Archway Workforce Development Group
Establishes Job Bank
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One of the initial goals identified by the Habersham Archway Partnership Executive Committee was to establish a work group tasked with addressing issues related to workforce development. The work group includes members representing the school system, chamber of commerce, local higher education institutions, cooperative extension, and local government and is chaired by Wade Rhodes.

As one of its first efforts, the Archway Workforce Development Work Group established a job bank to assist local residents in finding jobs within the community. Partnering with the Department of Labor (DOL), the work group sponsors a job bank opportunity during the first Saturday food drives at The Torch Worship Center in Demorest. The idea of a job bank began during an Archway Partnership brainstorming session, according to Mr. Rhodes.

The first job bank was held on Saturday, April 5, 2013. Over 400 individuals attended the event that included a booth with employment information. Becky Waters, manager of the Georgia DOL’s Habersham Career Center in Cornelia, said the participation the first Saturday was “awesome,” with 35 people signing up with the DOL for employment. “It was beyond what we had expected, but we do hope it will increase,” Waters said. “This is going to be a good program, because it’s going to reach a lot of people who don’t utilize the Department of Labor. They may not even know [the DOL] exists, or what we can do to help them. This will get our services out into the community so they’ll know there is help for them.”

A few local employers were in attendance at the event and were able to connect with potential employees. Additional inquiries were made through the Chamber of Commerce to determine local businesses and industries who might have job openings but who do not use the DOL to fill jobs.

According to Mr. Rhodes, the event was a great start and he hopes to keep the momentum going. He also noted that the Archway Partnership prepared a survey which he gave to about 40 human resources professionals in the community. The survey asked about problems with job applicants, so the workforce development committee would know “from a mentoring standpoint” how to help people get jobs. “A lot of it is technical skills, but a lot of it is soft skills [such as] work ethic, dressing appropriately for a job interview, [and] filling out an application correctly,” said Mr. Rhodes.

Additional efforts to enhance workforce development are in the planning stages, including the possibility of a mentoring center for job seekers and an entrepreneurship program for youth.

Advancing Community Priorities:
The Habersham Archway Partnership recognized the role of workforce development in economic development and has focused efforts on meeting the workforce needs of local industry. The job bank program is a first step in addressing specific needs identified by local employers.

[Quotes taken from Brown, K., (2013, April 17), Job bank program launches at The Torch Worship Center, The Northeast Georgian, p. 7A.]