



Virtual Career Fair Can Help Manufacture Opportunities For Students, Candidates & Businesses



This fall is gearing up to be a doozy when it comes to providing great job opportunities in Citrus, Levy and Marion counties.

But as with so many things we do in the next few months – from Trick-or-Treating to Giving Thanks to celebrating Hanukkah and Christmas – we're not likely to be doing things quite the same as we did a year ago.

If COVID-19 and social distancing has taught us anything, it has been to adapt to the way things are now. And that is exactly what we plan to do this month on October 15 with our annual Manufacturing and Logistics Career Fair, and next month with Paychecks for Patriots.

Both, it goes without saying, will be virtual events this time around. Before you roll your eyes and groan – *not another Zoom meeting* – we think you are going to like these because we have endeavored to make them as similar to in-person job fairs as possible.

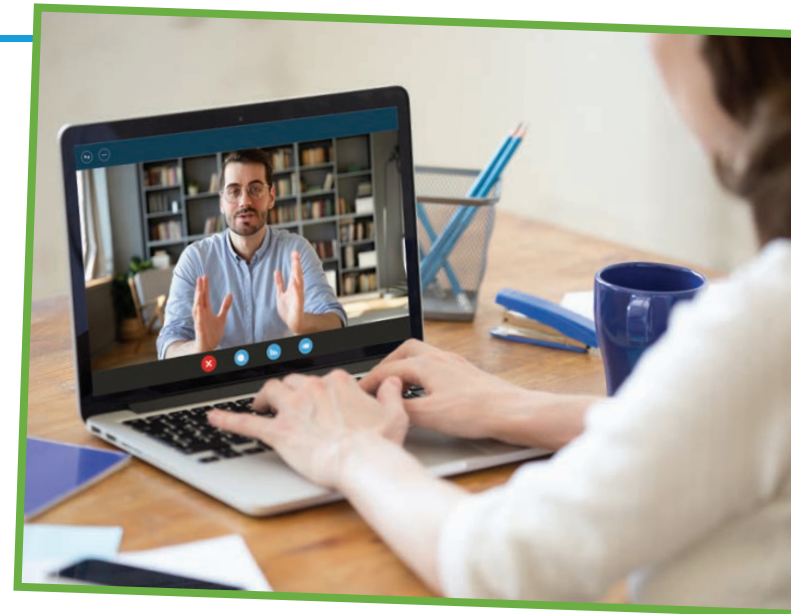
The Manufacturing and Logistics Career Fair takes place from 10 – 11:30 a.m. It is held in partnership with the Mid-FL Regional

Manufacturers Association (MRMA), Marion County Public Schools, Citrus County Schools and the School Board of Levy County.

Why Manufacturing and Logistics? To begin with, the job fair is held in conjunction with and recognition of National Manufacturing Month. And with the exception of what is hopefully a temporary dip in the economy, manufacturing is extremely robust in our region.

The most recent available U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages for our three counties shows 372 manufacturing establishments in our region employing 10,456 workers at an average weekly wage of \$894 – that's 20 percent more than the \$747 average weekly wage for all industries.

In Marion County, there are 269 manufacturers with 9,152 employees – an over-the-year increase of 3.8 percent, and an average weekly wage of \$1,039 compared to \$803 annual weekly wage for all industries – that's up 9.6 percent over-the-year and 29.4 percent more than the average



wage. Yes, you read that right.

So the industry is growing and pays far better than average wages. There are jobs to be had, and businesses actively hiring.

Let me first talk to job candidates. By attending the virtual career fair, you will be able to visit businesses' booths, check out their open positions, view company descriptions and information, tap into their social media and take a virtual tour or view company videos.

What's most important, you'll have the opportunity to chat in real time with recruiters and even take part in a face-to-face video chat, if so inclined.

Of particular interest to high school juniors and seniors is the opportunity to learn about special career academies and programs offered in our public schools as well as post-secondary and short-term opportunities in our region.

What you won't have to do is mask up and physically travel to a venue with myriad copies of your printed resume to hand out – if you upload it when you register, each business you visit will get a copy.

If you are a business and would like to take advantage of this, there is ample reason to do so. With social distancing and travel restrictions, this fee-free virtual career fair is a great alternative. Just think, you don't need to worry about making a major time commitment for yourself or other staff members, you won't incur the expense of traveling to and from a venue and you won't have to wrestle with setting up and taking down your display.

Job candidates interested in attending may register right now at bit.ly/MLCareerFair.

Businesses interested in learning more may contact our Business Development Team at 800-746-9950.

Earlier, I mentioned the Paychecks for Patriots Career Fair in November. That is still in the planning stages, but I can tell you it will be held using the same virtual approach. We'll have more information in next month's column as well as posted on our website and social channels as soon as possible. Businesses interested in recruiting US veterans are welcome to let us know by calling 800-746-9950.

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