

# Squeezing the most out of virtual & in-person services



When life hands you lemons, you make lemonade.

For CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, many of the signature events which, pre-COVID, meant hundreds of people happily engaged in one place, have shifted to virtual platforms. At the same time smaller, more safely controlled interactions continue to take place in-person.

And in a surprising way, this hybrid approach is proving to offer the best of both worlds.

The sixth annual Marion County Youth Career Expo, which took place in late January, is a great example of how going virtual really worked. Don't get me wrong, there's nothing like the excitement and energy of hundreds of middle- and high school students pouring out of a line of school buses to meet face-to-face with businesses representatives and industry leaders.

In years past, we have hosted 800-900 students over the two-day event. But of course, attendance is limited by the size of the venue and ability of Marion County Public Schools to get students to and from that venue. This year, add the whole issue of social distancing.

By going virtual, we were able to reach a record number of attendees by opening the event to home school, private and parochial students as well as public schoolers.

A total of 1,413 took part in the expo including 61 businesses and schools, 1,215 students, 54 teachers, 29 parents, CTE representatives from other school districts, our staff as well as staff from the expo partners (College of Central Florida, Marion County Public Schools, Public Education Foundation of Marion County, Ocala/Marion County Chamber & Economic Partnership, and the Mid-FL Regional Manufacturers Association).

The virtual expo offered three essential components of the in-person event: an expo hall where students interacted via Live Chat or video conferencing with area businesses; three keynote presentations; and in lieu of the business roundtables, industry tours featuring interviews with business leaders about key skills, education requirements and what they loved about their jobs.

Cory Weaver, CareerSource CLM's director of operations, said "We look forward to this event each year as it helps inform students of great opportunities right here in our community and gives businesses a sneak preview of the local talent preparing to enter the workforce."

The proof, as they say, is in the pudding. Let's hear from the students:

*"I recommend these expos to everyone. This is my second year attending and within both years*

*I gained more and more knowledge on not just career goals but also how to make college and careers more affordable."*

*"The event helped me decide what high school I want to go to."*

*"When I had questions, I would chat and someone would always reply back with the best attitude and amazing information."*

And while on the subject of going big and going virtual, the 2021 State of the Workforce Conference: Recover, Redesign, Rework will also be virtual this year. The conference takes place on Thursday, April 22; I'll have a lot more to say about it in next month's magazine.

In terms of free, in-person staff-assisted services, our career centers are currently open to the public weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. These services include one-on-one career counseling, assessments and resume, job search/referral and interview assistance. Anyone may also use our resource rooms -- equipped with computers with internet access, phones, faxes, and copiers -- to assist with job

searches.

We also have a variety of workshops, hiring events and other services and resources available at no charge.

Appointments are recommended but not required and walk-ins are welcome. All visitors will be asked to follow all public health safety measures, including use of proper face coverings. Virtual services continue to be available by phone, Live Chat, and email Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In Marion County, the Career Center is located at 2703 NE 14th St., in Ocala. To learn more about our in-person services, visit [careersourceclm.com](http://careersourceclm.com) or call 800-434-JOBS or 352-840-5700. For professional-level and highly skilled candidates, we also operate the Talent Center in partnership with the College of Central Florida at the Ocala Campus, 3003 SW College Road, Building 42, Suite 101. For more information, visit [talentcenter.org](http://talentcenter.org) or call 352-840-5762.



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## 2021 STATE OF WORKFORCE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Recover, Redesign, Rework

SAVE THE DATE!

**APRIL 22, 2021**  
8 A.M. - NOON



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