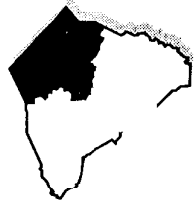


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# CEOs: focus on technical training

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Many four-year colleges and high schools are not preparing students for the jobs of the 21st century. And that is a major reason the county suffers from a shortage of qualified workers.

So said chief executive officers of several county businesses this morning.

In preparation for a Workforce Summit that will be held Nov. 30,

the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry invited the CEOs to discuss work-force issues at a breakfast sponsored by Mellon Bank at Franklin and Marshall College.

A panel of five Lancaster County CEOs shared their first-hand perspectives on the effects of a tight labor market.

"Four-year colleges are miss-

## Cite critical shortage of skilled workers here

ing the boat." Richard Witwer of Kalas Manufacturing, Inc. said. "They are not listening to what the community is saying. A paid, four-year education is not the future of this country."

"We (society) do not respect people that have to work with their hands," said Walt Legendstein of Certified Carpet. He said parents brag about their children

in college, many of whom after they graduate find they are not qualified technically for higher-paying jobs.

The panelists praised the job being done by two-year technical colleges like Harrisburg Area Community College and Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology, but said four-year colleges are dropping the ball in preparing stu-

dents for real-world jobs.

According to Stevens College of Technology, the demand for employees with a trained technical background is so great that there are an estimated 50 job openings for every three or four graduates.

The issue is critical to the county's future economic viability and quality of life, Legendstein said.

"If we think Lancaster County could not be another Shamokin,

"There will be a 28-percent increase in people over 65 over the next 20 years," he said. "Fifty percent of teachers will be eligible to retire in the next five years,"

A great shortage of nurses and teachers is expected, he added. "Who is going to take care of us and educate our children?" Wolfe asked.

The overall worker shortage is so bad, there is a waiting list for employers who want to hire prison inmates upon their release, he said.

Employers need to work harder to retain their current employees, the panelists said.

That includes, for example, showing workers what advanced training is available to them, not just telling them the company will pay for further education.

Another issue the panelists agreed on was diversity of the work force.

"This is a real issue in Lancaster County," Witwer said. "We have to address it if we want to continue our quality of life."

The breakfast today was one of two meetings that are being held to prepare CEOs and school district superintendents for the Workforce Summit.

"The summit will bring together representatives from all sectors of the community to develop solutions for the current work-force shortage in the county.

It is the cooperative effort of the Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board, The Lancaster Chamber, the Economic Development Company, the County of Lancaster, the Lancaster County Association for Human Resource Management and the United Way.

Health Alliance said the public Young of the Lancaster said, "It can happen to us in the next 20 years."

Phil Wenger of Isaac's Deli Inc. said employers need to foster closer relationships with school districts and colleges and communicate their needs better.

Before the panel discussion, Dr. Ira Wolfe, of Success Performance Solutions, provided a look into the future of Lancaster County's work force by presenting some statistics.

In surveying 326 job-fair attendees he found that:

- 57 percent were currently working,
- 26 percent completed a four-year college program,
- 31 percent completed high school,
- 20 percent held more than one job in the last year,
- 45 percent held more than one job in the last three years,
- 55 percent were paid \$10 or less per hour.

Wolfe warned the business leaders that the worker shortage in the nation is not going to be an easy problem to solve.

He blamed it on a shrinking birth rate and longer life expectancy, and said the national unemployment rate would dip under 2 percent by 2020.

## Technical training

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