

SLATE Update

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



Francis G. Slay, Mayor



Summer 2011 Issue

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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

ST. LOUIS AGENCY ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT
SLATE
MISSOURI CAREER CENTER
DOWNTOWN • CENTRAL WEST END

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By Michael K. Holmes – SLATE's downtown location was visited recently by *America Not Working*, an effort by journalist and documentarian D.W. Gibson, among others, to gather interviews from dislocated workers across the nation who have been affected by the economic downturn. SLATE was one of several destinations in St. Louis during their time here. On his blog, Mr. Gibson notes that the City of St. Louis "is filled with stories of lost jobs. This city is filled with survivors."

Of course, these stories are nothing new to the dedicated staff at SLATE. We hear them every day.

Between the recent budget cutbacks we have suffered and persistent fears of a double-dip recession, I know it can be difficult to remain positive and upbeat with our customers. But they really do rely on us to do this. Many of them, having lost their livelihood, are in uncharted waters. They are in danger of losing their homes. They are scared and understandably upset. They look to SLATE to help them survive this difficult period.

As with past issues, this edition of *SLATE Update* provides a sampling of the many ways we help. It offers proof positive that jobs are out there. And with our help and guidance, with persistence and patience, our customers can not only survive, but eventually thrive.

Sincerely yours,

"SLATE gave me hope."

~STLWORKS.COM VISITOR



SENATOR MCCASKILL'S PRESS CONFERENCE AT SLATE

SLATE's Downtown location was honored to welcome an exceptionally special guest on Friday, August 12, 2011. Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) concluded a tour of manufacturing facilities by holding a press conference outside Executive Director Michael Holmes' office.

Senator McCaskill spent a week visiting communities across Missouri, talking to businesses and discussing their need for trained workers. At the press conference, the Senator reiterated her belief that reform of fair trade policies will be critical to the success and growth of our nation's manufacturing base.

Senator McCaskill also made a special note to highlight the role played by our organization in meeting the needs of nearby businesses. "SLATE is a success story – they work with local companies to

make sure they get skilled workers. Without them, companies are left waiting for the labor they need, and dislocated workers are waiting to start employment," McCaskill said.

In a question and answer session with local members of the press, the Senator pointed out that there are many instances of redundancy in the way today's federal job training programs are administered. She is in favor of eliminating this kind of duplication of effort, but noted that "we should be cutting the redundant programs at the Federal level, not local community organizations [such as SLATE]." In particular, Claire McCaskill sees room for improvement in the overlapping services offered to veterans, hoping to eliminate duplication and confusion in this area and harness the valuable skills of returning servicemen and women. Before the press conference, Senator McCaskill was able to tour SLATE's downtown

office with Executive Director Michael Holmes, Deputy Director Kelley Bernardi, Site Manager Donny Carroll, and Executive Director of the St. Louis County Division of Workforce Development, Gene Gorden. The leadership, Workforce Investment Board members and staff present sincerely appreciated the unexpected but gratifying acknowledgement of the critical role played by SLATE and similar workforce development agencies by Senator Claire McCaskill.

GRADUATE! ST. LOUIS INCREASES REGIONAL COLLEGE ATTAINMENT LEVEL AND JOB PLACEMENT

Businesses consistently rate access to skilled and educated workers as a deciding factor in both relocation and expansion. However, St. Louis area businesses indicate that the St. Louis workforce is not "work ready": fully two-thirds of the employers surveyed by the St. Louis Community College said it was difficult to find qualified workers to fill vacancies in their offices, shops and factories. Individuals without a college degree find it more difficult to gain entry to well-paying careers, while an educated workforce helps the greater St. Louis area attract new businesses and prosper economically.

In order to address this need, SLATE worked closely with community colleges, Career Centers



Senator McCaskill: SLATE plays an important economic role

and Workforce Investment Boards across the region, and the RCGA, to successfully apply for a \$4.4 million jobs training grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL).

A groundbreaking initiative, the *Graduate! St. Louis Workforce Consortium* was established to increase the work readiness of dislocated and unemployed area workers, whether through a two-year degree, certification or license. The project focuses

on three high-growth career areas - Healthcare, Information Technology (IT), and Green Industries.

One year into the project, the Consortium has delivered its first results – out of 300 graduates, more than half have already found employment, primarily in the healthcare industry. This is a promising result, considering the fact that the current rate of unemployed workers to job openings in St. Louis is 6.9 to 1, according to the St. Louis Community College. At the end of its 3-year life, the Consortium projects that a total of 2,250 will receive degrees or certificates of value in the three focus areas.

“Those who took their time to go through a program, especially in the area of healthcare, have a much better chance to find employment even in today’s tough economy,” said Tom Jones, the Graduate! St. Louis Program Manager.



SLATE, on behalf of the Graduate! St. Louis Consortium, is developing a central web portal with links to all participating colleges and career centers. After the planned completion date in early September, Jones predicts further success: “The people have to have ways to access the program information. Right now, the word of mouth is doing a little but it doesn’t help us to do as much as it needs to do.”

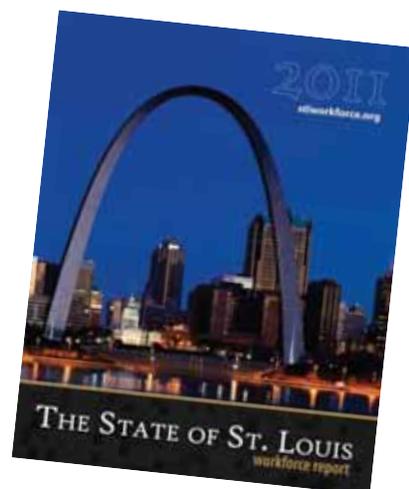
SLATE REPRESENTED AT 3RD ANNUAL STATE OF THE ST. LOUIS WORKFORCE

The 2011 State of the St. Louis Workforce: Moving Forward seminar took place on August 10 at the Missouri Botanical Garden. The event was organized by the St. Louis Business Journal for the third consecutive year.

SLATE Executive Director Michael K. Holmes joined a panel of 13 regional leaders representing education, businesses and workforce development to discuss the findings of the 2011 State of St. Louis Workforce Report. The report was developed by the St. Louis Community College in partnership with local Workforce Investment Boards, Missouri Career Centers, Southwestern Illinois WorkNet Centers, Go! Network, BounceBack St. Louis,

and the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC). Sonal Haté, MERIC’s Workforce Research Manager, presented findings that indicate the gap between the unemployment rate and the number of job openings is closing, albeit gradually.

Ellen Sherberg, Publisher of the St. Louis Business Journal, then moderated a panel discussion with more than 400 in attendance. As in past years, a wide range of topics was discussed, and the conversation moved beyond the specific skills needed to transition dislocated workers to new career opportunities. In particular, it was observed that many job seekers lack critical listening, communication, work discipline and other ‘soft’ skills necessary to succeed in today’s work environment. Panelists also discussed the direct link between our workforce and the economic growth of the region. Michael Holmes observed: “St. Louis has to compete – when major companies are looking to expand or relocate, we are seeing that they pass over





Panelists at the State of St. Louis Workforce Seminar

our area because our workforce doesn't have the skills or education they are looking for. As a community, we have to do better."

Among the panelists were Julie Gibson, Director of the Missouri Division of Workforce Development and Kurt Gerstner, Lead of Application Modernization COE at Unisys. Rod Nunn, Vice Chancellor for Workforce and Community Development at St. Louis Community College, was also present to facilitate the discussion.

The 2011 State of St. Louis Workforce Report distributed at the seminar encompasses the entire bi-state St. Louis Metropolitan Area (MSA), with a total population of over 2.8 million. Over 1,200 employers and 400 displaced workers from across the region were surveyed. The Report can be downloaded for free at stlworkforce.org.

EXTENDED OJT GRANT WILL HELP DISLOCATED WORKERS

On-The-Job Training (OJT) reimburses a hiring business up to 50% of a new hire's wages over a four to 26 week period that results in full-time permanent employment. Following the success of last year's OJT program in Missouri, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) extended the program by awarding over \$700,000 for OJT (including an OJT National Emergency Grant) to the Missouri Division of Workforce Development (DWD) in July 2011. Of this total, SLATE, the City of St. Louis' workforce development agency, received \$300,000 to continue to enable local businesses to provide training and job opportunities for laid-off workers throughout the region.

OJT works well for companies of any size. "We have developed strong relationships with very large bioscience companies, as well as very small startup companies," said Bonnie Mireles, Manager of Business Development at the SLATE Missouri Career Centers. "Since our regular training funds have been reduced and with the economy the way it is right now, OJT is the most appropriate method of making sure that we assist quality candidates in finding employment and that we help businesses with the extraordinary training costs involved with hiring a new employee, as well as to increase the retention of these well-trained employees," Mireles added.

According to Mireles, OJT funds are different from OJT NEG funds – they don't have a wage cap and can be used to place individuals into higher paying positions. Among the industries that benefited from OJT last year was biotech. Mireles said that SLATE used OJT funds to train and find employment for scientists and research developers that had been laid off from Pfizer and Monsanto.

Other industries that have had great success with OJT were healthcare, warehousing and transportation.



"We have qualified candidates for many local industries. We would love to create more OJT opportunities for Information Technology (IT) individuals that have years of experience and are highly skilled," said Mireles.

EXPECT SUCCESS!

Renovating The “Glass Ceiling”

Tonya Feltman
(left) and Armand
Paulet on the
roof of America’s
Center

Roofing workers not only install various types of material high above street level, they also evaluate, repair and safely remove existing roofs and perform waterproofing on foundations, ponds and storage tanks. These highly skilled and trained craftsmen ensure that commercial and residential roofs, so vital to personal safety and property protection, perform as they were meant to.

As in many building trades, roofers nationwide are predominately male. But, at least here in the St. Louis area, that is beginning to change. Tonya Feltman, a St. Louis City resident who registered at SLATE, has been working hard renovating the expansive roof of America’s Center in downtown St. Louis, one of 18 roofers employed on this project by Bartch Roofing Company, Inc.

“Roofing is not for everyone and the attrition rate is high among men”, says Armand Paulet, SLATE’s Construction Trades Liaison. “But when she came to me, Tonya had some experience with housing rehab and took to it very quickly. It was a good match.” Not long after meeting Tonya, Armand introduced her to Trey Downing, Project Manager at Bartch Roofing Co. Inc. After an interview at the company’s Bridgeton headquarters, Trey was pleased to extend a Letter of Intent to hire Tonya, which she presented to Dan Knight, the Apprentice Coordinator for Roofers Local No. 2. As an apprentice, she was assigned to Bartch’s America’s Center project in December 2010.

Bartch Roofing Co. has over 60 total employees and has served the St. Louis metropolitan area

for over 30 years. President Dennis Bartch agrees that diversity in his workforce is a positive. “We look forward to employing her skills on a variety of projects and hope to see her through to becoming a journeyman,” he states.

All Bartch roofers are members of Roofers Local No. 2, with a jurisdiction that covers St. Louis, Western and Southwestern Illinois and Eastern Missouri. Apprentice roofers, like Tonya, earn over \$17.00 per hour plus union benefits to start. They must complete 4,500 hours of on-the-job and classroom training in order to earn a Journeyman’s Certification.

Bartch Roofing initially contacted SLATE specifically to find a woman applicant, in order to fully comply with Ordinance

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68412. This ordinance, passed by the City of St. Louis Board of Alderman in 2009, specifies that for every construction contract within the City limits of \$1 million or more, at least 25% of all labor hours must be attributed to minorities, 20% to City residents, 15% to apprentices and 5% to women.

Tonya Feltman, formerly unemployed, has recently finished her work on America's Center, but is looking forward to future projects on some of the other large and impressive structures in St. Louis. She is one of a known handful of women roofers nationwide, but career opportunities in this field are open to all and this number is expected to grow. Tonya was enthusiastic about the support she received from both SLATE and Roofers Local No. 2 that helped her discover and enter her new career, telling us "You guys are great – you were a big help!"

**SLATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ELECTED TEAM PRESIDENT,
NAWDP BOARD**

Congratulations are extended to SLATE Executive Director Michael K. Holmes, due to his recent election as President of the Training and Employment Administrators of Missouri (TEAM) on August 17, in Jefferson City, Missouri.

TEAM consists of Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Executive Directors from the 14 workforce investment areas in the State of Missouri, who serve as workforce development capacity builders and advocates. Holmes, a member of TEAM for almost

three years, was nominated and elected President of the organization at their last full meeting.

"My goal as President is to better the communication between TEAM members and the Division of Workforce Development (DWD). I want to develop big-picture strategies for the workforce development system where local WIBs and DWD work closely with each other to produce a better workforce product for our job seeking and business customers," said Holmes.

This election comes three months after Mr. Holmes was elected to the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) Board. NAWDP is a professional association of workforce development professionals with over 3,500 members nationwide. Members of the NAWDP Board of Directors, who serve without compensation, contribute their time and resources to advance the profession of workforce development, both for the benefit of the NAWDP members they represent and society as a whole.

***Congratulations
and Thanks!!***
to the following SLATE staff:

Retirement
Ariel King - in July, 2011
over 35 years of service

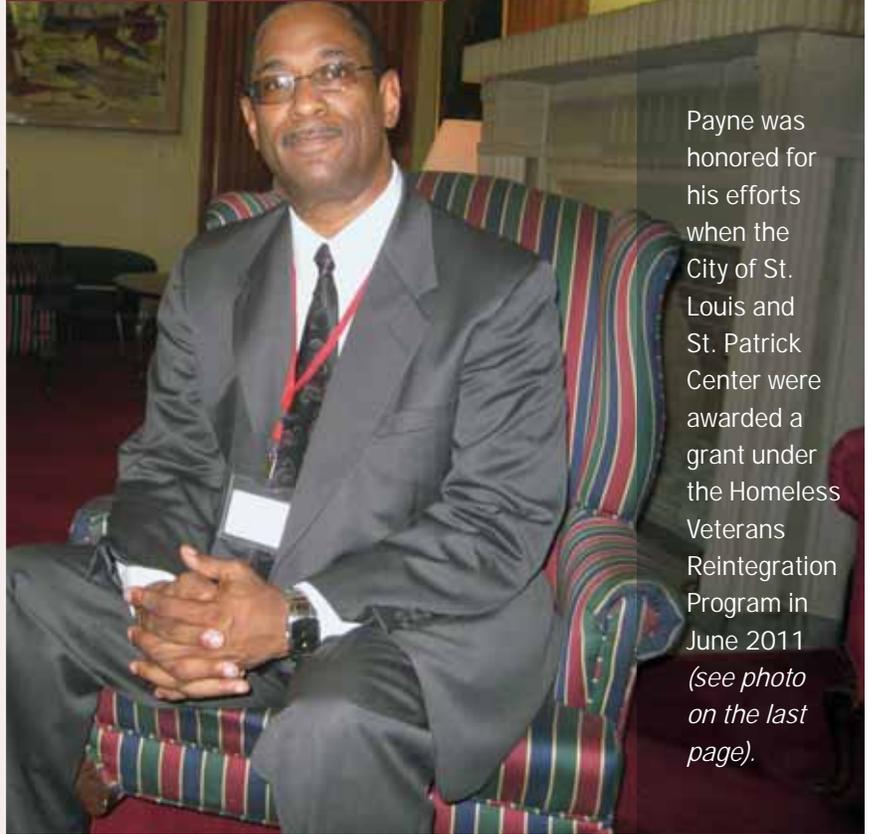
40th Anniversary
James Sahaida - in June, 2011

15th Anniversary
Tracy Walton - in June, 2011

STAFF & PARTNERS

Martin Payne is SLATE's Local Veterans Employment Representative, or LVER. Himself a veteran, he served as a medical officer in the U.S. Army for four years, attaining the rank of senior captain.

As a member of the Business Development Department, Martin Payne's duties are diverse and wide-ranging. He develops relationships with employers across the region, and is frequently invited for speaking engagements with organizations such as *Jefferson Barracks Domiciliary*, *Harbor Light Salvation Army Shelters* and *St. Patrick's Center* that serve homeless veterans. SLATE's veteran customers are referred to Martin - he familiarizes them with the benefits to which they are legally



Payne was honored for his efforts when the City of St. Louis and St. Patrick Center were awarded a grant under the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program in June 2011 (see photo on the last page).

SLATE Reaches Out To Veterans

entitled, develops close working relationships, and gives them personalized job search assistance: "I have to get the whole picture – not just their skills and training but where they see themselves going."

In the first half of 2011, Martin referred 152 veterans to jobs, and provided other services to 175 veterans, one of the highest totals for any Career Center in the state. Surprisingly, the majority of these date from the Vietnam War era and are now in their 50s and 60s; decades after their mustering out, many veterans are still struggling to transition to civilian life. In addition to physical disabilities, Martin has to be continually aware of signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Not all PTSD is a result of combat. "In the military, there are many support positions with an incredible amount of mental stress, continual stress," Martin notes.

In addition, Martin facilitates various veteran outreach events including mock interviews with major employers, Welcome Home celebrations, and Homeless Veteran Stand Downs. He is currently on the steering committee for a major new job fair specifically geared for veterans, the Eastern Regional Job Symposium. The Symposium will be held at the Machinist Hall District 9 in Bridgeton on October 28, 2011.

Among the many partners Payne works with in his role as SLATE's LVER are the Missouri Veterans Commission, the St. Louis Department of Human Services, AMVET, Purple Heart, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the Vet Center, Disabled American Veterans, the Hope Recovery Center, Jefferson Barracks and St. Louis University.

SLATE SNAPSHOTS



1. Grateful Employer Calls SLATE a Tremendous Success. Happy customer, *Joan Quartel*, President & CEO of Habitata Building Products, recommends SLATE for hiring at Habitata's networking event on April 28, 2011.



2. Healthcare Recruitment Event. Participants at the Magellan Health Services Job Fair conducted on July 12, 2011, await their interviews while staff of the Missouri Career Centers administer the process. **3. Mayor Accepts a Job Training Grant for Homeless Vets.** Mayor Francis Slay announces a \$600,000 grant awarded to the St. Louis City in collaboration with Employment Connection and St. Patrick Center. Photo shows (*from left*): Bill Siedhoff, Director of Human Services for the City of St. Louis, Brenda Mahr, CEO of Employment Connections, Mayor Slay, Martin Payne, Local Veterans Employment Representative at SLATE, and Tom Etling, CEO of St. Patrick Center. **4-5. Legislators Visit SLATE.** SLATE's Executive Director, Michael Holmes, State Representative Tishaura Jones (*below left*) and Senator Joseph Keaveny (*bottom right*) at the Workforce Development Open House held at SLATE's Central West End location on August 15, 2011.

