Our mission is to create, develop, and maintain a comprehensive workforce development system that engages the entire community towards ever-increasing levels of self-sufficiency.
In the midst of one of the most challenging economic times Cincinnati has ever experienced, the Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board rose to the occasion. As the Lead Elected Official of the SWORWIB, I’d like to share those achievements with you.

The SuperJobs Center, the SWORWIB’s operational hub, served more than 24,000 people during the year. It enrolled 411 job seekers in training and placed more than 2,200 people in jobs—again exceeding other metropolitan areas in Ohio. The SuperJobs Center’s emphasis on working closely with business and industry in Cincinnati and Hamilton County continues to pay dividends, even in a difficult economy.

A huge part of the SWORWIB’s focus this year was setting up a summer youth employment program funded by $2 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The SWORWIB contracted with five youth providers—Arbor E&T, Easter Seals Work Resource Center (WRC), Jobs for Cincinnati Graduates (JCG), Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development, and the Urban League of Greater Cincinnati—to develop programs that would prepare youth for the workplace.

By the end of the summer, almost 660 young people from ages 14 to 24 had completed work readiness training. Employers, ranging from the Cincinnati Parks and Health Departments to private companies, told us this was a program that worked. We have a tradition of strong and committed youth providers in Cincinnati. Let me take just a moment to compliment the SWORWIB’s four year-round youth service providers, whose contracts ended June 30, 2009: Easter Seals WRC, Literacy Center West, JCG and the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati. All exceeded the Workforce Investment Act’s Common Measures of performance: diploma or certificate, skill attainment, and retention. Well done!

Two years ago, the SWORWIB embarked upon an extensive collaborative review of how to better serve the most disadvantaged youth population in Cincinnati and Hamilton County—out-of-school youth with neither a diploma nor GED. Out of that came a decision to shift more resources toward out-of-school youth while not ignoring those youth still in school. After a rigorous Request For Proposal process, five year-round youth providers were selected: Easter Seals WRC, JCG, Lighthouse Youth Services, Literacy Center West, and Connect2Success. They committed to serving more youth than in previous years, with funding essentially flat. This is a challenge I am confident they can meet.

These youth programs are an important key to the future economic vitality of Cincinnati. As our youth succeed in work and life, so do our city and region.

Sincerely,

Mayor Mark Mallory

Lead Elected Official
Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board
I began my tenure as Chairman of the Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board while the region’s economy was relatively strong. I am ending it during one of the steepest economic downturns in the nation’s history.

As you know, we are in the midst of a difficult economic crisis and many of our citizens are desperately seeking employment opportunities. The traffic at the SuperJobs Center during the year reflected that—more than 24,000 people sought our help.

Given these challenges, it’s more important than ever to make sure we are meeting the needs of the employers who are our customers.

A sampling of the ways we did that in 2009 include:

The Business Services Unit at SuperJobs continued to work with new companies that came into Cincinnati and Hamilton County and sought our expertise to hire qualified people. At the same time, we also worked with those employers who are our longtime partners. Their successes speak volumes to other employers in the region that the SuperJobs Center is the place to go to when they need to hire.

President and CEO Sherry Kelley Marshall, working with the Ohio Department of Development, secured funding for incumbent worker training, and several area companies matched the grant to take advantage of the opportunity. Such training provides a more skilled workforce and helps employees keep their jobs.

At the same time, we continue to hone our services to dislocated workers who find themselves particularly hard hit in this economy. For many it is the first time they have been without a job, and our assistance to help them create what may be their first résumé or fill out their first online application is critical in today’s work world. Many also need to retrain to get to that next position. We helped more than 411 job seekers this year do that.

It’s in these challenging times that it becomes most apparent that an effective workforce investment system is vital to the economic health of Hamilton County and the broader region. As stewards of that system, we are determined to make sure that every dollar is well spent as we develop programs that serve both employers and job seekers.

Sincerely,

(Handwritten Signature)

Walter McLarty
Chairman
Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board
CHRO/Chief Human Resources Officer
TriHealth Inc.

Collaboration was the key to the SWORWIB’s accomplishments in 2008–09.

Collaboration with the Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network and the United Way of Greater Cincinnati as we moved toward a uniform way of measuring workforce results across the region.

Collaboration with Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, the Community Action Agency, Easter Seals Work Resource Center, the Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, and the Spirit of Construction as they applied for grants that would further the goals of developing a trained workforce. Those cooperative ventures are paying off handsomely—our area has been awarded more than $3 million in grants, and we expect to hear positive news about grants worth millions of dollars more.

Collaboration with the Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance focusing on training for energy-related jobs—a major component of future grants.

Collaboration with the Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati and churches throughout Hamilton County to launch job circles to help ensure the success of the newly employed through peer support, and to provide job search clubs in partnership with the SuperJobs Center.

Collaboration among five Summer Youth Employment Providers and the SWORWIB as we launched the $2 million summer jobs program, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. As a result of that, 659 youth honed their work readiness skills this past summer.

Collaboration with Microsoft to raise the computer literacy of our workforce while providing a means for summer youth to earn “work readiness” certificates.

Our exciting new collaboration with the Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network and United Way, with funding from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation and the Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, allowed us to develop regional workforce professionals who work with the hardest to place.

We grew stronger as 44 workforce specialists from the region completed rigorous training to obtain two professional certifications—Offender Workforce Development Specialist and Global Career Development Facilitator. This will help our region’s workforce become even more competitive in the years ahead. And that, ultimately, is the key to the success of our local economy: A competitive, trained workforce for 21st century jobs.

Sincerely,

(Handwritten Signature)

Sherry Kelley Marshall
President/CEO
Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board
Both employers and job seekers can benefit from the wide range of services provided by the SuperJobs Center (SJC) and its satellite locations. An overview of the offerings:

**Business services**

**Job postings:** Employers may post job openings at the SuperJobs Center at no charge. Job postings can be made through a Business Services representative and will be given wide dissemination through our network of satellite offices, partnering agencies, and through the State of Ohio’s job matching system (www.OhioMeansJobs.com).

**Job candidate recruitment and screening services:** Hundreds of job seekers use the services of the SuperJobs Center monthly, providing a steady flow of talented candidates for employers in the Cincinnati region. SuperJobs Center staff can recruit, assess, and screen candidates to fill employer vacancies.

**Hiring events:** At the SuperJobs Center, hiring events provide customized recruitment activities for individual employers, as well as assistance in screening the candidates.

**Layoff assistance:** During layoffs, a Rapid Response team provides employees information and guidance about unemployment benefits, how to find their next job and what assistance is available in their community to help them get that job.

**HR consultations:** After assessing an employer’s needs, the Business Services staff can provide recruitment resources, develop employee applications, create job descriptions, supply labor market information and assist with other human resource needs.

**On-the-job training (OJT):** Employers can recoup up to half of the wages paid to workers through on-the-job training for new employees. OJT is particularly encouraged in higher skill occupations, and in some instances can be done in conjunction with classroom training at educational institutions.

**Job seeker services**

**Resource Room:** Many of the tools a job seeker needs to communicate with an employer are available in the SuperJobs Center’s Resource Room. Whether it’s faxing a résumé, e-mailing a thank you note, or completing an online application, job seekers can accomplish the tasks at the SuperJobs Center.

**Workshops:** Every month at the main Center on Central Parkway, workshops are offered that cover subjects related to job searching. Some of them include: résumé writing, job search strategies, interviewing, and more.

**Job leads:** The SuperJobs Center matches job openings at local companies with qualified candidates. From healthcare and banking to construction and manufacturing, entry-level job seekers and managers alike can access job leads through the SJC.

**Career coaching:** One-on-one assistance is available to job seekers experiencing challenges with their job search. Career coaches assess needs and create a plan of action to help achieve specific career goals.

In July 2009, the SWORWIB graduated 44 individuals from 27 organizations in our first Regional Workforce Development Certification Training. The training focused on meeting the needs of former offenders and other job seekers, and covered ethical and legal issues, labor market information, diversity, employability assessment, and career development. Participants invested 14 full days in their professional development, as well as homework assignment time.

As a result of the training, which was jointly funded by the Greater Cincinnati Foundation in conjunction with the Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, the graduates now hold Offender Workforce Development Specialist and Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) certifications. Several graduates will take the next level of training to allow them to “train the trainers.”

“Having so many workforce specialists in the region who are able to train other staff is highly beneficial for Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati, as well as our whole region,” said Sherry Kelley Marshall, President/CEO. “We are extremely grateful for the support of these training efforts, and applaud the hard work of these individuals who completed the certification process, and the organizations that supported their professional development.”

The Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board selected Arbor E&T LLC to operate its one-stop employment services center—the SuperJobs Center—which is funded by WIA dollars received for the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.
Operating a one-stop jobs center during a period when unemployment is high and the country is in a recession brings many challenges, but also opportunities. The State of Ohio saw a persistently high demand for job-seeker services and a smaller supply of jobs during 2008–09. Despite the difficult situation, the SuperJobs Center (SJC), under the leadership of Director Wayde Smith, marched forward in its mission to serve employers and job seekers and earned significant attention for its success.

In fiscal year 2009, the SuperJobs Center, which is operated by Arbor E&T and overseen by the SWORWIB, served more than 24,000 job seekers, nearly 250 percent of its contract goal. Even more noteworthy was the job placement number. In times when jobs were difficult to find, the SuperJobs Center placed 2,239 people in jobs, exceeding its goal. In fact, SuperJobs achieved more job placements than any other metropolitan area one-stop in Ohio for two years in a row.

The SuperJobs’ Business Services Unit is one reason for those strong placement numbers. In fiscal year 2009, its staff worked with more than 220 area employers, including several new ones, as it helped recruit and screen job candidates. “Working with employers in Cincinnati and Hamilton County is a huge key to our success,” says Smith. “We continue to get positive feedback from them that we fill a vital role in getting them skilled workers.”

Success brings attention

Because of its success, the SuperJobs Center has garnered positive attention from both corporate and government officials. In July 2008, China’s ambassador to the United States, Zhou Wenzhong, visited SuperJobs as part of a two-day trip coordinated by ResCare, parent company of Arbor E&T. In February 2009, SuperJobs hosted ResCare representatives from the United Kingdom, the Middle East and the Netherlands. It was selected because of its reputation as a premiere one-stop job center in the U.S.

“It was a pleasure to share first-hand how the SuperJobs Center operates in serving job seekers and employers in the Greater Cincinnati area. Our visitors saw examples of best practices here that could be applied to operations in their home countries,” says Smith.

SuperJobs has also been the focus of increased media attention during these challenging economic times. In a 12-month period, the SJC was mentioned more than 40 times in the news; and SJC staff appeared as guests on cable TV, radio and online programs another 15 times. “All the coverage has reflected a positive light on the SuperJobs Center and the great work we’re doing,” Smith remarks.

Serving those affected by layoffs

The Center’s mission is to provide professional workforce development services to employers and job seekers that contribute to the economic well-being of the community. Its top-notch Rapid Response program is an element of that. This program offers immediate assistance to companies and workers experiencing layoffs to ease the transition. Not surprising in a recession, the number of Rapid Responses in Hamilton County doubled this fiscal year. The specially-trained team assisted 24 companies whose layoffs impacted nearly 1,400 workers. The team helped dislocated workers as they filed for unemployment compensation, improved their job-readiness skills, and sought additional career training.

“We are committed to providing services to the Hamilton County community, and have built partnerships with many organizations that help us reach the job seekers in areas beyond our main Center near downtown,” says Smith. Such partnerships include the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority, the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, and Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development. The library partnership alone yielded connections with 18 neighborhoods.

The SuperJobs Center continues to offer support to the community during these challenging times, and as the economy changes and starts to grow again, the SJC will be there to help our workforce adapt. “We understand that there will be new opportunities in the workforce, and the SuperJobs Center is equipped to make sure our job seekers have the skills they need to match those opportunities,” concludes Smith.
Employers succeed with SuperJobs

New to Cincinnati, staffing agency relies on SuperJobs Center for candidates, connections

 Shortly after opening a new office in Sharonville in May 2008, Employment Plus Inc. of Bloomington, Ind., turned to SuperJobs for assistance both in recruiting candidates and networking to other local connections. “When we contacted the SuperJobs Center after opening our Cincinnati location, we were looking for resources that could help us get access to applicants,” recalls Rob Koewler, Regional Manager of the Cincinnati office, pictured at left. “It took maybe a day for them to get us into their system, and then we were off to the races.”

The company, which specializes in matching employers with temporary staffing, currently operates 60 locations in 12 states. Their expansion correlates directly to an uptick in temporary hiring—a conservative means for employers to ease back into expanding payrolls as they sense stabilization in the economy through an increased demand for their goods and services.

Koewler appreciates the SuperJobs Center’s work in spreading the word about the firm to other local agencies to help find candidates. “We heard from churches, outreach centers, and other social organizations who knew through the SuperJobs Center that we were looking to hire,” he says. “Those introductions were very valuable to us because we hadn’t yet been able to make those connections.”

Further, Employment Plus took advantage of SuperJobs’ hiring events as they worked to staff for a large volume client—at one point bringing in nearly 800 temporary workers to help out during the seasonal rush at a large packaging company, explains Chuck Walters, manager of Business Services Unit at the SuperJobs Center.

In fact, Andy Lotter, a Business Services representative at the SuperJobs Center, spends time each week at Employment Plus, learning more about the company’s changing client staffing needs, and processing candidates through screenings and background checks. “Andy and everyone else at the Center have been very easy for us to work with,” concludes Koewler. “I know it’s a cliche, but they’re just a phone call away. They’re easy to get to, easy to work with, and very cooperative about working hard to understand our requests and get us access to the people we need so we can match them to jobs available in these challenging times. It’s been a good relationship.”

SuperJobs fills Health Alliance’s staffing needs

The SuperJobs Center provides services to many of Hamilton County’s hospitals and health care centers, including the Health Alliance of Greater Cincinnati. As an integrated health care system, the Health Alliance includes University Hospital, Jewish Hospital, Fort Hamilton Hospital, Drake Center and the new West Chester Medical Center, plus the Alliance Primary Care physicians group.

Each hospital does its own hiring, and occasionally their staffing coordinators reach out for assistance with special needs, explains Amber Whitfield, the Health Alliance’s Education Coordinator, pictured at right. For example, Whitfield says, when Jewish Hospital’s food services department struggled to fill some openings, they turned to the SuperJobs Center for recruiting, testing and screening services.

“The department manager was having a challenge finding people who were just the right fit; SuperJobs handled applications and interviews at a specific hiring event for that position, and the manager made several successful hires as a result,” Whitfield says. “In fact, the manager felt the process was so effective, she asked to repeat it again this past year.”

Further, the Health Alliance has turned to the SuperJobs Center to assist some workers whose positions were eliminated as the result of a reorganization. Led by Sheila Roth, the SuperJobs Center’s Rapid Response coordinator, affected employees received information and guidance about unemployment benefits, how to find their next job and the resources available to them should they choose to enroll in a training program to enhance their skills or transition into a new field.

“SuperJobs responded to that need on very short notice, coming out to meet with those affected,” notes Whitfield. “That outplacement service was very helpful and very well received by the people who used it. Those who hadn’t used SuperJobs for a while were pleasantly surprised by the services and assistance available.”

Overall, it’s the high level of responsiveness that Whitfield says her organization appreciates the most. “The Super Job Center’s staffers are always very easy to communicate with and more than willing to do whatever it takes to help our people. They’re very responsive, and we’ve been very impressed,” she concludes.
When Dublin, Ireland-headquartered Greencore Group PLC planned to open a second U.S. manufacturing facility in Sharonville by May 2009, the company first turned to the SuperJobs Center (SJC) for staffing help.

The company, a leading international manufacturer of convenience foods and ingredients, called the SuperJobs Center in February 2009, looking to fill both team member and team leader roles at its new, 5,500-square-foot plant. The location manufactures food-to-go products, including fresh, pre-packed sandwiches.

“We were starting a new business from scratch and needed staffing at all levels,” recalls Richard McGowan, Greencore’s Project Manager for the new facility, pictured above. “We wanted a single point of contact to deal with the staffing program.”

As a new employer to the area, McGowan says, the company lacked both reputation and contacts. “We wanted to partner with a known, local organization with a proven record for getting people into the workforce from a wide base,” he notes.

Together, Greencore’s management and the SJC’s Business Services Manager Chuck Walters developed a comprehensive program covering recruitment timing, staffing experience criteria, and screening questions. Because the company was hiring for all three shifts—sandwich assembly during the first shift, ingredient preparation during the second shift, and cleaning during the third shift—they looked for candidates from a variety of backgrounds, says McGowan.

“SuperJobs worked hard to understand our needs as a client, particularly our standards for food safety, which is key for us,” he explains. “They advertised the openings on our behalf, used our company logo, terms and language, and screened carefully to ensure that we got the right applicants.”

The recruiting process was implemented immediately, McGowan says, with the company making the first of three phases of job offers within two weeks. Of the 24 candidates ultimately hired, some have already been promoted from team member to team leader, he adds.

“The service from the SuperJobs Center was always professional, courteous and friendly. Most importantly we hired good people through the process who are key staff in the business,” concludes McGowan. “We are about to start on further programs for growing the business and we will look to partner with the SuperJobs team again.”

GREENING THE WORKFORCE

As the United States gears up for a greener economy, the SWORWIB recognizes that a workforce trained in green technology will be crucial to the region.

Even before the SWORWIB’s emphasis on a green jobs component in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Summer Youth Employment Program, the SWORWIB had collaborated on a number of grant submissions that are now starting to bear fruit.

One such effort coordinated by the SWORWIB in the Fall of 2008 successfully garnered a Department of Labor grant award, led by Cincinnati State Technical and Community College. Krishna Chapatwala, a Business Services representative at SuperJobs, now is assigned as a liaison with the energy industry to work with employers to define and recruit for green jobs.

Chapatwala is working with Cincinnati State to recruit trainees for a green jobs program in the manufacturing and construction industries. SuperJobs will initially refer qualified individuals to the program and then, after graduation, connect them to placement services for potential green jobs.

The SWORWIB is also working with Hamilton County for weatherization pre-apprenticeship training, with the Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance for competitive federal green grants, and with the Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network on green components of the construction and manufacturing career pathways development.
During a recession, companies often experience significant revenue losses that lead to decisions to downsize their workforce. Workers who may have put in a decade or more with one company find themselves unemployed and unprepared for the new job market.

Continuing with their current occupations is not an option; there are no longer job opportunities in those fields. They have to learn new skills to enter a new industry in a reasonable amount of time.

LaGracia Guice-Williams, pictured at left, knows this reality personally. She was laid off in June 2008 after being employed with a funeral home for 10 years. Guice-Williams didn’t get discouraged, though. She immediately began exploring ways to become more employable and decided to pursue training. The health unit coordinator program at Great Oaks Health Academy piqued her interest, but she didn’t know how she could afford it.

Great Oaks referred Guice-Williams to the SuperJobs Center to determine if she was eligible for Workforce Investment Act funding for her training.

“I started the process a few short weeks before the start of the first class. My Career Coach Beverly Schurig told me what documentation I needed, had me complete the proper forms, and let me know when everything had to be returned to her,” she says. “I was able to start the health unit coordinator program and not worry about the debt from tuition.”

Upon completion of her three-month training, Guice-Williams was invited for interviews with three different healthcare facilities. By January 2009, she found a job as a health unit coordinator at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center.

“The months that I was unemployed seemed like an eternity,” says LaGracia. “Without the assistance I received from SuperJobs, I would have certainly been out of work longer. I am so grateful to SuperJobs and all the professional help I received,” she continues. “Beverly took my layoff, a traumatic experience for me, and turned it into a positive process of gaining new skills and opportunities for my future.”

Training equals marketability

Sometimes when a job seeker is actively looking for a new position, it becomes evident that more skills are needed to become marketable in this environment. Bruno Tegano, pictured at right, knows this personally after being laid off from his job as a mechanical engineer in 2008. During the course of his job search, Tegano discovered that his target employers in the research and design/manufacturing industry required a set of skills he didn’t have. To land the job he was looking for, Tegano had to acquire those skills.

At a variety of networking events, Tegano kept hearing about the SuperJobs Center. He decided to step out of his comfort zone to ask the Center for help. He contacted SuperJobs and was assisted by Career Coach Maria Cotto and Training Coordinator Latrisha Payne. “They helped me understand that being laid off didn’t mean I did something wrong—and asking for help was the smart thing to do,” Tegano says.

Cotto and Payne helped Tegano obtain funds to cover SolidWorks training at 3D Visions Technology. Tegano updated his resumé to reflect these new skills, and it didn’t take long to attract the attention of an employer. Tegano now works for Tark Inc. as a mechanical engineer/project manager.

“My overall experience with SuperJobs was incredible,” Tegano says. “All of the people I talked to and dealt with made me feel comfortable and helped me at every corner during a very trying time in my life. I am very thankful for this.”
The SuperJobs Center works with many partners to provide services to job seekers. Among them is the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), a partner in Spirit of Construction.

Vicki Mayall, a registered nurse, pictured above, who had been away from the workplace for five years, was working with counselor Daryl Twyman through BVR. In addition to working with BVR, Twyman recommended that Mayall utilize other services at the SuperJobs Center. Initially, Mayall wasn’t sure if going back into nursing would be the right choice. “I thought I had been out of my field for too long and could just not live up to my own expectations,” she says. She decided to attend a workshop at SuperJobs entitled “Choosing a Career,” where she learned that she could transfer her 29 years of nursing experience and skills into a different occupation.

Then she got connected to Career Coach Theo Marks. “Theo was great! He gave me a job lead as a teacher of STNAs (state-tested nursing assistants). That was my first interview in a long time, and I got the job!” says Mayall.

While the newly created school that hired her never reached viability and thus could not maintain the employment offer, Mayall did not get discouraged. She credits her experience with BVR and the SuperJobs Center in helping her gain confidence, and she eventually found a job at an adult day center where she now works. Mayall would encourage anyone to utilize the services at SuperJobs. “The resources are there to help you find a new job that will be satisfying,” she says.

**Partnership eases former nurse’s transition back into the workforce**

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**“The resources at the SuperJobs Center are there to help you find a new job that will be satisfying.” – Vicki Mayall**

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**Hiring event at SuperJobs Center leads to a new job**

Chalk it up to good timing. George Bates — pictured above at right with Tony Simpson of Elite Staffing—happened to stop by the one-stop job center in Clermont County in summer 2009 for help finding a job when he saw a flyer for a hiring event. The hiring event was being held at the SuperJobs Center that very same day and was scheduled to end an hour after Bates saw the flyer. He hustled over to SuperJobs and arrived with 30 minutes to spare.

The hiring event, coordinated by Business Services representative Denise Becker on behalf of Elite Staffing, offered job opportunities for warehouse work. “Everyone was very professional” at SuperJobs, says Bates. Particularly, Becker’s friendliness and efficiency helped to ensure a smooth experience for him.

Like thousands of other workers in the area, Bates was laid off from his job in 2008. He had been working for two years at U.S. Playing Cards in Norwood when he lost his job and had only been able to find a four-week job in Kentucky since then. Luckily, the SuperJobs Center was able to facilitate a connection between him and a company offering longer-term employment.

Bates was pleased to get the opportunity to meet with Elite Staffing Manager Tony Simpson one-on-one within minutes of arriving at the SuperJobs Center the day of the hiring event.

A couple of weeks later, after filling out the appropriate paperwork, taking care of the mandatory medical evaluations, and attending a pre-employment orientation at the SuperJobs Center, Bates was extended a job offer to begin in October 2009. In tough economic times, jobs are hard to find. But with the help of the SuperJobs Center, Bates can enjoy earning a paycheck once again.
As the U.S. auto industry continued to shrink in 2008–2009, workers in Greater Cincinnati were not immune. Ford Motor Co. laid off 167 workers at its Sharonville plant as more senior workers from its closed plant in Batavia were transferred to Sharonville. The SWORWIB saw an immediate need and hastened to fill it.

With a $428,000 grant from the Department of Labor, the SWORWIB expanded the Labor-Management Committee (LMC) that began in Batavia and provided an “objective convener” to keep the task group focused. The LMC’s goal was to implement a regional service strategy that addressed the needs of Ford workers living in various counties in Southwest Ohio.

Part of this strategy included a transition center for dislocated workers. Early discussions focused on a temporary center at the Ford UAW Hall. However, maintaining a center just a short jog down the road from Ford that had been opened to assist those laid off earlier by NuTone and UBE Automotive seemed a better solution. The SWORWIB contracted with UAW 647 in Evendale to remain open another year to serve those being laid off from Ford.

Two employees of Arbor E&T, which operates in Batavia and provided an “objective convener” to keep the task group focused. The LMC’s goal was to implement a regional service strategy that addressed the needs of Ford workers living in various counties in Southwest Ohio.

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Two employees of Arbor E&T, which operates the SuperJobs Center, as well as staff who worked previously at the UAW “Bridge to Work Transition Center,” were assigned to continue services.

The involvement of the SuperJobs Center meant the full range of one-stop resources was available to Ford workers at the Bridge Center.

The involvement of the SWORWIB was crucial, says Phyllis Blust, President of UAW Local 863. “The SWORWIB moved all of us forward in serving the Ford workers, as well as the community as a whole,” she says.

From July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009, 150 Ford workers were served at the Bridge Center where they received career coaching and attended various workshops. Sheila Roth, Rapid Response coordinator at SuperJobs, says career coaches worked with dislocated workers as they sought to remake themselves for new careers.

“Some of them wanted to do a 180-degree turn in their careers,” she notes. Several sought training in medical fields such as physical therapy and licensed practical nursing. “Others stayed on a technical track and got additional training at Cincinnati State and Great Oaks,” she says.

Many of the dislocated workers had not applied for work in years. Some had no résumé and were inexperienced with the electronic job searches of the 21st century. They had to build or update a résumé and make sure it was polished and professional. Several reported to their SJC Career Coach Sheldon Scott, that their new résumé had gotten them in the door of a new job.

The Bridge Transition Center team helped former Ford workers prepare for new careers.

Over the year, the dislocated workers’ determination to improve their skills, network aggressively and keep a positive attitude paid off. According to Roth, of those who came through the Bridge to Work Transition Center, a remarkable 61 percent—92 workers—obtained jobs ranging from long-distance truck driving to nursing.

Roth concludes, “It was the cooperative partnership among many stakeholders that ensured the success of this project. The activities of the LMC and the services offered through the Bridge Center created an environment for Ford workers that was conducive to successful re-employment.”

Blust agrees: “The hard work and commitment of the Labor Management Committee paid off at the Bridge to Work Center for our UAW members as they found new career paths and new jobs.”

Training grants strengthen local workforce

The Ohio Incumbent Worker Training Program, a grant-based economic development effort, provided more than $1 million to Hamilton County businesses for incumbent worker training during the year. The funds were issued through the Ohio Department of Development and the SuperJobs Center. Monies were released on July 1, 2008, and matched dollar-for-dollar by employers.

Almost $800,000 of the grant money was spent, with more than 3,300 workers completing training courses before the program ended on June 30, 2009. The economic downturn impacted the ability of some employers to utilize the funding or train as many workers as initially planned.

“The Incumbent Worker Training Grant was a remarkable collaboration between the state, the SuperJobs Center and the SWORWIB,” notes Jennifer Spohr, Regional Workforce Director for the State of Ohio’s Region 5/Cincinnati. “This joint effort enabled us to assist many companies in their efforts to upgrade the skills of their workforce, retain jobs and remain competitive in a global marketplace.”
SuperJobs Center partnerships

The SuperJobs Center (SJC) is called a one-stop for good reason. It is here that the Center’s partners in workforce development share office space, coordinate services and, most importantly, meet with clients (see sidebar at right for a list of partners). In addition to its primary location on Central Parkway on the border of Over-the-Rhine and West End, the SJC continues its satellite operation at the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency’s Jordan Crossing office, open since 2004.

The SuperJobs Center, recognizing the need to be flexible in challenging times, has reached out to partners for new arrangements and begun other alliances to ensure that as many job seekers as possible are getting the advice and assistance they need.

In January 2009, the SuperJobs Center began a partnership with the

Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County to offer job-readiness workshops at branch libraries. The library provides the site and the SJC provides the instructor. This partnership allows job seekers convenient access to job search help by providing more workshop location choices. To see a calendar of workshops offered at branch libraries, visit www.SuperJobs.com.

In the summer of 2009, the SuperJobs Center partnered with the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) to extend Career Works, its youth-oriented work readiness program, to residents of the Millvale community, an area that suffers from high unemployment. Staffers reached out to residents ages 18–24 to encourage them to come to the Millvale Learning Center to participate in the summer employment program, which was funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Approximately 150 Millvale youth enrolled in the program, and participants received two-week job-readiness training and five-week workplace assignments.

In July 2009, the SuperJobs Center began a partnership with Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development to provide Return to Work services at the Scarlet Oaks Campus. A career coach is available to serve adults and dislocated workers at the campus. This partnership will allow the SJC to reach job seekers on the north side of Hamilton County.

“The SWORWIB is determined to be flexible to meet the needs of so many new job seekers,” says Sherry Kelley Marshall, President/CEO. “These new alliances are a good indication of how to make that work.”

SUPERJOBS PARTNER AGENCIES

Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency (CAA) provides space in its building for the SuperJobs Center’s Jordan Crossing satellite office. CAA serves economically disadvantaged individuals through various educational, child care, health, and employment services.

Cincinnati Job Corps Center offers a comprehensive array of career development services to at-risk young women and men, ages 16–24, to prepare them for successful careers.

Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority provides employment support services through Housing and Urban Development funds for individuals who are residents of public housing.

Cincinnati Public Schools and Great Oaks work with the SuperJobs Center to coordinate the Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) and General Educational Development (GED) programs. ABLE offers free day and evening classes for adult learners; the GED offers adults a second chance to complete their high school education. Computer-based academic instruction is offered.

Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services (HCJFS) administers workforce-related programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, which includes the Ohio Works First program; the Prevention, Retention and Contingency program; childcare; transportation and other supportive services.

Mature Services provides employment and job-readiness services to individuals over the age of 50. Its programs are designed to train, inspire and empower mature job seekers whose many talents may otherwise be lost.

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) provides information about unemployment compensation, Trade Adjustment Assistance, re-employment services, veterans employment, and training programs.

Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission administers the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired to help people with disabilities get or keep a job. For those unable to work, the Bureau of Disability Determination determines eligibility for Social Security disability benefits or Supplemental Security Income.

Higher education partners include the University of Cincinnati’s Southwest Ohio Educational Opportunity Center. It provides counseling and information on college admissions and financial aid to qualified adults interested in entering or continuing a post-secondary program. Cincinnati State Technical and Community College offers workshops on goal-setting, diversity, choosing a career, computer basics, college access, and provides financial aid information.
Two years ago the Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board (SWORWIB) began to rethink—and ultimately reinvent—its approach to serving Greater Cincinnati’s emerging workforce.

“The impetus for sharpening its focus came from stakeholders in youth workforce investment—the SWORWIB leadership and staff, providers, the Youth Council, and youth themselves,” notes Deborah Rose-Milavec, then Youth Coordinator at the SWORWIB. At the same time, the Department of Labor and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) were asking local WIBs to take inventory: Were they serving the proper population? Were they getting desired outcomes? What, if anything, needed to be changed?

“The ODJFS wanted to see Ohio achieve more results with its dollars,” Rose-Milavec says. Under Rose-Milavec’s leadership, the SWORWIB applied for and was granted funds for Youth System Building from ODJFS to gather data on area youth.

Simultaneously, the SWORWIB’s Youth Council participated with STRIVE Together in a Six Sigma approach to drive down the region’s high school dropout rate and get more of those youth into permanent jobs.

“This participatory method allowed all these stakeholders to share their resources and expertise,” says Rose-Milavec.

As a kickoff, the Youth Council formally renamed itself the Emerging Workforce Development Council to focus attention on these customers as our future workforce. A core team of workforce experts convened to compile and analyze data to determine how to serve WIA-eligible youth, ages 14–21, in Hamilton County and Cincinnati.
Youth Stimulus helps train future workforce

The demands were tough, the time frame compressed and the expectations high, but by the end of summer 2009, the payoff was apparent: 659 youth completed summer work readiness training and were better prepared to focus on future careers and the education necessary to get them there.

All five programs—Arbor E&T’s Career Works, Easter Seals Work Resource Center (WRC), Great Oaks, Jobs for Cincinnati Graduates (JCG), and the Urban League of Greater Cincinnati—targeted disadvantaged youth, eligible through the requirements of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The vast majority of youth in the programs were from low-income families and included former offenders, those in foster care, or persons with disabilities.

The participants came from a wide swath of Hamilton County neighborhoods that spanned 21 ZIP codes, with 16 percent coming from Madisonville. Substantially more females (69 percent) than males (31 percent) were represented.

“The funding from ARRA allowed us to offer an opportunity to over 650 youth who otherwise might have been unemployed and disengaged in productive activities this summer,” says Sherry Kelley Marshall, President/CEO of the SWORWIB. “The five programs developed work readiness skills that will pay off for these youth, and society, down the road.”

The work readiness skills included interviewing, building a resumé and writing a cover letter. Classes stressed the importance of making a good first impression, proper work dress, and being on time. Other classes covered financial literacy topics such as balancing a checkbook.

All five programs offered training in Microsoft’s E-Learning Digital Literacy Certification. By the middle of September, 30 percent of all youth had obtained the certificate—including all the participants in the JCG and Great Oaks programs.

Customer service training

The Urban League program focused on the call center customer service industry. Greater Cincinnati has more than 60 call centers, and frequent turnover is an issue for those employers, says Pamela King, Workforce Investment Act summer youth coordinator.

The Urban League training simulated a call center environment, and experts, such as trainers from Convergys Corp., a multinational company based in Cincinnati that operates call centers throughout the world, led some classes. At the conclusion of the program, 23 youth had received a National Professional Certification in customer service.

Emphasis on science, green

Job-shadowing at Great Oaks promoted careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields and included an emphasis on emerging green economy jobs. The students received one high school science credit. “Science is often a deficit on achievement tests for students,” says Ann Jordan, Career Development Manager at Great Oaks, explaining why the program focused on science and technology. “So many careers for the future require science skills. This gives those students a chance to immerse themselves in the sciences and consider such a career choice.”
Partnerships with employers

Young people in the Arbor E&T, Easter Seals WRC and JCG programs worked with almost 60 employers throughout Cincinnati and Hamilton County that ranged from the Cincinnati Parks Department, to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, to P3 Secure, a private company that specializes in emergency food and water supplies for disaster-hit areas.

The sectors of work experience spanned administrative, health care, education, graphic design, social work, parks and recreation, retail, and hospitality. Youth were paid from $7.30 to $10 an hour, depending upon their responsibilities.

More than 100 youth in Arbor’s Career Works worked at Mt. Airy Forest, run by the Cincinnati Parks Department, where they cleared more than 50 acres of honeysuckle, an invasive plant that chokes out native plants. They also cleaned up trails and picked up debris. “The park has never looked better,” says RuthAnn Spears, corporate and volunteer relations manager for Cincinnati parks.

Career Works youth also worked on the Little Miami bike trail doing similar clearing and cleanup work as part of the Ohio Recovery Conservation Corps summer youth program.

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Skills pay dividends

At P3 Secure, owned by Richard Harris, three young women trained by Easter Seals Work Resource Center filed online vendor applications with cities and counties in disaster-prone areas. P3 Secure provides heat-ready meals and supplies to disaster-hit areas. Harris says he was pleasantly surprised by the level of computer expertise his staffers had.

Shara Freeman, 19, who worked at P3, credits Easter Seals WRC for that preparation and its Microsoft e-learning training. “I learned more than basic computer skills,” she says. “I learned how to work the phone and how to manage my time.”

At the Cincinnati Department of Health, Rariety Monford, 17, in the JCG program, worked with the lead poisoning prevention staff. She participated in home inspections and helped with administrative tasks over the summer. “Rariety was accountable and showed flexibility and responsibility,” says her site mentor, Jackie Silas, a public health nurse and case manager.

Hired on

At the conclusion of the summer program, about 20 youth were kept on by their employers, including Gorman Heritage Farm, Dawson Heating & Cooling, T.J. Maxx, Mt. Healthy Health Center, State Farm Insurance and Greyhound. In addition, a number of young adults in the Urban League program were hired as a result of their call center customer service training. Among those employers were U.S. Bank, Convergys, Vianda LLC, the Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky International Airport, as well as T.J. Maxx.

Concludes Marshall: “Our community can be proud of the youth who maximized the opportunity provided by the summer youth employment funds under ARRA, and worked hard this summer to improve themselves.”
With The Banks project—Cincinnati’s riverfront mixed-use development—kicking up steam in July 2008, the SWORWIB undertook a series of initiatives to ensure the inclusion of a diverse workforce in all construction projects in Hamilton County.

“As part of a partnership with Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati to assist with implementation of the joint economic policy for The Banks project, the SuperJobs Center was designated as the place where Banks contractors could get assistance hiring a diverse workforce and prospective workers could learn more about construction opportunities,” explains Sherry Kelley Marshall, SWORWIB President/CEO.

Cincinnati City Council and the Hamilton County Commission passed resolutions affirming that construction projects receiving public funding must post open positions at the SuperJobs Center so residents can compete for the openings that their tax dollars support.

“Our policy is simple: our residents and taxpayers should see job opportunities from the economic development projects we promote and support,” asserts Commissioner David Pepper. “Through the SuperJobs Center, SWORWIB provides the central link that allows this to happen, connecting those looking for work to the new jobs that are created by public investment, and the job and skills training necessary to get the work done.”

Unfortunately, the slowdown in the economy had a direct impact on regional construction, reducing the previously anticipated hiring opportunities. However, recognizing that both the economy and construction projects would return in force, the SWORWIB redirected its energies toward building a workforce capable of meeting those needs as older workers retired from the industry.

The SWORWIB spent the year forging relationships, delineating career pathways and laying the foundation to develop a skilled workforce in construction—with women and African-Americans specifically targeted.

**Policy established**

First, the SWORWIB established a Construction Workforce Policy Committee, charged with creating a pathway to pre-qualify candidates based on needs identified by potential employers. While committee members built relationships with employers and apprenticeship training programs, the SuperJobs Center evaluated applicants. Job seekers were referred to either union or non-union apprenticeship training programs to prepare for future construction openings.

Many people interested in the construction industry who have no experience often need additional job readiness training prior to entering the apprenticeship programs, observes Patricia Bready, Economic Inclusion Consultant for The Banks and Queen City Tower.

“The SuperJobs Center provides a vital link to job readiness services that lead into preparing a trained workforce to support the large building projects in Hamilton County,” she says. “Because—even before the economic downturn—the industry lost two workers to retirement for every new worker entering the field. The SuperJobs Center helps job seekers see that even though the jobs are not here today, they can prepare and then apply to enter an apprenticeship training program that will put them in an ideal position once the jobs return.”

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Emerging workforce focus

The SWORWIB leadership worked with the Emerging Workforce Development Council (EWDC) to form the Construction Pathway Task Group to describe the construction career opportunities open to young adults in or out of high school and college.

“One of our goals was to rebuild the construction pathway to meet the needs of traditional and non-traditional students,” explains Joseph Hummel, Executive Director of Allied Construction and chairman of the construction cluster of the EWDC. “We did a gap analysis, and found very limited initiatives for kids younger than high-school age to be exposed to opportunities in the construction industry. We also are working to provide assistance to young adults of high school age and older with soft skills training and other special needs they may have, such as childcare and transportation.”

To extend the construction pathway into middle schools, the SWORWIB collaborated with the Spirit of Construction Foundation to develop a Middle School Construction Outreach program. Anne Mitchell, a communications and public relations professional with a construction background, joined SWORWIB in March 2009 to lead the initiative. She researched the learning styles of the age group, and developed a program that was test-marketed to Boys and Girls Clubs in Greater Cincinnati over the summer.

The program’s messages are simple: Stay in school, succeed in math, science, and language classes, and consider all the options for a career in construction—a career with both a legacy and a future.

“Construction has a proud tradition of building something that lasts for generations,” Mitchell explains. “With the advent of green building, construction is also looking to the future. Our goal is to engage these younger students early on, and increase the pipeline of workers who will meet the industry’s employment needs.”

“The SWORWIB has been a critical partner to everything that GCWN is doing, particularly in construction training programs,” says Janice Urbanik, Director of Construction Career Pathway at GCWN.

The two organizations also have collaborated on a variety of state and federal grant applications, which are expected to go into effect next fiscal year. The State of Ohio’s Constructing Futures grant is anticipated to fund construction pre-apprenticeship programs of the Community Action Agency, Easter Seals Work Resource Center and other regional organizations.

“This state grant is geared to enhance each of those construction skills education and training programs for young people, as well as enhance the coordination between them,” explains Urbanik.

Additionally, SWORWIB and GCWN developed grant proposals for the U.S. Department of Labor to prepare low-income, unemployed, dislocated workers, women, and minorities for jobs in a green career. The Energy Training Partnership and Pathways Out of Poverty grants are expected to be awarded and implemented next year.
In 2006, the leaders of the Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board submitted a proposal to the Greater Cincinnati Foundation to evaluate the capacity and effectiveness of employment and training programs in the region, with the goal of improving the delivery of services in workforce development. In 2008, the project was reworked to become the Measurement and Continuous Improvement Initiative for the SWORWIB. The goal was to create and maintain a continuous improvement environment for the SWORWIB, and create stronger bonds among regional workforce development organizations that would allow for more accurate measurement of performance among all.

A first step was to reconvene the organizations that had completed what is known as a “Logic Model” for workforce development. The group concluded that while the Logic Model helped in planning, assessing and predicting, a common set of definitions would truly benefit the regions’ providers.

The Logic Model was then revised to include guiding questions and indicators for improvement. All Requests for Proposals initiated by the SWORWIB now require that organizations submitting bids include a completed Logic Model with information about target groups, processes, and projected outcomes. The completed Logic Models support organizations to assess their own performance and set goals.

The Common Terms/Common Definitions Roundtable discussions then commenced. These focused on the region’s critical terms and their definitions. Those contributing to these conversations provided thoughtful insight which led the group to a final list of basic terminology that should streamline processes and encourage deeper collaboration.

Integral to the SWORWIB’s Continuous Improvement Initiative was improving our website. The www.SuperJobs.com website was redesigned in March 2009, while a youth subsection of the website was launched in June 2009 to improve outreach to youth in the region and connect to other providers who serve this population. A regularly updated press release section now has the latest news from the SWORWIB and the SuperJobs Center.

The SWORWIB’s Performance Dashboard is also on the website with the latest outcomes measurement information from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. (See the Dashboard Data sidebar at right.)

This project also led to the formation of the Workforce Partners Council comprised of partners from the SWORWIB, the Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network, and the United Way of Greater Cincinnati. The Workforce Partners Council has coordinated staff development and grant development efforts that have resulted in new resources in the community and unique training opportunities featured elsewhere in the Annual Report.

To learn more, please visit www.SuperJobs.com and click on Special Initiatives. That will take you to Measurement and Continuous Improvement, where you can find out more about Common Terms, the Logic Model, and the latest outcomes on our Performance Dashboard.
Since 2006, the SWORWIB has led the way when it comes to tracking clients and measuring results at its one-stop, the SuperJobs Center. This is largely due to G*Stars, the sophisticated yet easy-to-use Web-based application that allows for quick data reporting.

Now, two other workforce partners are joining with SWORWIB in adopting G*Stars. The result, says Sherry Kelley Marshall, President/CEO, will be an unprecedented measurement of data that will allow Greater Cincinnati to know the results of workforce efforts across the region, not just from the SuperJobs Center.

Partnering with the SWORWIB are the United Way of Greater Cincinnati and the Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network (GCWN). United Way tested the approach in a pilot project with G*Stars, and the GCWN has already embraced it for its grant reporting purposes.

“We are seriously looking at a regional reporting system that would align and track workforce efforts of United Way, the SWORWIB and the GCWN. The G*Stars system is the database we are considering,” says Lucy Crane, Manager of Community Impact at United Way. “We are very hopeful that we can get a regional system operational for the coming year.”

G*Stars, a product of American Government Services, is a client-tracking system as compared to the traditional case-management system used by county and state agencies. That means it can track customers from the moment they walk into the one-stop and swipe their card at a terminal to the time they find a job. The customers can use G*Stars to easily obtain and organize the tools that are important to them in their job search, while WIBs can track how effectively dollars are being spent.

“The use of G*Stars allows the organization and its partners to collect, maintain and extract key customer information that informs the community about who is being served by the SWORWIB partnership for employment services,” explains Marshall. “By tracking our collaborative efforts and keeping our attention on performance expectations through solid measurement, SWORWIB maximizes the public investment and produces more results for more people.”

System’s use expands regionally

Workforce One, the public workforce development system in Butler, Clermont and Warren Counties, recently installed G*Stars in its three one-stops.

“As we integrate the system into our operations, we are optimistic that G*Stars will track data that will allow our Workforce Investment Board and one-stop operators to better manage our services and meet customer demand,” says Jeff Weber, Executive Director. “It will also streamline our performance reporting process to state and federal workforce agencies. Ultimately, G*Stars will allow for better management of the larger, multi-state workforce region, thereby benefiting employers and job seekers alike.”

Ross Meyer, Executive Director of the GCWF, notes that getting all workforce-related agencies onto a common reporting system would likely be the first such effort in the country. At the same time, he says, “it will be powerful for the region to use that data to make our case for increased investment in workforce development in our region.”

This progress in collecting and reporting common measures regionwide was the vision of SWORWIB leaders Pete Strange of Messer, Michael Conner of Frisch’s Restaurants and David Phillips of Cincinnati Works, supported by a grant from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation.

Their leadership and commitment to the community are much appreciated by Marshall, who notes that they all sparked the shared measurement and continuous improvement effort that the region’s workforce partners are now embracing together.
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