

Unions address trade-related job losses in Oregon

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

A new analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Labor shows Oregon has lost the most jobs per capita to trade and offshoring, according to the nonprofit Trade Justice Education Fund.

The report uses numbers from Trade Adjustment Assistance, a federal program that provides assistance to workers who lost their jobs as a direct result of the job being moved overseas or the product they produce being replaced by imports from other countries. A total of 11,396 job losses in Oregon from 2017 to 2019 were certified as “trade-related job losses” by the TAA.

Jon Irvine, the workforce liaison for the Oregon AFL-CIO union, said he had his own experience with Trade Adjustment Assistance after being laid off in 2008.

“It was an incredible pro-



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

A sign along Hermiston's Highland Avenue advertises for licensed electricians. Though Oregon has lost jobs to trade and offshoring, there are still shortages in some specialized trade jobs.

gram at the time for me,” he said.

Irvine said the TAA allowed him to get into a nursing program after his high-skill job was cut and it didn't look like it was coming back.

He said it was “ridiculous,” however, to see workers such as machinists in high-skill jobs continually lose their jobs and go back onto the TAA rolls again before going through the training for another company.

“Nothing replaces good,

solid manufacturing jobs right here in the state of Oregon,” he said.

One of those people who has been a TAA recipient multiple times is Nathan Aldrich, a former machinist who was laid off with “hundreds” of other people due to offshoring. He went back to school with the help of the TAA and worked for Boeing before recently losing his job again to offshoring.

“I got some experience with manufacturing and a

trade, but it is definitely suffering,” he said of those industries.

Umatilla County residents have had their own experiences with trade-related job losses. According to the Trade Justice Education Fund's report, 33 people who lost their jobs at Hermiston Foods were certified by the TAA as trade-related job losses in 2017, along with 219 jobs at Sykes Enterprises Incorporated.

Hermiston Foods was a vegetable-processing plant owned by NORPAC, which closed the Hermiston facility and laid off 199 seasonal and full-time workers. Sykes Enterprises runs call centers around the world that offer customer services for a variety of companies, but closed its call center in Milton-Freewater in 2018.

Hillary Haden, representing the Oregon Fair Trade Campaign, said the TAA numbers undercount the true

number of people who lost their jobs for trade or offshoring reasons, because they depend on someone to proactively fill out an application to be enrolled in the program, and only certain types of jobs qualify. However, she said Oregon's TAA numbers in the past three years have been “particularly concerning.”

“The most troubling trend uncovered in our analysis is that trade-related job loss has been on the rise in recent years,” she said. “Oregon experienced a 113% increase in trade-related job loss in the past three years compared to the previous three years.”

She said those losses have been felt in industries from steel to semiconductors.

The report from the Trade Justice Education fund criticized the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act for providing incentive for companies to move jobs overseas by allowing them to pay a much lower

corporate tax rate on profits made overseas than they do on profits made at home. It also criticized the trade deal with China that the United States signed in January for “neglecting to even mention, let alone address, the abysmal labor rights, forced labor, weak environmental standards and related causes of job offshoring to China,” and instead helping companies feel safer moving jobs overseas by increasing protections for their intellectual property.

The report provides a list of policy recommendations, including enforcing a ban on products made by forced labor, allowing collective bargaining and other joint labor activities across borders, requiring public notice when companies offshore jobs, and requiring other countries to agree to stronger labor and environmental laws in order to access lucrative markets in the U.S.

Chamber puts up land for sale

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce is hoping for some new neighbors.

In 2019 chamber purchased a 2-acre parcel of property on the southeast corner of South Highway 395 and East Evelyn Avenue, across from New Hope Community Church, to build a new business center. The center will include offices for the chamber and rooms for workforce development activities.

Chamber CEO Kimberly Rill said the designs that the chamber board have approved do not need the entire 2 acres, and so the chamber is putting two parcels of the property up for sale.

The chamber was awarded \$1 million by the Oregon Legislature in 2018 to build a new workforce development space. The original plan was to fundraise additional dollars locally, but Rill said in March when Hermiston's economy was hit hard



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce is putting part of the 2 acres it purchased for its new building up for sale to help pay for the project.

by COVID-19 the board decided that “a year like 2020” wasn't an appropriate time to be asking their members for donations for the building.

Instead, the chamber plans to use the money from the sale of the parcels along with the money from the Legislature to build the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce Business Center, and cut back on some costs for now.

She said how soon they can start construction

depends on how long it takes to sell the other parcels.

“It's exciting, but also challenging and nerve-wracking,” she said of trying to build a business center during a pandemic.

Rill said anyone who purchases one of the parcels will benefit from work the chamber has already done to make the land shovel-ready, including getting it rezoned from residential to commercial.

“It's a unique piece of property,” she said.

Staffing agency to hold drive-thru job fair

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Express Employment Professionals will be holding a drive-thru job fair on Thursday, Aug. 13, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in front of its offices at 120 E. Hurlburt Ave. in Hermiston.

Owner Kristin Connell said as of Monday, Aug. 10, they had 55 jobs that needed filling, but many companies had given her a low estimate to get started and could actually use more workers if they were available.

“We have so many jobs available we're doing anything we can to get people in those jobs,” she said.

She said anyone who is interested should bring their employment history and I-9 documentation to show they can work. Jobs currently available include manufacturing, warehousing,



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Express Employment Professionals will hold a drive-thru job fair on Thursday, Aug. 13, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

ing, food processing, construction and cleaning.

“We can literally screen a person today and have them working tomorrow,” she said.

Visitors to the job fair will receive a \$5 gift certificate to Obie's and a branded item, such as hand sanitizer from Express. Connell said the company's \$75 refer-

ral bonus will also apply if visitors to the job fair share who referred them there.

For people who can't make it to the drive-thru job fair, Connell said the office is closed to walk-in traffic but people can still contact Express over the phone at 541-567-1123 or fill out paperwork online at expresspros.com.

New information available for PPP loan forgiveness

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Businesses that received a Paycheck Protection Program loan now have more information available on how they can go about seeking forgiveness of that loan.

The businesses may receive forgiveness for all or part of their loans if they used the money as prescribed by the rules of the program, which was one of the main components of the federal stimulus package known as the CARES Act.

The Small Business Administration recently released a 10-page Frequently Asked Questions document online to help business owners navigate the process at sba.gov/document/support-frequently-asked-questions-ppp-loan-forgiveness.

According to the document, if a borrower submits a forgiveness applica-

tion within 10 months of the period their loan covered, they will not be required to make any payments on the loan until the SBA sends the lender the money for the portion of the loan that has been forgiven. If the loan is completely forgiven, the borrower won't have to ever pay anything. If the loan is only partially forgiven or the application for forgiveness is denied, the borrower will have to repay the loan before the date of maturity outlined in their agreement.

The SBA launched its portal for loan forgiveness on Monday, Aug. 10, but many banks are awaiting additional guidance and taking time to prepare before processing application.

Hermiston-area businesses can seek help from their lender, the Blue Mountain Community College Small Business Development Center (541-278-5833) or the Umatilla Electric Cooperative's Business Resource Center in Hermiston (541-289-3000).

Revolving loan fund available for businesses

HERMISTON HERALD

As the economy continues to shift due to the pandemic, Umatilla Electric Cooperative is reminding area entrepreneurs of its revolving loan fund.

According to a news release, the purposes of the fund are to help establish a new business, expand an existing business, create employment opportunities, save existing jobs or develop community projects.

Loans are available for between \$5,000 and

\$360,000, and projects must have a minimum of 20% of their funding from other sources.

There is a \$500 application fee, an annual 1% servicing fee on the balance and a 3.25% interest rate. Collateral and the length of the loan period are negotiable.

“Eligible projects for loans can include any business venture, governmental public body, or entities involved in a community or economic development project that promotes job creation and/or provides

needed community services that benefit rural areas,” the email from UEC states. “Uses of UEC's Revolving Loan Fund proceeds may be for land, fixed assets, machinery, and equipment, or working capital needs. Working capital loans will only be considered in conjunction with the purchase of other assets, as previously specified.”

For more information, contact the Umatilla Electric Cooperative Business Resource Center at uecbrc@gmail.com or 541-289-3000.

Dr. Dave Drotzmann and Dr. Kollan Arritt would like to welcome a new associate,
Dr. Stephanie Uggen
a graduate from Indiana University practicing full scope optometry, specializing in Pediatrics.

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