

Career fair aims to curb expected trades shortage

BENTON HARBOR — More than 100,000 tri-county workers will be employed in the construction/skilled trades industry by 2012.

With a 13.8-percent growth rate, upcoming developments like Harbor Shores and the Four Winds Casino and an aging workforce, many employers are concerned about the future availability of workers.

The problem is not unique to southwest Michigan.

In fact, each year the United States alone adds more than \$600 billion worth of new construction projects such as new hospitals, schools, highways, bridges, homes, office buildings and stores.

That's about 10 percent of America's gross domestic product.

"I don't think enough people realize the variety and quality of opportunities available in this industry. Construction trades offer excellent wages and benefits, job security, opportunity for growth and the chance to leave your mark for generations to come.

"As the region's primary workforce development organization, it's our responsibility to help educate job-seekers about these opportunities and insure a future workforce for local employers," stated Todd Gustafson, executive director of Michigan Works! Berrien Cass Van Buren.

Michigan Works! hosts a construction trades career fair today until 6 p.m. at its Benton Harbor Service Center, 499 W. Main St., to educate job seekers about training opportunities and to meet employers who are hiring.

There is no charge for career fair attendees.

Organizations represented include:

- Arnt Asphalt
- Quality Paving Co.
- Plumbers and Pipefitters Union
- Michigan Carpenters Apprenticeship and Training Fund
- Michigan Laborers Training and Apprenticeship Institute.
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (Bill Hasse)
- Iron Workers Union
- Southwestern Michigan College
- Kalamazoo Valley Community College
- International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers

Skilled trades jobs include carpenters, millwrights, plumbers, pipe-fitters, HVAC technicians, electricians, masons, iron workers, engineers and surveyors.

Call (269) 927-1064, ext.1144, for more information.