



Workforce Happenings

January 2012

Volume 2, Issue 1

North Florida Workforce

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www.NFWorkforce.org

SOOTKOOS NAMED WORKFORCE PROFESSIONAL CHAMPION

Recently, Joan Sootkoos was named North Florida Workforce's "Workforce Professional Champion." At the Workforce Professional Development Academy in Orlando (December 7-9), she was honored with other regional Champions in a special ceremony.

Sootkoos is originally from the Miami area. She and her husband, Dennis, enjoy outdoor activities, including gardening, cycling and kayaking.

The Workforce Professional Champion Award is described as a commendation with which "one is acknowledged to be better than all others." The individuals nominated for the award have been recognized for sharing their expertise and going far beyond the traditional expectations of their job. Sootkoos, who came to Workforce as a dislocated worker in 2010, was hired shortly thereafter as the Workforce Innovation Act (WIA) Adult Career Consultant. She was previously employed as an Adult Education/GED Prep Instructor with North Florida Community College.



When Sootkoos isn't busy with her own caseload as a Career Consultant, she's pitching in in the Resource Room to provide services and assist with workshops available to all jobseekers. Her innate ability to guide jobseekers gently, nurturing them and promoting positive outcomes, has been beneficial to North Florida Workforce. Although she's only been employed by Workforce since early 2010, she's made a huge impact on her team.

According to teammate Jaime Green, "Joan Sootkoos is innovation personified to our team. From the moment she started, she provided a shot of new energy and inspiration to our stagnant program team. Her resourcefulness and varied background of expertise has proven effective in motivating her customers, as well as her coworkers. She looks for any opportunity to enhance her customers' job seeking experience, even creating a personalized profile to allow them to shine. She is a leader in customer service to her coworkers and customers, seeking out the hard cases to find a way to brighten their day. Joan comes to the office with a smile on her face every day and she is an inspiration to us all to assist our customers to the fullest extent."

[iWork Youth](#)

[North Florida Workforce](#)

[NF Workforce Vets](#)

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If you're unable to click any of our links because you're reading a printed out version of this newsletter, contact us at socialmedia@nfwdb.org to be added to the mailing list!

JUMBLE

e o r k e e s b j _____

m e p a d i o o l f y r l _____

a n v e e t r _____

r n t e p i n h i s _____

n b f e e s i t _____

| Unemployment Rates (%) (not seasonally adjusted) | Nov-11 | Oct-11 | Nov-10 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|
| North Florida Workforce Region | 10.0 | 9.8 | 11.3 |
| Hamilton County | 12.4 | 11.9 | 12.8 |
| Jefferson County | 8.8 | 8.4 | 9.9 |
| Lafayette County | 7.7 | 7.2 | 9.1 |
| Madison County | 12.0 | 11.7 | 12.3 |
| Suwannee County | 9.4 | 9.2 | 11.1 |
| Taylor County | 10.2 | 10.3 | 11.8 |
| Florida | 9.8 | 10.1 | 12.1 |
| United States | 8.2 | 8.5 | 9.3 |

HIERS NAMED EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER FOR WINTER 2012

Workforce announced Karen Hiers Employee of the Quarter for Winter 2011. She was presented a certificate noting her contributions on Friday, January 6th, by Executive Director Sheryl Rehberg.

Hiers has worked for **North Florida Workforce** for over a year as an Employer Services Representative. In her brief time at **Workforce**, she has shown an amazing ability to adapt and overcome any situation. At one point, Hiers was the only ESR for all of the business in the six-county region.

Her supervisor, Diane Head, speaks very highly of Hiers' dedication and

enthusiasm. "She pitches in wherever she's needed. Her account assignments have changed 3 times since she's been on board and she's taken on each new challenge like a champ! I can always count on her to get the job done."

Hiers' duties include working hand-in-hand with area employers to assist them in managing their human resources, including providing avenues for skills upgrades and finding the right candidates to fill their open positions. A full menu of the Employer Services offered by Workforce can be found at www.NFWorkforce.org/emp-about.aspx.

Hiers and her husband, Sammy, live in Lee, Florida. She attends Lee First Baptist Church, where her husband is pastor. In her spare time, she enjoys shopping (unless it's football season) and spending time with family.



Garret Pegg is a sixteen year old honor student attending Taylor County High School. This past summer, he participated in the iWork3 Summer Youth Employment Program and was placed at the Perry Fire Department.

Garret worked at the PFD for six weeks, making \$7.50 an hour as part of his Work Readiness training. He excelled at all of the tasks assigned, from flushing out fire hydrants to cleaning up, and all with a broken arm! He performed so admirably that his worksite supervisor commented that they'd participate in the program again only if they could have Garret.

When he's not busy being a role model for other youth, Garret enjoys playing soccer and spending time with his family. He's heavily involved in both youth and church activities and plans to pursue a career in physical therapy following graduation.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN BEGINS IN JANUARY

As of January 2012, **North Florida Workforce**, serving Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee and Taylor Counties will implement a social media campaign. Using platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn, **Workforce** aims to better serve the community through networking and providing real time updates.

The pages will deliver just breaking regional workforce news, hot job listings, state and federal labor information and a whole lot more! It's all a part of thinking social - and the trend is booming. The average consumer mentions specific brands over

90 times a week to co-workers, family and friends, while 80 percent of businesses use those exact same insights in marketing and merchandising. In fact, social media networks like Twitter and Facebook are considered some of the most effective ways to market information to a consumer base.

The Business of Social Media a web-based blog, or emagazine, suggests that 74 percent of consumers rely on social networks to guide their consumer decisions. **North Florida Workforce** plans on cashing-in on the benefits of social media to implement more effective communications

strategies and enhance existing customer service.

Coming in January, **Workforce** will have (in addition to pre-existing website, www.NFWorkforce.org) three Facebook Pages, geared towards General Jobseekers, Youth and Veterans, a Twitter account, a WordPress Blog, a YouTube Channel and a LinkedIn Profile. All of the changes planned for the upcoming year are for the convenience of jobseekers and employers – and provide an easy way to find out more about the services **Workforce** offers.



EMPLOY FLORIDA OFFERS OPPORTUNITY

Employ Florida Marketplace, www.EmployFlorida.com, is Florida's official online gateway to virtual job-searching services, designed to meet the needs of jobseekers and employers alike. Jobseekers can benefit from many of the features in Employ Florida, including assessment, customized job search and training.

Assessment. Besides job search, as a job seeker, you can complete self-assessments designed to provide you with a detailed look at your skills and interests, and then search for jobs matching your skills and interests. It also allows you to create and post résumés and cover letters using various templates. A great benefit to this feature is that resumes and cover letters are visible to employers and Career Center staff, so even if you're not actively job searching, someone may search for you!

Customized Job Search. Another feature provided by Employ Florida is the Virtual Recruiter. The Virtual Recruiter send you email or text message updates on new jobs matching the criteria you set. Employ Florida also pulls job postings from various job boards, eliminating the need to jump from website to website for job searching.

Training. Through applications in Employ Florida, you can research colleges, universities and technical schools, as well as detailed information about various occupations and industries. If you're interested in personal and professional development, Employ Florida will route you to www.Alison.com which provides free online training in various subjects.

To get registered as a jobseeker, go to www.EmployFlorida.com.