

Squeezing the Most Out of Virtual and In-Person Services

By Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC, Communications Manager, CareerSource CLM



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.

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

First, a heads up about what I mean when we talk about going big and going virtual. This year's State of the Workforce Conference: *Recover, Redesign, Rework* will move from in-person to a virtual platform. You may recall the inaugural conference, *Cultivating Your 21st Century Workforce*, was

held in 2019 at the Ocala Hilton. We had to cancel last year's *Focusing on Your 21st Century Workforce* due to the pandemic.

And now, as much as we'd love to hold the 2021 conference in-person again, for safety's sake and in an abundance of caution, we opted to go virtual. The conference takes place Thursday, April 22, from 8 a.m. to noon. It provides the opportunity to join in from the comfort of your home or office, rather than spending time traveling to and from - though believe me, it would be worth it.

At any rate, we'll have information about the conference on our website, social media and, of course, detailed here in next month's issue of Country Club Neighbors. So, Save the Date and stay tuned.

The next big virtual event will be the Citrus County Youth Career Expo, currently being planned to take place in mid-

May. This will be our third expo here; the first took place in 2017 at the College of Central Florida's Citrus County campus in Lecanto. Last year, it was held at Withlacoochee Technical College.

Like I said, while still in the planning stages if it's anything like the virtual youth career expo we just held in Marion County, it should exceed expectations. Naturally, in-person events are limited by the size of the venue and the ability to get students to and from that venue. This year, add the whole issue of social distancing. Granted, the Marion County expo starts off larger due to the larger student population, and typically, we have 800-900 students take part over the course of two days. By going virtual, we were able to reach a record number of attendees (1,413) by opening the event to home school, private and parochial students, as well as public schoolers.

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 business representatives and industry leaders.

But this year, COVID soured those plans, so we made lemonade.

Cory Weaver, CareerSource CLM's director of operations, said "We look forward to these events each year ... and we received great feedback from our business and education partners who had fun ... chatting with students about specific jobs and education programs."

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."

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

Appointments are recommended but not required, and walk-ins are welcome. All visitors will be asked to follow all public health safety measures, including the 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.

We also have a variety of workshops, hiring events, and other services and resources available at no charge. In addition to our library of virtual workshops, we now offer live Zoom workshops each Monday and Friday; you can find and register for these workshops on our calendar at careersourceclm.com.

In Citrus County, the Career Center is located at 683 S. Adolph Point, in Lecanto. To learn more about our fee-free services or upcoming events, visit our website or call 800-434-JOBS or 352-249-3278. For professional-level and highly skilled candidates, check out our affiliate Talent Center in partnership with the College of Central Florida located on the Ocala Campus, 3003 SW College Road, Building 42, Suite 101. For more information, visit 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

CareerSource
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OHRMA
Ocala Human Resources Management Association

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