

Benton Spirit

Community Newspaper

Informing, Enhancing, Showcasing, Promoting and Educating Southwest Michigan and Northern Indiana

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Where Are the Jobs? At the Michigan Works! 2008 Career Fair!



Dashiekah Dyson (right) jobseeker,

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Almost 300 jobseekers flocked to **Michigan Works!** in Benton Harbor last Tuesday for their Second Annual Career Fair. The goal of the fair was not just to match employers with jobseekers, but also to educate the public about local career opportunities and what skills jobseekers need in order to qualify.

The Benton Harbor event was the second of three Career Fair dates and locations. The first was in Paw Paw, and another will be held at Southwestern Michigan College in Dowagiac on April 8. All times are 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Twenty-four area employers are scheduled to attend the fairs.

"The Career Fairs benefit jobseekers and employers" according to Michigan Works! Executive Director, Todd Gustafson. "Although Michigan has a relatively high unemployment rate, many businesses are having difficulty recruiting enough qualified applicants." One reason is that jobseekers don't always know where the jobs are. Labor market research projects that over the next seven years, 70% of tri-county job growth will be within four major industries: Advanced Manufacturing, Skilled Trades, Healthcare and Hospitality. Representatives from all of those industry sectors were present at the Career Fair.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Wayne Petzke, the Human Resources Manager of K&M Machine-Fabricating surprised some jobseekers when he said they planned to hire 120 machinists, welders, engineers, inspectors and supervisors. "Business is booming," exclaimed Petzke. "Even in this slow economy, K&M is planning a major expansion in the next 12 to 18 months."

Vickers Engineering is also in growth mode. The precision metal parts manufacturer was offering on-the-job training for CNC operators. They were also recruiting quality control technicians and a brake press operator. "We're busy and we're hiring," said Laura Richards, Director of Human Resources.