

Looking for jobs? They're out there

PITTSFIELD » It may not feel like a robust economy at this point, but there are jobs in the Berkshires and the rest of the state that are going unfilled.

On Jan. 8, the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the U.S. economy added 2.65 million jobs in 2015 — which represents a solid year for job growth.

December was the 63rd consecutive month of positive job growth — the best stretch since 1939 — and the 70th consecutive month in which there was private-sector job growth, which is the longest on record. The overall unemployment rate remained at 5.0 percent, which is still the lowest it's been since February 2008.

In Berkshire County, the Pittsfield Metro area added 200 jobs between November 2014-November 2015, and the Berkshire County employment rate is at 5.3 percent (down 0.3 percent from a year ago).

According to Massachusetts' Job Quest database, there are 116,455 job openings in the state. There were 1,685 job openings in Berkshire County as of Jan. 13. Berkshire County's job vacancy



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rate is 5.1 percent compared to Massachusetts' at 4.8 percent. Almost half of these positions — 45 percent — are considered to be professional or technical jobs.

So where are all these jobs in the Berkshires? Here's a sampler from Job Quest.

As of Jan. 13, there were 365 open positions for nurses, physicians, technicians and related positions; 178 in sales such as customer service, cashiers, managers and clerks; 142 in the transportation sector (truck and delivery drivers); and 141 in office or administrative support (clerks, payroll, schedulers or bookkeeping).

That's not all. There were 116 available positions in the computer field in software design, development and data analysts; 94 in food preparation (chefs, waitstaff, bartenders); 78 in architect/engineering fields; 76 in management; 47 in installation/maintenance jobs like automotive or HVAC; 41 in health care support (nursing and dental assistants); and 40 in personal care areas like fitness, spas and caregivers.

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Finally, there were 36 positions available in education; 36 in social services; 32 in business/finance; and 31 in art and design areas like social media and graphic design.

These are the job opportunities that companies report to the state, and in our estimation, there are probably another 1,000 jobs in the hidden job market and other venues where companies post their job opportunities. To find out more about these job openings, visit <http://jobquest.detma.org>.

For those actively looking for employment who cannot find it, please don't shoot the messenger! Job hunting is challenging and you have to be persistent, but there are jobs out there if you have the right attitude, motivation, and the right skills.

Our human resource manager tell us that 65 percent of companies use social networking sites to recruit job candidates, with recruiters often going beyond sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and others.

We recommend registering with BerkshireWorks Career Center (www.berkshirerworks.org) to help

prepare for and find the perfect Berkshire employment opportunity for you. BerkshireWorks provides job search assistance, direct referrals, training, counseling, and career development resources to promote career advancement or new employment opportunities.

Transition resources

Every company experiences peaks, valleys, and times of transition. With the announcement this week of several Berkshire County companies closing and/or downsizing, the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, Inc. (BCREB) wanted to inform companies that there is a free Rapid Response program in Massachusetts to help companies who are in transition mode, whether they are expanding or downsizing.

The Massachusetts Department of Career Services Rapid Response Team provides statewide, early intervention, and no-cost re-employment services for companies and their employees affected by layoffs and closings. Companies working with Rapid Response can expect:

- A quick response to your transition planning needs

- Confidentiality regarding your business needs

- Information about alternatives that could possibly lessen the impact of a layoff

- Information to even avoid the layoff altogether
- Pre-layoff services designed to help workers shorten their transition time

- Assistance in preparing affected workers to find new employment

- Information about the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Act (WARN) and plant closing laws

- Information on One-Stop Career Centers and Unemployment Insurance

- Assistance in maintaining worker morale and productivity during the transition

Last year alone, seven Berkshire County companies impacting 530 employees were assisted by the Rapid Response Team. Rapid Response's quality, on-site outplacement services provide an effective and smooth transition to new employment for all affected employees, and are customized to each company's needs and expectations.

The Rapid Response Team also works closely with companies to avert layoffs and keep a skilled workforce engaged in the

existing regional economy or industry. Rapid Response tries to identify the exact needs of a company in crisis. Once the needs are assessed then the team tries to help the company establish partnerships with other organizations and build networks to help them try and acquire those needs meant to reduce the possibility of layoffs or a plant closure. Employers are also educated on various state and local programs and agencies to help with cost-sharing, training opportunities, tax incentives, business loans, succession planning and other resources.

No matter what the size of your business or the size of your transition, the Rapid Response Team can help you at every step. While you may not be able to change the business conditions that make layoffs necessary, calling the Rapid Response Team can reduce the cost of layoffs for you and your employees.

For more information, visit www.mass.gov/rapidresponse or contact the BCREB at 413 442-7177 ext. 150.

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