CantonRep.com | THE REPOSITORY

Commentary: Let's extend In-Demand Jobs Week to In-Demand Jobs Year

Para Jones Special to the Canton Repository
Published 4:55 a.m. ET May 7, 2021

At the April meeting of the Governor's Executive Workforce Board, Gov. Mike DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted challenged us to extend In-Demand Jobs Week (May 3-7) to In-Demand Jobs Year.

Why? Lt. Gov. Husted shared that there are 180,773 unfilled jobs in Ohio, and 92,886 of those jobs pay $50,000 or more per year. Jennifer Meek-Eels, executive director of Ohio Means Jobs (OMJ), cited 7,354 unfilled jobs in Stark and Tuscarawas counties.

The Governor's Executive Workforce Board is comprised of innovative business, education and workforce leaders across Ohio focused on in-demand, quality wage jobs that empower Ohioans and give our state a strategic economic advantage.

That focus is shared by Stark State College and other Strengthening Stark partners, including employers/companies; educators; OMJ Stark/Tuscarawas; federal, state and local funders; workforce agencies; community and social service agencies. Our priorities include increasing enrollment in programs that lead to in-demand careers; retraining and up-skilling incumbent workers; and educating and training disconnected and/or new workers.

Across Ohio and here in Stark County, we are working to fill in-demand jobs with quality, low- or no-cost education and training programs for people of all ages. Employers are working with schools, community colleges, universities and workforce organizations to attract, retain, develop and advance employees. Lt. Gov. Husted urges Ohioans of all ages to gain skills, credentials, certificates and degrees for better jobs and more prosperous futures by:

> Earning a debt-free college credential, certificate or degree. You can begin and complete college debt-free through Learn to Earn programs. Earn an industry-recognized credential and a pathway to a rewarding career, work and continue your education (maybe with tuition reimbursement from your employer). Learn to Earn is a smart, debt-free pathway to education and career advancement.
>
> Earning college credit while in high school with College Credit Plus (CCP). In the 2019-20 academic year, CCP students in Ohio earned 969 certificates and 2,666 associate's degrees while they were still in high school, at no cost. According to Stark Education Partnership (SEP), in 2020, 3,369 Stark County high school graduates earned three or more college credits. For more information, please contact your local high school.
>
> Graduating from high school career-ready with an industry-recognized credential. With an industry-recognized credential, students can work in good-paying jobs while attending college. According to SEP, 939 high school students earned industry-recognized credentials in 2020.
>
> Starting at a community college, and easily turning a two-year degree into a bachelor's degree. During the 2020-21 academic year, tuition at an Ohio community college (including Stark State) was around $5,000, which makes community colleges free for students who qualify for full PELL. Stark State student Victoria Metheny shares her debt-free college pathway with Lt. Gov. Husted at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsXNTBwV0qc.
>
> Earning credentials or a degree while you work. Thanks to programs like TechCred (www.techcred.ohio.gov), employers can help employees gain skills, credentials and degrees.

Take advantage of the many opportunities to learn and earn, connect to education and employment and create a better future.

Whether you are a 2021 high school graduate, working, unemployed and/or seeking career advancement, Strengthening Stark and our partners can help. Contact us today at InDemandJobs@starkstate.edu to put Strengthening Stark and our partners to work for you.

Stark State College President Para M. Jones serves on the Governor's Executive Workforce Board and is a member of the Governance and Workforce and Talent Committees of Strengthening Stark.