

# SLATE Update

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



Francis G. Slay, Mayor



September 2014 Issue

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- 3 Trade Act Success Story 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](mailto:sbostick@stlworks.com).

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## PROVIDING ACCESS TO JOBS TO UNDERPRIVILEGED POPULATION

*A Special Message from the Executive Director*

I am sure everyone in the St. Louis community has heard about and been affected by the Michael Brown shooting. In fact, our entire State operated in crisis mode for a number of weeks. Then, there was a police shooting within the

City of Saint Louis, fairly near the Ferguson area. The people in the neighborhood started to protest, but they also voiced their concerns on lack of employment opportunities and access to jobs. Mayor Slay contacted me and asked that I as-



SLATE and the Urban League Job & Resource Fair organized for the Ferguson community on September 13, 2014. SLATE and more than 100 local businesses and service agencies introduced themselves to thousands of appreciative and well prepared job seekers.

“No work is insignificant. All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.”

~MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

semble a team to handle this crisis. We met with residents there regarding all the services SLATE has to offer, and ended up signing up at least **90** people. Some of them have already started to take advantage of the free services SLATE offers as an American Job Center.

That day was a rewarding opportunity to directly reach out and begin to provide services to underprivileged residents. Sometimes responding to the needs of our community cannot be done within regular business hours. Many of the residents we spoke to were not familiar with SLATE, and it was obvious to me that despite our best efforts, we can do a better job of making our presence felt in neighborhoods that desperately need access to economic opportunity. As an organization, SLATE needs to be able to respond to the needs of our community at a moment's notice.

To achieve these ends, I have decided to establish a *Rapid Response Crisis Team* at SLATE. Their primary responsibility will be to respond to the needs of the community during a crisis with job information; team members will also help ensure that no neighborhood, especially those in North St. Louis City, is isolated or unaware of the ways we can help.

Prolonged unemployment can have negative effects beyond even the lack of income; it can lead to feelings of despair and unworthiness. SLATE will continue to help every man, woman and young person we serve overcome obstacles and find a path forward. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “No work is insignificant. All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.”

#### **SLATE AWARDED MSD JOB TRAINING CONTRACT**

SLATE, in partnership with the Building and Construction Trades Council of St. Louis, has been awarded funds under the Job Training Supportive Services RFP issued by the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District (MSD). SLATE will work with a number of area unions to ensure that a comprehensive set of Joint Apprenticeship Programs

will be offered to our customers.

SLATE and its partners plan to link three primary groups with opportunities in the construction trades:

- Minority and women pre-apprenticeship graduates who, due to the economic recession, are currently unemployed;
- Minority and women pre-apprenticeship graduates who were never able to find construction employment and/or are currently underemployed in an unrelated industry; and
- New recruits with no previous pre-apprenticeship or construction experience.

This training program builds upon the success of SLATE's previous partnership with Ameren. Ameren's pre-apprenticeship consisted of a 6-week workshop which prepared participants for testing for job opportunities at Ameren. Normally, Ameren has 18-25 percent success rate on their applications. The rate went up to 80 percent by individuals taking the 6-week class.

This current comprehensive effort will help area unions diversify and meet the goals set by St. Louis City Ordinance 69427. SLATE's St. Louis Construction Orientation Intake Center will play an important role in assessing and referring applicants, while the popular ongoing Construction Apprenticeship Infor-

### **EVENTS** *Calendar*

- **Oct 2:** EBLAP: *Legal Clinic.*
- **Oct 13-17:** *FastTrac Seminar for Entrepreneurs.*
- **Oct 16:** EBLAP: *Legal Clinic.*
- **Oct 16:** EBLAP: *Intellectual Property.*
- **Oct 25:** *Financial Planning Day.*

mation Sessions held at our downtown American Job Center location will continue to reach and recruit new pre-apprenticeship candidates.

The contract is for **\$149,881** per year over a three year period; these funds will support a Training Coordinator position, training funds to assist participants, safety equipment, Workkeys Assessments and supportive services.

### **PRE-APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING FOR MINORITIES LAUNCHED**

This month, SLATE and the St. Louis Construction Trades Council announced the launching of an innovative program designed to increase diversity within the construction trades. The program, Building Union Diversity (BUD), will provide pre-apprenticeship skills training for minorities, women and the long-term unemployed residents of the St. Louis region interested in pursuing one of many available careers in construction.

BUD will consist of a comprehensive and intensive eight-week pre-apprenticeship skills training course, taught by nationally certified and industry approved specialists in state-of-the-art facilities. Participants will learn skills required for entering apprenticeship with participating BUD Construction trades. Eligible participants can be provided with work-related equipment, transportation to training sites, and a training stipend (upon completion of the program).

The BUD program will bring together a comprehensive network of participating joint labor-management Construction Skills training providers, SLATE, the St. Louis Construction Trades Council, and the Missouri Division of Workforce Development (DWD).

Michael Holmes, the Director of SLATE, comments that, "This effort goes beyond most industry/government partnerships, regionally or nationally. Bringing labor-directed construction skills training centers across the St. Louis region into our communities will assist industry with meeting its labor demands while placing motivated individuals in highly-skilled, middle income careers."

The training will include both classroom and shop training, and participants will earn national skills certifications and certificates as they progress through the training. Participating union apprenticeship training program providers

include Brick Layers, Carpenters, IBEW Local 1 Electrical Workers, Iron Workers, L.I.U.N.A. Construction Craft Laborers, Operating Engineers Local 513, and Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 562.

### **FORMER TRADE ACT RECIPIENT TO MARKET OJT**

Recently, SLATE added a new OJT Marketing Specialist to its staff, Amy Lesmeister, formerly a Graphic Designer at AT&T. She worked at AT&T for 17 years, supporting production of the printed edition of the Yellow Pages, until her department was sold and re-branded into YP in 2012, and subsequently outsourced to India in 2013. Lesmeister's entire publishing department, about 100 people working in the St. Louis office and thousands more across 5 states, were let go in May of 2013. Among the displaced professionals were



**Amy Lesmeister** and SLATE's Andy Anderson talking about On-the-Job Training.

Graphic Designers, Quality Analysts, Production Artists, and Paging Specialists among many others.

“They started contracting work to India back in 2007 so we kind of had an idea that something might happen, but they [India] messed up so many ads that we were hoping that we would just get smaller. Since the Internet was growing, nobody used the Yellow Pages book anymore,” Lesmeister said.

YP employees turned for support to the State of Missouri. Since their work went overseas, Missouri granted a petition of assistance by the displaced workers under the Trade Act Agreement (TAA), releasing funding for personalized re-employment services at any Missouri Career Center. TAA also provided each affected worker with up to \$15,000 in financial assistance towards re-training for a new career with better prospects for employment.

Soon after Lesmeister visited SLATE, signed up with the Career Centers system and took an assessment, she started attending career-ready workshops including résumé writing. In the meantime, she began to attend UMSL and took classes that expanded her designer abilities and skills with certifications in digital design and web publishing as she continued to look for employment.

But after long months of intensive yet unsuccessful job hunting, she grew increasingly frustrated. With over 230 resumes sent and 11 interviews conducted, she wasn't getting any full-time job offers. Her partnership with 5 temp agencies providing creative services to local businesses weren't bringing her the desired permanent employment, either.

“It was incredibly frustrating,” she said. “Especially when I knew that I had skills that can transfer to a lot

of different things.” Her realization to try other careers outside Graphics finally brought her the desired full-time employment. Last month she applied for a marketing position with SLATE and was offered a full-time position. She will be marketing SLATE's On-the-Job Training (OJT) program, ensuring that both displaced employees and businesses in need of talent are aware of this valuable resource. Lesmeister is determined to spread the word about OJT as many of her former co-workers are currently unemployed or under-employed; she knows that this and other services at SLATE can catalyze a job search or career change.

Overall, Lesmeister said the Trade Act was extremely beneficial. “Without all that assistance I would probably still be unemployed. I do believe that the certifications I got through UMSL helped me to gain more skills and it will be something I can use wherever I go.”



### **GRAYBAR AWARDED FLAG OF FREEDOM FOR HIRING VETERANS**

*From left: Beverly Propst, Graybar's Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Kathleen M. Mazzarella, Graybar's Chairman, President and CEO, Martin Payne, SLATE Veterans representative, and Lt. Jon Berry, Show-Me Heroes Director, at Graybar's office in Clayton, on August 27, 2014.*