

BY LAURA BYRNES, APR, CPRC, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER



CAUSE TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MONTH THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



Typically, September is recognized as National Workforce Development Month. I expect this year, the 19th, will not be the exception, though it is too early as of this writing for the annual proclamation marking it as such. Still, I figure this is as good a month as any to recognize the forces that play an important role in the economic vitality of our community, state and nation.

After all, September starts with Labor Day when we celebrate the social and economic impact of the American worker. And in a few weeks, Florida's frontline and leadership workforce professionals will gather in Orlando for an annual professional development summit – you may recall it was at this summit last year that Mark Vianello, executive director of Career and Technical Education for Marion County Public Schools, was named the Florida Workforce Partner of the Year for championing workforce collaboration.

Sure, CareerSource CLM's mission is all about workforce development. But as Mark Vianello and MCPS demonstrated, workforce development is really about collaborating with public-private partners, too numerous to mention here, to build prosperity for our region, state and nation.

It's also about the local business representatives who serve on myriad economic and workforce boards, including our own board of directors. For Marion County, our private-sector directors are Kathy Judkins, SECO's deputy director for Civic, Charitable and Government Affairs and our immediate past chair; Brandon Whiteman, key account executive for Benefit Advisors; Darlene Goddard, HR consultant and financial coach who also served as board chair; Jeff Chang, senior HR manager for Lockheed Martin; and Pat Reddish, consultant and retired HR manager at Signature Brands and also a former board chair. In addition to business representatives, our other Marion County directors are Fred Morgan, who represents IBEW Local Union 222 and serves as our treasurer; Charles Harris, Central Florida Community Action Agency; Jorge Martinez, Florida Department of Children and Families District 13; Judy Houlios, Ocala Housing Authority; Dr. Mark Paugh, College of Central Florida; Mark Vianello, MCPS; and Pete Beasley, of Rasmussen College.

And it is most definitely about the professional frontline staff at our career centers and affiliated Talent Center as well as mobile resource units in Marion, Citrus and Levy counties. These are the folks providing fee-free services to businesses and job candidates. We'll have much more on this next month.

It is thanks to the concerted, all-hands-on-deck efforts of economic, education and workforce partners in Marion County, and throughout our region and state, that Florida has actually experienced significant progress, to wit:

- For at least the seventh consecutive year, Chief Executive Magazine ranked the Sunshine State as the second Best State for Business (behind Texas).
- Florida came in at #12 in CNBC's annual "America's Top States for Business." Described as "not only an attractive destination for visitors, it is also a great place to get some capital for your business," ranking fourth in the nation for access to capital.
- Once again, Florida broke the Top 10 list of Forbes Magazine's Best States for Business, coming in at #7. The state's ranking was fueled by a robust Economic Climate, which Forbes ranked #4 in the nation, and #2 ranking for Fastest Projected Job Growth.
- Florida ranked #3 in Growth in Number of Small Businesses and #6 overall as Best State to Start a Business; significant in that, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, about a fifth of all startups typically don't survive past year one, and nearly half never make it to their fifth anniversary.

None of this happens in a vacuum but by working together to identify and meet the needs of businesses and job seekers. That's something to celebrate not just during National Workforce Development Month but throughout the year.

Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC, communications manager at CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, is Accredited in Public Relations, a Certified Public Relations Counselor and a Florida Certified Workforce Professional. She would love to hear from you and learn what kind of information you'd like to see each month. Please contact her at (352) 291-9559, (800) 434-5627, ext. 1234 or lbyrnes@careersourceclm.com.

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