

SLATE Update

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. LOUIS AGENCY ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT (SLATE)



Francis G. Slay, Mayor



ST. LOUIS AGENCY ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

SLATE
americanjobcenter

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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1 Diversity for Employers
- 2 Urban Jobs Program
- 2 Entrepreneur Success
- 4 SLATE in Photos and More

SLATE Update is a monthly newsletter produced by the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE), a unit of St. Louis City government helping match area job seekers with businesses through a variety of no-cost services.

The purpose of this publication is to share the progress and outcomes of our many programs, and will be of special interest to legislators, Workforce Investment Board members, vendors, partners, educational institutions, other public agencies or anyone with an interest in workforce development.

To subscribe/unsubscribe to *SLATE Update*, please send a request to sbostick@stlworks.com.

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ACCOMMODATION FOR SUCCESS FOCUSES ON EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

On August 11 from 12:30 to 4:30 pm, businesses and organizations from across the St. Louis region including SLATE will convene at the St. Louis Community College at Forest Park's Student Center Café to hold *Accommodation for Success*. This special event will call attention to the ongoing challenge that persons with disabilities face when seeking employment.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the passage of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, the employment rate for those with disabilities remains extremely low at 20 percent, compared to 68.9 percent of people without disabilities. *Accommodation for Success* is specifically designed to encourage and support businesses to consider persons with disabilities for full-time employment, gathering and explaining all the resources available. SLATE has played a role in reaching out to employers, and has hosted a series of planning meetings in cooperation

with the Missouri Dept. of Mental Health, other American Job Centers across the region, members of the St. Louis City Workforce Investment Board, and Vocational Rehabilitation Services, part of the Missouri Dept. of Social Services.

Accommodation for Success will feature over **100** human resources officers from approximately **60** businesses and **30** agencies that provide specialized workplace services for persons with disabilities. Ameren, Anthem, Commerce Bank, Express Scripts, Mercy Health, Monsanto, Paraquad, St. Louis Community College and Washington University are among those who will be present. The event will feature several break-out sessions, with employer-focused topics including 'Recruiting Etiquette,' 'Sourcing to Find Talent,' 'Accommodations & Assistive Technology,' and 'Tax Credits.'

A number of federal initiatives seek to break down barriers to employment of persons with disabilities. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that funds SLATE now includes a reauthorization of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) portion of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, with an emphasis on fully integrated work environments.

EVENTS *Calendar*

- **Aug 4:** *Bricklayers Info Session*
- **Aug 6:** *Laborers Info Session*
- **Aug 6, 20:** *EBLAP: Legal Clinics*
- **Aug 18:** *EBLAP: Starting a Business in MO*
- **Aug 19:** *EBLAP: Business Plan*

SLATE AND ST. LOUIS HOUSING AUTHORITY PARTNER TO SERVE CLINTON PEABODY RESIDENTS

The St. Louis Housing Authority (SLHA) and SLATE recently worked together to successfully apply for **\$3 million** in funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Jobs Plus Pilot Program. Over the next four years, these funds will be used to implement activities that serve **240** residents at the Clinton Peabody development, the largest and oldest SLHA facility, with 347 households. SLHA was one of only nine organizations nationwide to receive a grant under Jobs Plus.

SLATE is responsible for all workforce development activities as part of this partnership, providing case managers on-site at Clinton Peabody, administering paid work experiences and supportive services, and filling Community Coach and volunteer Jobs Plus Ambassador positions from among the residents.

SLATE will also oversee the creation of a Technology Innovation Center within the existing Al Chapelle Community Center. Acclaimed IT training provider BLUE1647 will adapt their curriculum to serve both youth and adults at Clinton Peabody. At the new Center, they will be able to create real-world coding and application-building skills marketable to future employers.

As part of the Jobs Plus Pilot, SLHA will administer a Job Plus Earned Income Disregard (JPEID) program, providing 100

percent exclusion for all newly employed residents that increase their earned income. This means that earnings will not adversely affect their rental payment plan – giving them the chance to establish savings and financial stability.

Both SLATE and SLHA look forward to helping residents, many of whom are single mothers, become job-ready, obtain employment, and transition to unsubsidized housing. "The residents are like anyone else – they want to build a better and more secure future for themselves and their children," says Stacey Fowler, SLATE's Adult Services/Special Projects Manager. "We are going to help them do this while building a culture of hope and accomplishment and Clinton Peabody."

The Jobs Plus program will officially launch at Clinton Peabody with a kick-off rally on August 25.

MISSOURI-BASED U.S. DRILLING PRODUCTS PLANS TO GO GLOBAL

Innovative entrepreneurs nationwide are continuing to develop ways to manufacture durable and cost-effective products in the U.S. **Douglas Ford** has now joined their ranks. A Missouri born design engineer and small business owner, Ford is aiming to not only set a new standard for utility construction domestically but to develop a more rapid and efficient process that can be exported to rest of the world.

When Douglas, an experienced maintenance technician at Chrysler over a period of 14 years, got a pink slip back in August of 2009, he knew he wouldn't pursue the



company's offer to transfer out of state. Although his tenure with Chrysler had been highly rewarding, Ford wanted to achieve a renewed sense of responsibility and purpose operating his own business.

For years, Douglas had researched challenges associated with drilling in Missouri, specifically in his native Jefferson County, home of two of the toughest rock formations on the planet. He witnessed Ameren modifying their plans to rebuild infrastructure as drilling was considered too difficult and expensive.

Instead of trying to break the rocks from above, as with vertical directional drilling (VDD) – a conventional method used by most utility companies, Ford suggested

laying equipment on its side in order to drill horizontally (HDD). With less power required and fewer burn outs, his method significantly improved productivity. In addition, Ford designed a new drill bit with 38 cutting points and improved velocity, enabling contractors to punch through virtually any rock.

Ford proceeded to patent his invention and his business began to take shape. He now owns U.S. Drilling Products and holds six patents in various categories, including design and method. He has set production on two manufacturing plants, one in Pevely, another in Union. Now Ford is thinking about global expansion. “[Originally] I was just going to do mom-and-pop thing out of my garage, but

this was taking off and running further and faster than I could ever have imagined,” Ford said.

He attributed much of his start-up success to Lynette Watson, his instructor in the *FastTrac* program for entrepreneurs at MIZZOU (a service now housed at SLATE), funded by Chrysler for their displaced workers. “[Before Lynette] I was thinking in-the-box, not outside-the-box,” he said. In 2013, Ford won an Arch Grant which awarded him with an additional \$50,000 and an office space at T-Rex in St. Louis’ Downtown. He spent his award on product development and increasing market share.

What started as a small operation out of his garage is set to grow exponentially, with continual development of new products, entry into new markets, and planned hiring of more staff. “It got so intense and vast that no one person can have a grip on it now... I’d be surprised if it didn’t take 50 more. [Drillers] don’t have to be at the mercy of the rock anymore,” he explained.



“I was thinking in-the-box, not outside-the-box.”

~DOUGLAS FORD, OWNER, U.S. DRILLING PRODUCTS

SLATE *in Photos*



FERGUSON 1000 JOB FAIR

More than **700** job seekers turned out for a Ferguson 1000 hiring event on July 18, 2015 at the Ferguson Community Center. More than **40** companies attended the event, such as Hollywood Casino, Ameren, Centene, Edward Jones and IKEA. Close to **60** people were hired on the spot, and many more hiring interviews will be held over the next few weeks, reported **Bonnie Forker**, Manager of Business Development at SLATE.



HACK4HOPE ORIENTATION AT SLATE

SLATE hosted the Hack4Hope Hackathon orientation on the evening of July 8. The room was filled with energy and the students made their first pitch for the mini-Hackathon review.

On July 10, Hack4Hope Hackathon was launched at T-Rex, Downtown St. Louis, an immersive coding weekend for 50 students and 25 mentors.

Hack4Hope offers youth from the St. Louis area enrollment in six months of free courses in life skills, coding and strategic planning.



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