

# SLATE Update

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



Francis G. Slay, Mayor



Winter 2011 - 2012 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** — As stakeholders in and stewards of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), uncertainty continues to confront us at the Federal level. WIA itself has not yet been reauthorized, and from both the President and Congress, we hear that a consolidation of existing employment and training services is needed. At the time of this writing, the future form of Unemployment Insurance (UI) and its eligibility requirements also remains in doubt.

Of course, these unknowns pale in comparison to those that weigh on the minds of many of our customers. When the average duration of unemployment surpassed **40 weeks** last year, it represented the highest such total since the government started tracking this information over sixty years ago in 1948.

As we have seen, many individuals in formerly secure careers are now re-examining where they have been and where they are going. Internationally, the euro zone crisis continues to create an atmosphere of diminished confidence in economic growth. Truly, we live in uncertain times.

WIA and UI serve as a safety net not only for job seekers, but for the overall economy. WIA provided services to over **seven million** adults, youth and dislocated workers in Program Year 2010, while working with many thousands of employers to ensure that today's workforce is keeping pace with the needs of the 21st century. It has been shown that for every dollar paid out in unemployment benefits (regular, temporary and extended) two dollars are returned to grow the nation's economy.

Recently, the St. Louis Workforce Investment Board (WIB) applauded the efforts of everyone who works at SLATE Missouri Career Centers. They recognize, as do I, that we have excelled under trying circumstances in 2011, and have no doubt that we will continue to do outstanding work in 2012.



## **SLATE AND PARTNERS AWARDED BIOSCIENCE JOBS ACCELERATOR GRANT**

A group of St. Louis partners have formed the St. Louis Bioscience Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Project as the result of a successful application under the Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge. The Challenge was a unique, joint effort between three federal agencies – the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA), the Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) and



the Small Business Administration (SBA). The total grant award to the St. Louis Bioscience Accelerator was **\$1.8 million** over **four years**.

The St. Louis Bioscience Jobs and Innovation Accelerator is a regional partnership that will see SLATE working closely with BioSTL, BioGenerator, the Center for Emerging Technologies, the St. Louis County Division of Workforce Development, the St. Louis Regional Chamber & Growth Association (RCGA), and the St. Louis Minority Business Council.

Over the next few years, SLATE will help establish opportunities for skilled workers in both St. Louis City and County, providing access to On-the-Job Training (OJT) funds (see *left sidebar*) and conducting workshops and boot camps designed to introduce dislocated professionals to the bioscience industry cluster. On January 24, 2012, representatives from both the grantor agencies and

*Left to Right:* **District Director for Congressman Carnahan James P. McHugh, SLATE Executive Director Michael Holmes, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce Matt Erskine, Mayor Francis G. Slay, SBA Regional Administrator Pat Brown-Dixon, SLDC Executive Director Rodney Crim at the St. Louis Bioscience Jobs Accelerator Kick-off**

the grantees came together at the Center for Emerging Technologies for a special kick-off celebration and press conference. At this event, SLATE Executive Director **Michael Holmes** stated “the St. Louis Bioscience Jobs Accelerator is good for businesses, good for jobseekers, and good for the competitiveness of the entire St. Louis region.”

### **MOCK INTERVIEWS HELP BOTH JOB SEEKERS AND AREA BUSINESSES**

On December 7, the Central West End (CWE) Career Center conducted a Mock Interviewing session in cooperation with SLATE’S Business Development Department. Mock Interviews, held monthly, connect qualified, job-ready candi-

### **ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR ON-THE-JOB TRAINING**



As the workforce development project partner, SLATE was awarded \$973,000 over four years by ETA. Of this total, \$675,000 is reserved for On-the-Job Training (OJT) contracts within the area’s biotech cluster. It is anticipated that at least 60 highly paid technical and professional positions will be partially reimbursed through these funds. A number of area bioscience employers have already expressed their interest in OJT under this grant award:

- Sigma-Aldrich
- Orion Genomics
- University of Missouri-St. Louis
- Bethesda Health Group
- Apse LLC (CORTEX)
- Leinco Technologies, Inc.
- Kypha, Inc.
- Gallus Biopharmaceuticals

dates to the staff that meet directly with employers and understand the positions they are seeking to fill. A total of **13** job seekers participated in this latest event.

Each client completed a mock interview lasting a minimum of 15 minutes, received specific follow-up instructions from SLATE Business Development staff, and were offered a constructive critique to strengthen their performance in future interviews. Several of the participants were recommended for referrals to Graham Packaging, Express Scripts, Habitata Building Products LLC, St. John's Mercy, and other employers. Once revised copies of their résumé have been received by the interviewing staff member, they will be prepared for a "live" interview!

### **SLATE'S INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR VETERANS ADDRESS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING**

SLATE presented its first Military Workforce Information Session on January 17, at SLATE's Central West End location.

The event was designed to address the employment issues of thousands of U.S. military personnel who are completing their service in Iraq and Afghanistan and will soon be returning home and looking for work. SLATE wants to make sure that the returning veterans have access to the services to which they are entitled.

The event was sponsored by the Veterans Business Resource Center (Vetbiz), which will oversee SLATE's delivery of services to those in the

### **COMPANIES HIRING VETS CAN BE ELIGIBLE:**

- **OJT - program that partially reimburses companies for up to the first 26 weeks of full-time employment.**
- **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC).**

**Businesses interested in OJT and WOTC, need to contact Bonnie Mireles, SLATE's Business Development Manager, at [bmireles@stlworks.com](mailto:bmireles@stlworks.com).**

The two-hour Military Workforce Information Sessions will be held on every third Friday of the month.

Many veterans have a high degree of skill but may need advice and assistance in adjusting those skills to the demands of local civilian employers.

"We want to make sure there is a smooth transition between job requirements and what the veterans have to offer," said SLATE Executive Director **Michael Holmes**.

SLATE will use federal funding, where available, to send eligible veterans to a college or training program of their choice. In addition, SLATE offers a number of workshops that will help veterans to prepare résumés and cover letters that will reflect their technical expertise and

service record. SLATE's interview



**Military service members attending SLATE's first Information Session**

military and help ensure that returning veterans are fully aware of all the benefits they can receive.

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preparation workshops will address difficult questions and will allow the veterans to be at their best during the real thing.

“Our veterans have excellent leadership abilities: they are team players and can follow directions; they are trained to achieve results; they are loyal. These qualities make them highly attractive to any employer,” said **Martin Payne**, Local Veterans Employment Representative at SLATE. “We can help military service members market themselves to local businesses.”



### GRADUATE! ST. LOUIS WEBSITE IS LIVE

Following its announcement, Graduate! St. Louis Workforce Consortium have completed development of its own website [graduatestlouis.com](http://graduatestlouis.com). Graduate! St. Louis, funded by the Department of Labor, is an ongoing collaborative initiative administered by SLATE in partnership with community colleges and Workforce Investment Boards across the region. The Consortium partners provide degree and certificate programs that can lead to careers in a variety of Health Care, IT, and Emerging Energy fields. Check out the website for background information and links to the training opportunities offered by our various partners!

### PATHWAYS TO RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

Fathers' Support Center (FSC) recently applied for and received a Pathways to Responsible Fatherhood grant from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

One of 55 grants awarded nationwide, the aim of the program is to help fathers meet their parenting and financial obligations to their children, promote responsible fatherhood and foster economic stability.

SLATE is freely assisting Fathers' Support Center in meeting their objective of serving **550** fathers throughout the program's first year. SLATE staff will enroll these participants to ensure their access to WIA-funded services including résumé workshops, GED preparation/testing and remedial adult education courses, as well as available training venues.

**Stacey Fowler**, Adult Services Manager at SLATE, states that “Some of the participants are ex-offenders, but all of them are fathers. By helping them learn new skills and reconnect with the job market, we are giving them the opportunity to find sustainable employment, support their children and rebuild their families.”

The Pathways to Responsible Fatherhood grant is renewable for a period of up to three years. SLATE Missouri Career Centers and the City of St. Louis Workforce Investment Board (WIB) are proud to help FSC address the issues of employment and economic equality among at-risk families in our community.

## Unemployment Ends For a Deserving Veteran

*Melissa Gaugh* served in the U.S. Navy over a period of approximately four years. An Electronics Specialist, one of thousands of crew serving aboard a nuclear aircraft carrier, she returned to civilian life in March of 2011.

On December 14, 2011 Melissa described her initial experience on the job market to the St. Louis City Workforce Investment Board (WIB): “I was putting in 20 or more applications each week and wouldn’t hear back...even from fast food restaurants. I was disappointed and frustrated.”

In August, she came to SLATE, and was introduced to Veterans Representative **Martin Payne**. Melissa’s job search immediately turned around. Martin, **Jeanne Miller** and other SLATE staff worked to revise her résumé, sharpen her interview skills and connect her with job leads. Within ten working days, Melissa had met with and accepted an offer from Habitata in Customer



Left to right: **Martin Payne, Melissa Gaugh, Kevin Schaedler**

*“I had a wonderful experience and would recommend SLATE to any employer.”*

~**KEVIN SCHAEGLER, HABITATA BUILDING PRODUCTS LLC**

Service. “Melissa is the very definition of a success story,” said Martin. “She is an extraordinary individual with outstanding skills and attributes.” *Kevin Schaedler*, Executive Vice President of Sales at Halcyon Shades and owner of Habitata Building Products, LLC, echoed these sentiments. “Melissa has a high level of integrity and understanding”, Kevin said. “She has the mechanical knowledge to understand our products and can help to fill the needs of thousands of our customers. I wish we had 14 more of her!” Schaedler also notes that he has recruited a third of his workforce through SLATE, and that it has been “a wonderful experience that I would recommend to any employer.”

**EXPECT SUCCESS!**

## From Homeless to Hope: One Youth's Lifechanging Experience

In 2010, *Miranda Prince* enrolled in SLATE's Workforce Investment Act funded youth program as a high school dropout who was both unemployed and homeless. Miranda had almost no work experience and was desperate to gain training and occupational skills. As part of Miranda's work experience, she filled a Facility Assistant position at the Demetrious Johnson Charitable Foundation and worked for six months in an Office Assistant position at a nursing home. While Miranda was gaining work experience, she vigorously applied herself in order to obtain her GED.

Now, Miranda is employed and doing well. She was hired as by Barnes Jewish Hospital as a Specimen Transporter. Miranda is an assistant in a BJC operating room, collects tissue samples during surgeries, and then transfers them to the laboratory for testing. Miranda works full-time and is earning \$10.00 an hour. For the first time, Miranda has been able to afford her own apartment and is "happier than she has ever been". Miranda is "thrilled every day by the things she gets to see and do" and her long term goal is to earn an MD. Miranda is enrolled in post-secondary classes and starts school in January, the first step towards making her dreams come true!

*Ray Creely*, Chair of the Youth Council, states that stories such as Miranda's "help put a human face to the positive impact of the youth program." Miranda was featured on local news broadcasts that showcased her hard work and dedication towards achieving her educational and career goals. A special thanks goes to *Erin McCuan*, Director of the MERS/Goodwill Advocate Center, and everyone who helped set Miranda on a path to fulfillment and prosperity.



**“EMPLOYER-DRIVEN  
TRAINING MEANS JOBS.  
I THINK OF WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT AS  
ONE BIG APPRENTICE  
PROGRAM BASED ON  
MARKET DEMAND.”**

**~LYDIA PADILLA**

Born in southern California into a large family and raised near Los Angeles, Padilla became a resident of St. Louis City over a decade ago. She has served as a member of the St. Louis WIB since September 2006.

Helping jobseekers find employment that matches their background, interests and skills has been a driving force throughout Lydia's professional life. After attending Mt. San Antonio College, she began working for staffing company Remedy in San Juan Capistrano, CA, before moving to Memphis as a regional manager. She supervised the Memphis market for Remedy over a five year period as Vice President. Before long, "I had a goal to own my own franchise," Lydia said. She met her future husband in Memphis; together they researched available franchise opportunities and decided on TRC in St. Louis. Altogether, her career has spanned 21 years - 10 with Remedy and 11 with TRC.

## The St. Louis WIB Spotlight: **LYDIA PADILLA**

TRC Staffing Services was established over 30 years ago in Atlanta and currently has locations in 14 states. The St. Louis franchise offers job placement services from its present location on Washington Avenue. The service area comprises St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Charles; locally TRC serves several hundred clients annually. Padilla's clientele is quite diverse, though TRC in St. Louis places a strong emphasis on hard-to-fill professional positions, IT placement, and bilingual openings. Padilla works with dozens of area employers, whether, large, small or mid-sized businesses, not-for-profits, or government agencies.

Her membership on the Empowerment Zone of St. Louis board led to her involvement with the City of St. Louis WIB. It was there that she met both former SLATE Executive Director *Tom Jones* and St. Louis County DWD Executive Director *Gene Gorden*. In fact, SLATE and TRC already had a long and productive working relationship, having traded referrals since shortly after her franchise was established. She was elected Vice Chair of the St.



Louis WIB in October 2008. The WIB was a logical move, a "natural board for me to be on," she said.

Padilla's enthusiasm for her work is infectious; her life-long passion to help people motivates her daily work. "Jobs give freedom, the independence to move where you want, to pursue an education, to pursue your dreams," she states, and emphasizes that a well-trained, employed community is a prosperous community, with better living and housing conditions for everyone.

Padilla, with her husband Chris Salinas, has lived in Lafayette Square since late 2000, not

long after their move to St. Louis. Her two younger brothers and her mother have also moved to the St. Louis area. "I love being in St. Louis," Lydia says, "it's small and agile enough that a few great relationships can be forged to positively impact education and employment... it's not too big a ship to turn!"

Lydia Padilla was recently honored as a member of the 2011 Diverse Business Leaders Awards by the St. Louis Business Journal.

### **PADILLA'S PRIORITIES**

#### **1. Establish 501(c)3 Status for SLATE**

Lydia notes that the Kansas City WIB successfully operates as a 501 (c)(3) and looks forward to helping SLATE diversify its sources of funding.

#### **2. Regional Outreach**

She believes that effectively telling SLATE's story on a wider basis is key to maintaining organizational momentum.

#### **3. Continue to support strategic planning**

In addition to ensuring compliance with quality measures and metrics, Lydia wants proper emphasis to be placed on lower-skill, living wage positions that serve as transitional jobs for students and others.

## SLATE SNAPSHOTS

**1. SLATE Addresses Local Crisis with IT Talent.** Local businesses gathered to discuss the shortage of qualified IT workers at SLATE's Missouri Tech Crunch Forum on January 12, 2012.

**2-3. Career Fair focuses on jobs for St. Louis Veterans.** Over 90 veterans showed up at a St. Louis-region Veterans Career Fair conducted in Bridgeton on October 28, 2011. Dozens of

prospective employers and representatives from the Veterans Administration (VA) helped with veterans' claims and benefits. Also in attendance was *Senator Claire McCaskill (left)* who emphasized the important work the Missouri

Career Centers' Vet Reps perform in the region, helping local veterans find job opportunities.

**4. Job Seekers Get Inspired by SLATE.**

Job Seekers gathered at the New Hope Presbyterian Church for a presentation on job search and self-marketing delivered by SLATE's job search expert, **Frank Alaniz**, on January 5, 2012. They welcomed tips on a variety of topics, including background checks and how to efficiently complete an automated application process.

