



## That was then, this is now: New Year offers fresh solutions

By Laura Byrnes

Some of the headlines the past year weren't what you'd call encouraging.

"JOB-LESS" screamed a 100-pointer on the front page of the local daily. And then there was the lament that the monthly unemployment rate for the Homosassa Springs metro area (aka Citrus County) routinely ranked among the highest in the state.

But often it's hard to see the forest for the trees. Sometimes you have to climb to the top of one of those trees to get a better view of where you've come and a fresh perspective on where you're going. That seems like an appropriate tact as we embark on a brand new year.

First, the perspective. While we won't have this month's employment data until March, when it comes to year-over-year trends, I think we can draw some pretty consistent conclusions. Significantly, January's unemployment rate has been less than the previous January's rate, each and every year since the end of the recession.

The most current data we have on deadline for this issue is for October 2016, when Citrus County's jobless rate was 6.8 percent, 3,239 people were out of work, 44,582 and we had a labor force of 47,821. Compare that to January 2016 when the rate was 7.4 percent, 3,501 were unemployed, 43,692 had jobs and the labor force was 47,193.

Okay, we're not talking a "one-giant-leap-for-mankind" kind of difference here, but when you have fewer unemployed (-262) and more employed (+890) along expansion of the labor force (+628) that's like the hitting the trifecta of economic indicators.

Look at January 2015: the jobless rate was 8.5 percent, there were 772 more people out of work and 1,385 fewer employed. Now go back five years: the unemployment rate was 11.8 percent and there were 6,000 people out of work. Since 2012, the unemployment rate has dropped here by 5.0 percentage point and the number of jobless has fallen by 54 percent.



And honestly, that's due to the efforts of Citrus County's businesses – striving to grow and working with community partners such as the College of Central Florida and Withlacoochee Technical College, the Economic Development Authority of Citrus County and CareerSource CLM.

From July to September, 173 Citrus County employers posted 472 jobs with us in Citrus County. We also provided services to 2,468 career seekers including 137 veterans and had 319 job placements.

Here's how we factor into the equation: CareerSource CLM helps employers recruit, hire and train the talent you need. Not only is there no charge for our services, but eligible employers may also take advantage of incentives that can offset the financial burden of hiring and training a new employee.

These include:

- Paid adult internship and work experience trainee programs which pay individuals to work up to 30 hours a week for 12 weeks at your company – wages, worker's compensation, taxes and other related payroll costs are paid by CareerSource CLM.
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) reimburse from 50 to 75 percent of a new hire's wages while being training by an employer in a target industry (Healthcare, Transportation/Logistics, Manufacturing and IT).
- Custom Business Training (CBT) covers up to 50 percent of out-of-pocket costs to ensure current employees have the skills important to the success of your for-profit business.

Exclusive hiring events, customized to meet your specific, immediate needs, is another way we partner with businesses. These can take place at our Career Center in Lecanto, at your workplace or an alternate site. Additionally, job fairs provide a fast, efficient and effective way for multiple employers to meet hundreds of career seekers in one place, on one day.

These are just some of the ways we'd like to help you get this New Year off to a bright start. Call Frank Calascione, our Citrus County business development manager, at 352-249-3278, ext. 4206 or t 800-746-9950 to learn how to make the most of 2017.

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