

SLATE Update

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. LOUIS AGENCY ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT



Francis G. Slay, Mayor
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Spring 2010

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR What the NGCC means for you

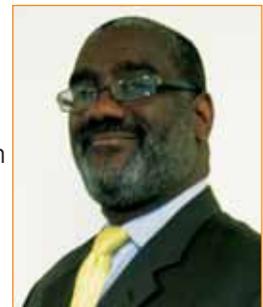
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As we all know, some major changes are in store for SLATE in the months and years to come. The statewide Next Generation Career Centers initiative will change the way we do business, decreasing our response time and increasing our flexibility. Inside this issue of *SLATE Update*, you will find additional information about the Next Generation and what it means for you.

I understand that such a momentous transformation can be intimidating and a cause for concern. I would like to make three points that might address any misgivings. First, by looking at and talking to Workforce Investment Boards and career centers in other states, we have plenty of evidence that the process can work, will improve efficiency, and will give us the ability to effectively serve more customers. Second, the Next Generation Career Centers offer every SLATE staff member the invaluable opportunity to leave behind your comfort zone, learn new skills, and see how the various teams and departments

work together. Finally, as the Planning Committee has made clear, your input is a vital part of the process. Never hesitate to let me know, verbally or in writing, if you see any way to overcome challenges or make further improvements.



Michael K. Holmes,
Executive Director

Now is the time for the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment to be forward-looking. While the transition will have both ups and downs, we should all be keeping in mind the eventual outcome: a stronger SLATE better positioned to serve our customers and connect job-seekers with the skills, education and employment they want and need.

Respectfully yours,

SUMMER JOBS BILL MOVES TO SENATE



An additional \$600 million in funding for DOL summer youth employment programs is included in bill HR 4899, the Disaster Relief and Summer Jobs Act of 2010, which passed the House of Representatives in March and has been received by the Senate.

SLATE Update is the quarterly newsletter produced by the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) for its staff, friends and partners



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ST. LOUIS WIB CHAIR JEFF SEROCKE WINS AWARD

Mr. Jeff Serocke, Chairman of the St. Louis Workforce Investment Board, received the 2009 Human Resources Professional of the Year award on February 18, 2010 from the St. Louis Area Hotel Association (SLAHA).

Mr. Serocke, the Market Director of Human Resources for the Renaissance Grand & Suites Hotel and the St. Louis Airport Marriott Hotel, has worked for Marriott International for over 27 years, the last 18 in Human Resources. Mr. Serocke has been a member of the local Workforce Investment Board for over 9 years, and personally expressed his appreciation to SLATE Executive Director Michael Holmes for his contribution of a letter of support to SLAHA's award committee.



Jeff Serocke

The St. Louis Area Hotel Association, known as the "Voice of Hospitality" since its establishment in 1938, is dedicated to fostering networking between hotel properties in the Greater St. Louis area.

HAITI RELIEF DAYS AT SLATE

Every Friday in the month of February, a number of SLATE staff from all Career Centers contributed generous gifts towards relief efforts in Haiti. A grand total of \$687 was donated to Red Cross International and is reserved to assist the millions affected by the Port-au-Prince earthquake. Thanks to everyone who gave in order to ease the suffering caused by one of the greatest natural disasters in recorded history.



Thank you!

A round of applause goes to the Youth Services Department for taking photos and ensuring that all staff members at SLATE-Downtown and SLATE-Central West End have the appropriate ID badges for security purposes.



THINK OUTSIDE PROVIDES AN OUTDOOR SUMMER EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE TO YOUTH



This summer, Missouri youth will have the opportunity to gain valuable work experience for future careers and be part of a “green” initiative through the Think Outside program. Funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the program will employ over 1,000 youth ages 17-24 in 85 state parks and historic sites, and at state park central and district offices. Youth will work about 240 hours during the length of the program which runs from May 1-September 30. Further information can be found at SLATE’s homepage www.stlworks.com.

SLATE PLAYS ROLE IN THE 2010 U.S. CENSUS

 Every decade, the data collected by the U.S. Census helps determine how over \$400 billion of federal funding is spent each year on hospitals, schools, job training centers and public works. It also plays a vital role in our political process and in social and other types of research.

Since December, SLATE has provided space for Census recruitment, training and testing. As of the end of March, an estimated 700 potential census takers have been tested at SLATE. Census staff training will take place during the last week of April and first week of May.

These individuals represent a small but significant portion of the hundreds of thousands of census takers needed nationwide to help locate households and conduct brief personal interviews. SLATE is proud to partner with the 2010 Census to help ensure an accurate and fair count of residents in the City of St. Louis and surrounding areas.

SLATE PARTICIPATES IN COMMUNITY OUTREACH

On March 2, 2010, Jim Donnelly and Gretchen Vander Meulen joined five other dedicated Missouri Career Center staff from around the St. Louis Metropolitan area to answer job seeker calls and online chats non-stop from 5:00 am to 10:00 am. Each of them lent a sympathetic ear to a wide spectrum of unemployed and underemployed people while providing information about the many services that are offered at Missouri Career Centers. Fox Channel 2 taped many live shots of staff members manning the phone banks and conducted a number of brief interviews, some of which were aired later that day.

Earlier this year, SLATE staff participated in KMOV Channel 4’s on-line web chat, held from February 16th through the 18th. Ken Riddick, Cheryl Jones and Sonya Bailey from SLATE-Downtown volunteered to share their time and expertise. Together, they fielded hundreds of inquiries on employment, training and job market issues. Harnessing the power of the internet is one more way for SLATE to reach and help our customers, many of whom are facing substantial challenges in their professional and personal lives.

Many SLATE staff interact with individuals facing substantial challenges in their professional and personal lives every day—but as our volunteers found out it becomes very immediate indeed when phones ring over and over, or in-boxes rapidly fill up. One emailed note contained a wise admonition: “Be kinder than necessary—because everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle.”

*“Be kinder than necessary —
because everyone you meet is
fighting some kind of battle.”*



NGCC TEAMS MANAGERS:
WELCOME TEAM
 Lynette White/Kenneth White
SKILLS & JOBS TEAM
 Stacey Fowler/Wanda Summers
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
 Bonnie Mireles

Feature Story

SLATE'S NEXT GENERATION CHANGE-OVER

SLATE is in the midst of one of the most far-reaching transformations in our agency's history. Planning for, and implementation of, the Next Generation Career Centers (NGCC) initiative in the City of St. Louis is well underway in order to meet the Missouri Department of Workforce Development's target date of July 1, 2010.

As everyone at SLATE knows, the past 18 months have been our busiest ever. With a local unemployment rate over 11%, limited staff and resources, and certain outmoded procedures, it became clear that change was needed. The NGCC is a comprehensive way to do more with less, keep pace with demand and increase the number of customers served without sacrificing quality of service.

The new Integrated Services Model will include a number of frontline

functional teams (listed above) to provide a direct and seamless experience, or Robust Product Box, to each and every customer SLATE serves.

SLATE's new organizational chart will cut across programmatic lines - staff will no longer operate under the traditional case management system. Customers will be referred to one of the teams listed above depending on their immediate needs, but all teams will have access to the information to guide an individual along a skill or job placement track. SLATE will be ready to provide cross-training by April, and the process is first and foremost designed to be practical. Staff will not be expected to become experts in every subject, but after completing cross-training will have the working knowledge needed to cover any temporary service gaps.

Another benefit NGCC will bring is improved data capture of SLATE's customers. Everyone who walks through our doors will enroll in one of three ways. Customers can:

- Self-enroll at www.MissouriCareerSource.com (many customers already do this but now they will be captured);
- Be entered into Toolbox for WIA services by Welcome Team staff;
- Be provided with the ability to register themselves at SLATE (again, at www.MissouriCareerSource.com).

In this way, the number of customers SLATE serves and the many types of services we provide will be accurately tracked, giving a truer picture of our total impact and substantially contributing to long-term planning. It will also assist SLATE in the ongoing process of renegotiating with the state and the Department of Labor for waivers related to WIA performance goals.

The Business Development department will likewise undergo substantial changes as a result of NGCC, not only working closely with area businesses, but acting as a liaison with the Jobs Team in order to find quality matches for

EXPECT SUCCESS!

job seekers. Four SLATE staff will be assigned primarily to business outreach duties, spending most of their time off-site facilitating job fairs, giving presentations, and managing corporate job order requests. Business Developers will continue to handle pre-screening and other HR-type duties, with a special focus on the small business community. "More than ever, we will concentrate on helping small businesses", notes Bonnie Mireles, Business Development Manager. "They really need the resources we can provide in order to survive in the current economy."

By the end of April, both SLATE Career Center – Downtown and SLATE Career Center – Central West End will be prepared to implement a test pilot walk-through of all NGCC procedures (tentatively scheduled for May 19th). During this process, the Next Generation Planning Committee encourages feedback from all SLATE staff. Committee Chair Donny Carroll stated, "This is definitely not a top-down approach. We want and need input from the staff affected by these changes – any and all concerns and recommendations for improvement are welcome."

Anyone with questions about SLATE's transition to the Next Generation Career Center should contact their manager or any member of the NGCC Planning Committee.

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Ruthie Braden, 68, applied for unemployment at SLATE in November 2009, and from there she began a project that was cut short many years ago. When told that GED classes were available at City Hall West, her interest was engaged – Ruthie wanted to know when and where. Decades ago, Ruthie had dropped out of high school in her sophomore year. She always had the intention to return, but life intervened – Ruthie had married and raised three children.

Mrs. Braden, who can always be recognized not only by her seniority, but by her smile, her hugs and her compassion for others, has picked up her education where she left off. SLATE's GED Lab served as a gateway, providing her with the advice, tools and encouragement she needs to attain her high school diploma. "There is no way I can go back and undo what I did" she told SLATE program specialist Mariam Whitford, "but education is essential...

I am grateful to have the opportunity to experience school again."

Ruthie has noticed a number of drastic changes in today's school environment: for example, the pervasive use of technology, which she feels can limit important human interactions, and the larger class sizes. She also believes she sends a strong message to her younger classmates: "If I can do it, they can, too." What's more, she finds her fellow pupils to be "respectful and kind; we are all here for one common goal. They inspire me!" She goes on to say that education is the one resource that can take anyone wherever they want to go.

To sum up her experience, Ruthie notes that the GED program gives "people in the community hope, and hope is what is needed in order to ensure success. This program is one of the highlights of my day." Ruthie Braden is scheduled to take her GED examination in April. Above all, she wants people to know that "Your dreams are attainable; you must persevere – just don't quit!"



“Your dreams are attainable; you must persevere – just don't quit!”

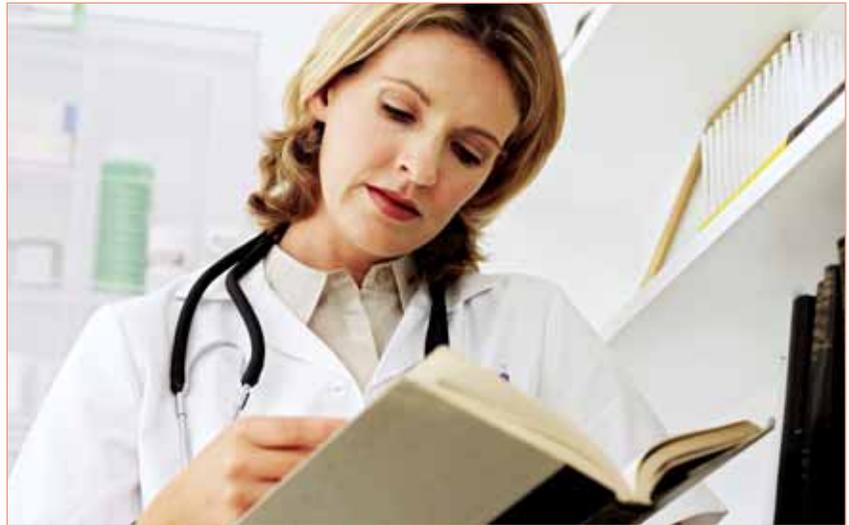
(continued from pg. 5)

In order to plan forward and anticipate any challenges ahead, SLATE department heads have been cooperating with the WorkOne Center in Fort Wayne, Indiana. WorkOne is a WIA-funded partner agency of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. Fort Wayne itself, in Allen County, has much in common with the St. Louis area: an urban population of over 250,000, a location near multiple waterways, and an economy based on manufacturing, education, insurance, health care, logistics and defense.

Over two years ago, WorkOne implemented an integrated services model similar in many respects to NGCC. As there is no substitute for practical working knowledge, SLATE has been consulting closely with Kathleen Randolph, Executive Director of the Allen County WorkOne Center. Al-

though perfectly willing to admit that the transition process was not without its difficulties, Ms. Randolph has been consistently impressed by the constant improvement in customer service she has seen since the new model was im-

plemented. She has been giving specific advice on how her Center implemented new customer assessment and tracking procedures, and sees the fact that SLATE is on the same path as WorkOne was



a few years ago as an encouraging sign that NGCC is on the path to successful implementation.

OJT FOR 600 FORMER EMPLOYEES OF PFIZER

Last year, pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc. announced its plan to reorganize and consolidate its nationwide operations. Pfizer's Chesterfield Village Research Center was among the sites affected, and was sold back to original owner Monsanto Company. As a result, 600 Pfizer workers were laid off from the facility.

This potentially severe blow to the region's bio-medical industry required rapid action between Pfizer and the public workforce system. Currently, SLATE is working with the St. Louis County Workforce Investment Board and Right Management (handling all communications and outplacement on behalf of Pfizer) to transition as many former Pfizer staff as possible into appropriate local positions.

St. Louis based Sigma-Aldrich, formed through a merger in 1975,

is a leading life science and high technology company. Sigma-Aldrich has expressed a desire to hire as many as 31 former Pfizer staff to fill a variety of roles from marketing to research. SLATE's Business Development department is consulting closely with a number of other major potential employers in the bio-tech and medical research fields.

Under the Workforce Investment Act, each Pfizer worker is eligible to receive On-the-Job Training (OJT). This incentive gives employers the opportunity to receive a temporary federally funded subsidy for 50% of all wages in the first six months of employment for each dislocated worker they hire.

In the months ahead, SLATE will continue to play a key role in the transition of workers from Pfizer to other employers in and around St. Louis. A special National Emergency Grant (NEG) has already been applied for. If approved, it will provide additional funds for OJT and entrepreneurial start-ups.

SLATE MISSOURI CAREER CENTERS RENAMED
SLATE's two primary locations (on Market and Olive) are now renamed as SLATE Missouri Career Center - Downtown and SLATE Missouri Career Center - Central West End.

SLATE STAFF & PARTNERS

AMERICORPS CAREER CORPS AT SLATE

For 15 years, AmeriCorps-St. Louis, which was established under the Corporation for National and Community Service, has met the needs in the community through its Education Corps and Emergency Response Team programs. This year, the organization recognized unemployment as a vital issue in the community. In September 2009, it launched The Career Corps to place volunteers in career centers throughout Missouri.

A total of 9 AmeriCorps Members add value to SLATE services, regularly receiving praise from our customers. The AmeriCorps team has been instrumental in providing weekly orientations and computer workshops, taking appointments and offering clients individualized, one-on-one computer and resume assistance. They have also taken the initiative in planning and organizing two important upcoming events (right).

Not shown: Robert Batterson, Jennifer Blando, John T. Hinton at SLATE Missouri Career Center - Central West End



LEFT (left to right) Brittany Ledbetter, Al Schuster, Ashley Mastandrea at SLATE Missouri Career Center - Downtown

BELOW (left to right) Ben Oberg, Tom Vollman, Kelly Chase at SLATE Missouri Career Center - REOS



What: Healthcare Career Event

When: April 30, 2010
9 a.m. to noon for Clinical Staff
1 to 4 p.m. for Non-Clinical Staff

Where: SLATE Missouri CareerCenter - Central West End

Organizers: The City of St. Louis, AmeriCorps St. Louis, SLATE Missouri Career Center

Why Attend: Prominent medical organizations from the St. Louis Metro area will answer questions about employment in the healthcare industry, inform about current open positions, discuss healthcare career options

Details: Event is primarily targeted to those losing positions at Forest Park Hospital due to the merger with Alexian Bros. Hospital.

What: Health & Wellness Event

When: June 7, 2010
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Where: SLATE Missouri Career Center - Downtown

Organizers: AmeriCorps St. Louis, SLATE Missouri Career Center

Why Attend: The event will raise awareness about maintaining mental and physical health during periods of unemployment, distribute wellness information specific to unemployed persons, offer basic medical screenings for unemployed individuals and increase SLATE clients' abilities to find and maintain employment.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH
AT SLATE: KEYNOTE
SPEAKER SERIES

SLATE premiered the Black History Celebration Keynote Speaker Series in February 2010. Three special guest speakers were invited to present on topics related to African-American social issues, history and culture. All three presentations were free and open to anyone who works at City Hall West. The presenters were:



Antoinette D. Hayes Triplett delivers a compassionate presentation on her efforts to eradicate homelessness in the City of St. Louis



Bernie Hayes, a media professor at Webster University and KWMU's first African-American news director, took the podium on February 4. Mr. Hayes made his opinions

known on the continuing existence of stereotypes of African-Americans in the media, promoted an in-depth discussion, and graciously accepted a special gift from SLATE Executive Director Michael K. Holmes.



Donnell Smith of Donnell Smith & Associates, LLC, is an attorney and among several other positions serves as Municipal Judge for the City of Greendale. On February 10,

he provided a wealth of information on the realities of practicing law, and a history of African Americans in the legal profession.

Closing out the Speaker Series on February 24, Antoinette D. Hayes Triplett presented her perspective on the issues surrounding the multi-racial problem of homelessness in St. Louis. Ms. Triplett has been the Manager of the Homeless Services Division in the City of St. Louis Department of Human Services since 2001.

The first Keynote Speaker Series not only presented overlooked information and promoted lively debate, it gave everyone who attended

FORUM ON RACE
RELATIONS

Sonya A. Bailey, a SLATE-Downtown Career Specialist, hosted a forum at City Hall West on February 25, entitled "How do race relations affect employment?". Four guest panelists, Sheryl Rose of the Human Rights Commission, Reena Hajat from Diversity Awareness Partnership, Sylvia Donaldson, Training Manager from the City of St. Louis and Richard "Onion" Horton of KSLG 1380 AM, attended a thought-provoking group discussion.

food for thought. The Black History Celebration will hopefully become an annual tradition at SLATE.