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Thousands seeking work crowd Covelli Centre during job fair

September 16, 2010 - By LARRY RINGLER Tribune Chronicle

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YOUNGSTOWN The stress of being unemployed - but also the hope of finding work at the area's biggest job fair - was visible on Braceville resident Doug Postlethwait's face as he went job hunting Wednesday.

"I'm trying to find full-time work to support my four kids and wife. We're struggling really hard. The economy's not getting any better," said Postlethwait, 42, as he got job information at the Windsor House table shortly after the Oh-Penn Job Expo opened at noon at the Covelli Centre in downtown Youngstown.

Postlethwait said he's afraid of losing his home after being laid off in 2008 from the Warren operation of Victory Packaging in Cleveland.

An emergency medical technician with the Braceville Fire Department and another area fire department, along with Action Ambulance, Postlethwait said he was looking at shipping and receiving work with Windsor House, a Girard company with 11 long-term care facilities and about 1,700 workers.

Windsor House Human Resources Coordinator Janice Hardman said the business is looking for state-tested licensed practical nurses and registered nurses. The job expo is a "good way to find workers. There's always a large selection," she said.

Wednesday's event drew 90 employers, plus 30 training providers ranging from universities to nursing and truck driving schools, officials said. They gave a preliminary estimate of 3,500 jobseekers attending the expo hoping to fill more than 1,600 jobs.

"We called every employer who registered and asked what jobs they were hiring for and how many. We got only half respondents, and the 1,600 was based on that," said Gloria Mathews, spokeswoman for the Mahoning and Columbiana Counties One-Stop Workforce System, which along with the Trumbull County One-Stop sponsored event for the three Ohio county event, and the PA Career Link for Lawrence and Mercer in Pennsylvania.

Not all the openings are entry-level or labor-oriented, Mathews said.

"Some pay up to \$70,000 a year. There are a lot of good jobs," she said.

Bill Turner, Workforce Administrator for the Trumbull County One-Stop job office in Warren, partly attributed the number of jobs to development of the Marcellus Shale natural gas formation under eastern Ohio, Pennsylvania and neighboring states, but also a



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gradual economic recovery that is bringing jobseekers back into the market.

"A lot of people are looking again due to encouraging news. They have more options than they did six months ago," he said.

Turner said the expo drew praise for the quality of candidates, training and information that was offered.

The Marcellus Shale is prompting global steel tubemaker V&M Star to hire 350 workers to staff the new fine-quality tube mill it's building.

Mary Ann DeCapita in V&M's human resources said the company has received more than 6,000 applications over the Internet but continues to seek engineering and skilled trades workers, such as 24 electronic technicians to troubleshoot the computer programs that run the plant's equipment.

Production workers will be needed in the last three months of this year and early in 2011 as the new plant gets closer to opening toward the end of 2011

Patriot Special Metals, a new company in North Jackson that makes forged steel parts for oil and gas drilling, as well as aerospace, nuclear and military customers, "desperately" needs three or four more skilled trades maintenance workers as it prepares to start production in October, Human Resources Director Victoria Neff said.

The company, which will operate two new factories in North Jackson, is seeking workers with "good attitudes and strong work ethics" out of the thousands of resumes it has received, Neff said.

Production openings include overhead crane operators and forklift drivers who preferably have had manufacturing experience, although "we can train," she said.

Neff said finding maintenance workers has been hard.

"Our equipment will be the first in North America," she said, referring to the hydraulic radial forge that's fully automated with four dies, and is hydraulically operated. There are only five of the forges in the world, she said.

Former Warren resident Frank Sanchez, 46, was one expo attendee seeking to catch on with Patriot.

"I've been trying to find a job for two months. It's hard," said Sanchez, now a Salem resident who was laid off from Koppel Steel in Koppel, Pa.

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