

# ***Eastern Washington Partnership***

## **WorkSource System Update**

### **September 2017**

#### **Walla Walla General Hospital Closure**

Walla Walla General Hospital submitted a WARN Notice on June 21<sup>st</sup> announcing the closure of their facilities in the Walla Walla area. The WARN specified the official closure date as 8/24/17, and indicated that 371 employees, from all occupations and professional disciplines would be impacted.

WorkSource initiated immediate contact with WWGH Human Resources to seek additional information and learned that despite the published closure date, the actual end date for most employees would occur on July 24<sup>th</sup>. WorkSource staffs also learned that there were approximately 100 contract workers potentially impacted.

As required during official Rapid Response events, WorkSource began planning and coordination for worker orientations which were offered at different times and locations (WorkSource and WWGH) between June 29<sup>th</sup> and July 20<sup>th</sup>. WorkSource staffs also attended a Career Transition event hosted by WWGH on July 6<sup>th</sup> and began surveying workers to assess needs and identify concerns.

WorkSource is presently engaged with over 60 former employees, with several now enrolled in WIOA Dislocated Worker services, and others undergoing assessment for program services. To date, WorkSource has confirmation of approximately 135 former employees securing employment with local and regional health care organizations.

#### **Key observations of workers seeking services:**

- Majority worked full time, and were primary wage earners
- Most hope to work in the same field, but recognize they may need to upgrade their skills
- Many are concerned about interim health and medical coverage and their future earnings prospects
- Most are requesting help with career exploration, on-line job search strategies, interviewing skills, and resumes

#### **Community Impacts:**

- Loss of WWGH related employment equates to roughly 14% of local healthcare jobs
- Nearly \$26 million in lost wages, or 14% of total healthcare payrolls

#### **Forest Service Youth Employment Project**

Earlier this year, the U.S. Forest Service Three Rivers District, and Rural Resources Community Action's Employment & Training programs, partnered to provide summer employment through natural resource conservation activities for four Kettle Falls High School students.

Employees of Rural Resources and the Forest Service collaborated to recruit through Kettle Falls High School and then interviewed four youth, with three being selected for the positions. Forest Service funds covered expenses for Rural Resources staff time and travel to recruit, interview and manage the three youth's participation in the summer employment program, as well as the three youth's wages. The fourth position

was filled by a student meeting the WIOA In-School Youth eligibility requirements; the majority of his wages and staff time to coordinate his enrollment and participation were paid by WIOA Youth In-School Funding. This also served as the 25% match required by the contract with the Forest Service.

Through their summer employment, this partnership introduced the four youth to various land and resource management functions of the U.S. Forest Service while focusing on the improvement of recreational opportunities, water quality, access, reduction of fuels and increased forest health. Each youth worked 30 days (240 hours) in the summer, and at the conclusion of their employment, Rural Resources provided a workshop for the youth which included instruction on completing employment applications, resumes, cover letters, employment “soft skills” and communication.