unknown, investigators believe he was homeless and may have rolled into a nearby campfire.