

**JOBS from page 1A**

People can go to three riverscasino.com/careers for additional information. To contact Hickson directly, call 541-902-6648.

For Hickson, the casino hiring is a good sign, showing that Three Rivers was able to safely remain open for much of the pandemic with stringent health standards in place.

"So far, it's worked out really well. And our staff is happy too, because they're working — and that's a good thing," she said.

Not everyone has been so lucky, which Florence Area Chamber of Commerce CEO/President Bettina Hannigan witnessed personally both here in the local community as well as in recent travels out of state.

"Everybody's having staffing problems right now," she said.

She has asked for chamber members to check in about reopening, and reports are still coming in.

"We were just supposed to pop back into business," Hannigan said. "It's like, 'Poof!' OK, everybody, let's all go back to business



PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

**Businesses all over town are looking for additional employees. Several resources are available for those hunting for a job, including social media, job boards and the classifieds.**

now." Many businesses have been looking forward to reopening. The problem, however, has been resuming operations with enough staff on board.

A lot of people who were employed in the service industry were furloughed or let go early in the pandemic. While many remained in town, some found other jobs or took care of children, who were attending school via distance learning. Yet others left, following the work where they

could. Now, as things open up, it's leaving a vacuum with not enough staff to fill positions.

Or, possibly, the employees are out there, and just don't know where to look.

Hickson is continuing to offer advice that she has learned in her years of hiring people and running the Community Career Fair.

"I'm just passionate about it, that's for sure," she said.

Her first recommendation for both businesses and potential employees is to utilize resources in the community. From social media groups where people post, to business pages — "People are looking at social media and they're using it," Hickson said. Businesses can also run job listings in the classifieds section, on the radio and on job boards through WorkSource Lane County and Goodwill Job Connections.

"We're really fortunate living in a small town that everybody knows everyone and everything about everybody else," Hickson said. "That can be good, and it can be bad, but in this case, relying on each other in the community is

not a competition as much as it is helping each other out."

For people looking for jobs, Hickson recommended the same resources.

"Word of mouth is a biggie," she added. "Just getting out there and connecting with different businesses here in town. ... Check with your local community. Just reach out and ask who's hiring."

It's important for people to be deliberate.

"The face-to-face contact is really a good thing, but pick up those phones and don't be afraid to make those calls and connect with people," she said.

Once the connection has been made, people should prepare for an in-person interview.

"Get those résumés updated and make sure you're putting your best foot forward," Hickson said. "And when you show up for the job interview, show up to present yourself for the job that you're applying for."

The Florence Area Chamber of Commerce also has connections with job opportunities that it posts in its weekly Chamber Blast. Among these is Elevate Lane County's Hir-



ing Fair 2021, a four-week virtual event to connect local students with local companies and hiring opportunities. From April 19 through May 14, students will get to know participating businesses, learn how to build a résumé, apply for jobs and more. Students can apply now through Friday, April 14. Businesses can also participate and should apply as quickly as possible.

People can go to [connectedlane.org](http://connectedlane.org) for more information.

The chamber's role is to wrap resources around businesses. It also markets the area and receives Transient Room Tax (TRT) revenue depending on the number of people staying overnight in the area.

"Our TRT reports are up over 8 percent from last year, so people are coming," Hannigan said. "A lot of what we're seeing is that people are not comfortable getting on airplanes, and so they're doing driving trips. And then I think we're seeing a lot of cabin fever, too, where people are just try-

ing to get away and have a little break in their day."

It's a sign that people are coming back to Florence and that the tourist season is starting with the spring weather.

According to Hannigan, one thing the pandemic has done has been to allow people to work from home. Those who travel have been able to bring their desks with them.

"We're seeing a lot of 'work where you play,'" Hannigan said. "A hotel or vacation rental has WIFI, and we're working remotely. It was like me working in California. Even though I was on vacation, I was still working."

It could be a growing facet for Florence as people recreate and stay here. It could also help fill some of the seasonal job gaps as people shift between recreation destinations throughout the year.

"I'm hoping that we do see that more year-round," Hannigan said. "We've got this tremendous, wonderful, creative, free and easy millennial population that doesn't want to buy a house and settle down. They want to travel, they want to live in a tiny house. (The pandemic) has opened up a whole lot of opportunities to that type of traveler."

People who bring their own lodging with them — travel vans are making a comeback — could also help with Florence's housing situation. The growing need for low- and middle-income housing, both owned and rented, is exacerbated by the need for higher paying jobs.

"Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" Hannigan asked. "The housing or the jobs? The jobs or the housing? What do we do?"

It's something she is talking about with the Florence Chamber Board.

"Once we move out of this pandemic into more of a 'normal,' whatever that might look like, how do we support the community? How do we stay relevant and really meet the needs of our business community and our community as a whole?" she asked.

For Hannigan, it's about both short-term solutions, in matching current residents to current job openings, but also to looking to the future.

As the state continues to reopen and the federal government continues to announce pandemic support, more businesses will be offering services as the economy opens up.

People can learn more about business opportunities in the Florence area at [florencechamber.com/build-a-business/](http://florencechamber.com/build-a-business/).

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