



CareerSource
CITRUS | LEVY | MARION

OFFERING CONSTANCY IN A TIME OF CHANGE

Exactly five years ago, in this space, I began our first column for *Innovation Ocala* magazine by noting that when it came to the economy, conversations were beginning to start all over town – in restaurants, in the frozen food aisle at neighborhood grocery stores, on Little League fields and golf links.

In fact, I said, the conversation was about change.

It seemed back in June 2013 that everywhere you'd go, you got the sense that things were getting better. Of course, back then, it was almost hard to believe because the economic recovery was still so new and fragile. But still, you could feel that something different was in the air just like you can feel the welcoming crispness of that first fall morning after a wet-blanket of a hot, soggy summer.

Five years ago, we embarked on a journey with Best Version Media and its nascent *Innovation Ocala* magazine to share stories and information about what CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion and its education, economic development and community partners could do to help businesses leverage that change.

Today, you're reading our final column for this publication as Best Version Media shifts focus to its neighborhood magazines. But that doesn't mean we won't continue to do what we've always done for this community, and that is to connect businesses with qualified, skilled job candidates and candidates with employment and career development opportunities – all at no charge.

So, in addition to the magazine's change, what else has shifted since we first began?

Let's begin with the region's employment situation. In June 2013, out of a labor force of 198,653 there were 18,322 unemployed and 180,332 employed for a jobless rate of 9.2 percent. We don't have the June numbers yet, but looking at March 2018 (our most recent available data), out of an expanded labor force of 200,627, there were 9,211 out of work and 191,416 with jobs for an unemployment rate of 4.6 percent.

Both the unemployment rate and number of jobless have been cut in half while Citrus, Levy and Marion counties added 11,085 new jobs.

Honing in on the Ocala metropolitan statistical area, which includes all of Marion County, we see the labor force expand from 132,176 to 134,980, the number of workers increased from 120,366 to 129,511 and the number of those without jobs dropped from 11,810 to 5,469, leaving us with an unemployment rate that fell from 8.9 percent to 4.1 percent.

That's definitely a shift of seismic proportions; maybe it doesn't feel so earth shattering because it has happened steadily for five years. But make no mistake, it has happened.

When Gov. Rick Scott was in town this past March delivering good news about the local and state economy, the news that the Ocala MSA posted the second fastest annual job-growth rate among all Florida metros in manufacturing (+7.6 percent) prompted one local influential to remark on our Facebook that she was "glad to see manufacturing was making a comeback (as) it's a long-time coming."

The reality is that manufacturing began its comeback with back-to-back top rankings for the fastest job growth rate among all Florida metros in October and November 2016. Not only manufacturing but myriad other key industries have been making a comeback for years. Let's take a look:



By Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC
Communications Manager

2016

May #2 in Education and Health Services
June #2 in Manufacturing and #3 in Financial Activities
July #3 Education and Health Services
August #3 Manufacturing
September #3 Manufacturing
October #1 Manufacturing
November #1 Manufacturing
December #1 Professional and Business Services and #3 Manufacturing

2017

January #1 Professional and Business Services and #1 Trade, Transportation and Utilities
February #1 Professional and Business Services and #2 Trade, Transportation and Utilities
March #3 Overall fastest job-growth rate
April #1 Professional and Business Services
May #1 Professional and Business Services
June #1 Professional and Business Services
November #2 Education and Health Services
December #1 "Other" Services

2018

March and April #1 in Education and Health Services and #2 in Manufacturing

Most recently, manufacturing's 8.9 percent job growth rate and education and health services' 5.4 percent rate grew faster in the metro area than statewide over the year.

Here's something else to consider: in June 2013 there were 93,000 nonfarm jobs in Ocala/Marion County, today there are 103,700 – that's an 11.5 percent increase.

I'll repeat what I wrote five years ago when I compared the 2013 numbers with previous years: when you look at where we are compared to where we've been, things are changing for the better. There are myriad reasons why this may be so; I'll posit one: collaboration.

The Ocala/Marion County community has never been one to give up when times are tough. In fact, the spirit of collaboration, innovation and dedication among economic development, business, education, workforce and public partners has never been stronger. That was true then, and that is certainly true today. Working in collaboration, each partner helps bring in new business as well as support existing businesses and entrepreneurs to help the engine of our community thrum along.

Each piece to the prosperity puzzle is essential: prospecting, infrastructure, financial incentives, tax credits and human resources. Helping businesses meet their HR needs is how CareerSource CLM fits in.

Our full range of fee-free business services includes posting your open positions online through Employ Florida; recruiting and screening job candidates; coordinating exclusive hiring events at your location, ours or elsewhere; financial support for customized training programs for your new or existing employees; labor market information; financial incentives and tax credits; and if needed, outplacement services.

Five years ago, I told you about when HealthSouth came to town and two recruiters were tasked with setting up the area's first rehabilitative hospital, a hospital that was not yet built. They were inundated with 1,400 applications to fill 75 positions, something that Donna Howard, then HR director, said was "beyond anything I ever could have imagined."

We were able to provide labor market information and wage analysis, posted jobs, handled promotions, screened applicants, coordinated a "Meet and Greet" recruiting event, set up a computer lab for on-the-spot assessment, and helped candidates apply.

Fast-forward to Diana Richardson, who handles HR for On Top of the World. In terms of businesses services, Diana said, "It's amazing,

it's wonderful ... we can count on them to find what we need ..." But I want to give you the perspective from the candidates' side of the equation.

To do that, I'm going to share a segment from our Business Showcase last month on WOCA "AM Ocala Live."

On-air host Larry Whitler asked Diana: "Didn't you tell us once that you got your job through CareerSource CLM?"

Diana: "Yes, yes I did. That was 2 1/2 years ago."

Whitler: "Wow! I bet you had no idea you were going to like it this much."

Richardson: "The good thing about CareerSource is that you go there with your resume and if you don't have one they'll help you. So, if anybody out there is listening, and you just don't know what to do or where to go, just start with them. Okay? Even if (you're) interested in what I'm offering, just go through them and they will guide you as far as doing your resume, (finding) your strong points, the workshops, everything. They will take you exactly where you fit in and help you get a job and I'm talking from experience. I'm not just saying that. It's true, that's what they did with me and it was just a perfect fit."

That's what we like to hear, and what we like to do. Helping you grow and strengthen your business is what we'll continue to accomplish in the years ahead.

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