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# Job fair offers aid to out-of-work Mason County workers

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When one door closes, another door opens.

In April, one door shut for hundreds of local employees who were to lose their jobs when the Shelton locations of the Simpson Lumber Co. closed. However, the company, with several other community organizations, attempted to open another door for those employees this past week.

Simpson partnered with the Economic Development Council of Mason County (EDC) to host a job fair June 10 at the Mason Transit Authority's Transit-Community Center.

The gymnasium was packed as laid-off mill employees and members of the community perused potential employers.

"There has been a huge effort all around to make sure that these people are able to find employment," said Lynn Longan, chief executive director for the EDC.

Employers were required to have at least three full-time job openings to participate in the fair.

In addition to hosting the fair, the EDC enacted several methods to make sure job fair attendees got the most out of the event. Attendees filled out and submitted information sheets on their way into the fair, which the EDC will keep on file for the participating employers. If any employer has an opening in the future, they can contact job fair attendees to fill the spot.

More than 350 people attended the fair. Many of these were Simpson employees, but the fair was open to the general public.

## SHUT DOWN

In April, Simpson announced it would close its doors at its Shelton operations after Sierra Pacific Industries bought the mill and announced plans to eventually construct at least one new sawmill in Shelton. This new mill is not scheduled to open until 2017.

Due to the announcement, more



Journal photo by Brianna Loper  
Auston Mayer fills out a job application June 10 outside the job fair hosted in the Mason Transit Authority's Transit-Community Center in downtown Shelton.

than 270 employees were suddenly out of work.

"I have four kids at home, so I have to have a job," said Jose Perry, who attended the job fair. Perry worked for Simpson for four years before being laid off in the spring, but said the job fair looked like a good opportunity to find a new career.

"There's a lot going on here, I think I've handed out six or eight resumes," he said. "There's a lot of interesting work here."

Simpson established the job fair with help from the EDC. The two eventually teamed up with several other local organizations, including Pacific Mountain Work Force Development and WorkSource, to get word out about the fair.

"We've had such a great response," Longan said. "Businesses would see the fair (advertised) on the news and call us to say, 'We have openings. How can we participate?'"

Thanks to a booming response, Longan said the EDC plans to have another similar fair in the fall.

Another job fair is planned for March, when Olympic Panel Products closes its doors.

"The important thing is that we need to keep them engaged, that this doesn't die down," Longan said. "We,



# Job fair: 49 employers took part in employment event

As a community, need to make sure this effort doesn't stop here, today."

## A PLETHORA OF OPTIONS

By final count, 49 employers squeezed into the gymnasium at the Transit-Community Center, all with employment opportunities for job fair attendees.

Many of the businesses had positions available that required similar skills to those who worked at the lumber mill. Aerospace, manufacturing, machining and other industrial employers showcased their positions. However, other employers, such as two local casinos

and financial advisers, also hosted booths at the fair.

At least five schools and career training programs attended the fair for those who wanted to attend school for a new career path or receive additional education. A training school for bus and commercial vehicle drivers was even in attendance.

Area officials and representatives got involved as well, contacting employers they knew to encourage participation. U.S. Rep. Derek Kilmer contacted the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, while other legislators contacted the Washington State Patrol, according to Longan.

*continued from page A-1*

JUNE 18th 2015

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