

Look Who's Talking

Kevin Stinnett comments on GreatHires:



“GreatHires is a very user-friendly system. It allows an individual employer to specify the actual positions they want filled from a generic standpoint all the way to a very detailed standpoint. I’ve used several different job sites such as Monster, Hot Jobs... and I think that GreatHires is a lot better than all the rest I’ve used so far.”

Kevin Stinnett,
AJM Packaging
Joplin, MO

8 - Workforce Zone

Why New Hires Fail

According to a study by Leadership IQ, 46% of newly hired employees will fail within 18 months. But contrary to popular belief, lack of technical skills is rarely the primary reason. Rather, poor interpersonal skills overlooked during the interview process are most often to blame.

The three-year study looked at over 20,000 employees hired by 5,247 managers from 312 public, private, business, and healthcare organizations. Leadership IQ found that 26% of new hires fail because they can’t accept feedback, 23% because they are unable to understand and manage their emotions, 17% because they lack motivation to excel, 15% because they have the wrong temperament for the job, and only 11% because they lack the necessary skills.

Interestingly, 82% of managers reported in hindsight that there were subtle clues in the interview process that should have warned them they were headed for trouble. ■

Barry County Expansion (From Page Three)

“I am pleased that state, local and company officials were able to work together to make this expansion possible, thereby creating new jobs and a greater demand for locally grown agricultural products,” Gov. Matt Blunt noted as the funds were announced. “It is important that Missouri has adequate resources available so our smaller communities and counties can make necessary infrastructure improvements that will help them win business location or expansion projects.

The grant was made under the Community Development Block Grant program, administered by DED. Funds will be released to Barry County as certain requirements set forth by the program are met. The program provides economic development grants and loan funds to cities with a population under 50,000 and counties under 200,000 to assist in the location of new industry and the expansion or retention of existing businesses. ■



Workforce Investment Board of
Southwest Missouri
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***Happy Holidays and
Best Wishes for the
New Year from your
friends at the Missouri
Career Center!***

mailing
permit #

Workforce ZONE

News you can use from the Business Services Team at the Missouri Career Centers of Joplin and Monett
www.workforcezone.com

Credential Project Raises the Bar for Entry-Level Workers

The Workforce Investment Board of Southwest Missouri (WIB) has announced their pursuit to provide an assessment-based certification to affirm that entry-level job seekers have communication, interpersonal, decision-making, and lifelong learning skills. The Equipped for the Future Work Readiness Credential, now under development with U.S. Chamber of Commerce, symbolizes the partnership opportunity for Southwest Missouri business and community leaders to meet critical goals for ensuring a competitive workforce and a productive economy.

The Skills Gap and Business Needs Consortium of the WIB is comprised of pilot businesses, economic development organizations, and training institutions as partners in the Work Readiness Credential effort. The Consortium identified the project as an opportunity to help shorten the gap in

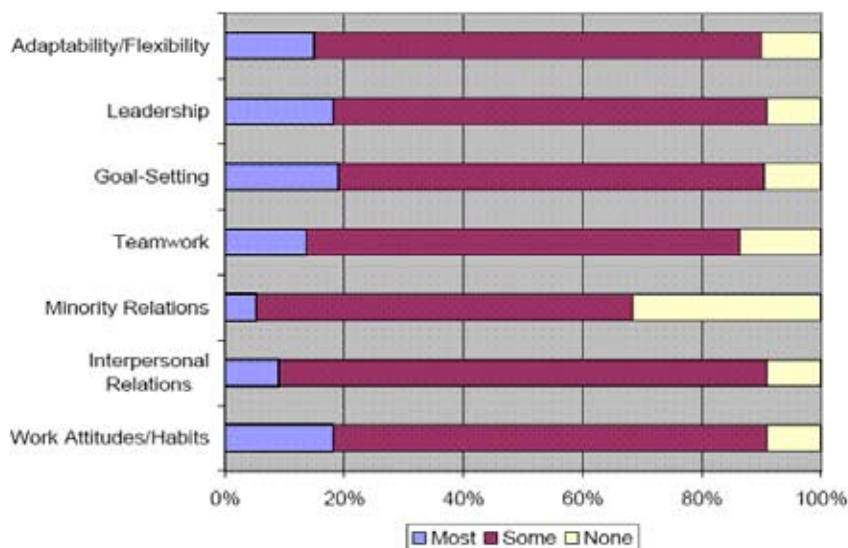
soft skills between employer expectations and entry-level workers throughout the region. The credential seeks to streamline the hiring process by identifying a work-ready pool of job applicants; to assist the Missouri Career Center with referring work-ready applicants to their business customers, and to help individuals develop the knowledge and skills required in the 21st century workplace.

Businesses in Southwest Missouri have identified gaps in soft skills, according to research in the Opportunity Outlook/State of the Workforce report from the Workforce Investment Board released at the Summit on the Workforce last July. These skill gaps cost time, money, and lost opportunities for the region's economy. Businesses want a standard for quality and they want their applicants and incumbent workers to meet higher standards for the workplace.

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Current Employees Need Training in Soft Skills

Source: Employer Survey for *Opportunity Outlook 2005*
Workforce Investment Board of Southwest Missouri



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NEWSLETTER INFO

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Information for *Workforce Zone* has been secured from sources we believe to be reliable, but the WIB makes no representation or warranties, express or implied, as to the accuracy of the information. The intent of the articles from this resource is to provide business professionals and community leaders with informative and interesting articles and news about the WIB, its partners, and local non-profit organizations. Appropriate legal, accounting, financial, or medical advice and expert assistance should always be sought from a competent professional.

Grant Targets Remaining Hurricane Victims

Southwest Missouri has 393 members in 145 families displaced by recent natural disasters in the Gulf region. Those individuals are targeted to benefit from a federal grant to provide workforce counseling services that link job seekers to local businesses through the Missouri Career Centers.

The U.S. Department of Labor approved the funding to pay for four reintegration counselors who will provide intensive career and life counseling directly to individuals displaced due to the recent hurricanes. Missouri is one of 12 states sharing a total of \$15 million in federal grants from the Labor Department. The Missouri grant was secured through an application from the Department of Economic Development's Workforce Development Division.

"Missouri has opened its arms to those devastated by the hurricanes and these federal funds will allow us to help the evacuees rebuild their lives so they can secure a future both for themselves and their families," noted Missouri Governor Matt Blunt during a formal announcement of the grant. "With this federal

Work Readiness (From Page One)

The credential is based on the skills identified by more than 600 businesses as critical for performance of entry-level work. Nationally, field testing of the work readiness assessment is underway with the goal of rolling out the credential in the Spring of 2006. The WIB has engaged six pilot businesses to participate in recruitment services based on the higher levels of workforce quality contained in the credential. Part of the value the WIB identified locally for the project is its emerging nationwide acceptance and prominence as the premiere work readiness standard. This nationally validated standard enables businesses with offices across the country to achieve the same high quality workforce in every location. Southwest Missouri also benefits from the increased competitiveness of its workforce in attracting new commercial investment and job creation for the region.

The WIB is seeking grant support for the pilot project that would assess and/or train more than

funding we can help ensure that the evacuees will have opportunities to find meaningful employment in order to improve their quality of life."

The grant will pay for supplies, equipment, travel, salaries and fringe benefits for a specialized job counselor. Southwest region evacuees are slated to receive services from a counselor to be based in the Missouri Career Center at Springfield. Statewide, additional counselors will be based in St. Louis, Kansas City, and Cape Girardeau. The four counselors will also coordinate efforts to reach the balance of evacuees in the remainder of the state.

According to the most recent information provided by the State Emergency Management Agency and the Red Cross, there is an estimated 5,400 evacuees in St. Louis Metro, 4,000 evacuees in Kansas City Metro, 3,200 evacuees in Springfield Metro, 900 evacuees in the Cape Girardeau area and about 2,000 in the rest of Missouri.

Several hundred evacuees are currently utilizing Missouri Career Centers and Greathires.org, the state's electronic job bank, to connect to employment opportunities across the state. This grant will help bolster those activities by providing more intensive services to evacuees.

2,000 local job seekers for the Work Readiness Credential. The \$175 thousand grant, currently being evaluated by the Missouri Division of Workforce Development, would provide testing and training grants to pilot businesses for applying the credential to their incumbent workforce groups. Notification of the grant award could come in mid-December.

The success of the Work Readiness Credential depends on wide-scale participation from area business leaders. Over the coming weeks, the WIB will be seeking endorsements from local business associations and chambers of commerce in Southwest Missouri.

Participating businesses that recognize the credential would provide fast-track, expedited hiring processes for the qualified applicants to encourage job seekers and students to beef up their work skills for the future. Business leaders that are ready to raise the bar for Southwest Missouri's workforce can contact Jasen Jones at the WIB for more information. Call (417) 629-3000 or contact the WIB by email, ceo@workforcezone.net. ■



Barry County Business Utilizes Grant in Major Expansion Project

A state grant will help fund road improvements near Cassville, facilitating a \$1.5 million expansion and a new feed mill for George's Farms. The company will create 27 new jobs as it increases production capacity.

The Missouri Department of Economic Development approved a \$266,500 industrial infrastructure Community Development Block Grant for Barry County. The funds will be used to construct entrances into the industrial site from both Highway 37 and Highway W. The project will also include a southbound deceleration lane and a northbound left turn lane. CDBG funds will be used to help

fund the new left and right turning lanes on Highway 37. These road improvements will boost safety and maintain traffic flow through the area as the number of trucks and passenger cars entering the facility increases because of the expansion.

Springdale, Ark.-based George's Inc. is a fully integrated poultry operation. The company established a poultry processing plant and a hatchery near Cassville in 1987. Chicken broilers processed at the Missouri plant are distributed to major fast-food chains, grocery food chains, independent grocery stores and institutional customers in the Midwest and western United States. The company will expand its operation by building a new feed mill that will provide feed grain to its area growers and producers and increase demand for local agriculture products.

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Economic Development Study Provides New Insights Into Available Labor for Region

Despite traditionally low unemployment rates, new research released by the Southwest Missouri Development Alliance indicates an ample supply of labor is available for new and expanding businesses in the area. An independent analysis completed recently by the Docking Institute for Public Affairs on behalf of the Alliance expands the view of the labor market beyond traditional government employment statistics.

The study identifies seventeen counties in Southwest Missouri, Southeast Kansas, and Northeast Oklahoma that comprise the labor market for the region. From the half-million residents in this region, nearly 21% (roughly 110 thousand individuals) are considered to be part of the pool of available labor. This pool represents those who are looking for employment or would consider changing jobs for the right employment opportunity.

The trends provide valuable intelligence to local business and community leaders when it comes to attracting and retaining a quality workforce. The report identifies a segment of the labor market seriously seeking new employment, the skills and experience of that active market, and the considerations (pay, benefits, commuting) important to them in their

pursuit of new opportunities. The research also examines the perceptions of underemployment in the available labor pool and identifies workers that would consider starting their own businesses.

Nearly a quarter of the labor market is actively looking for employment, according to the report's projections. Another 65% would consider new and/or different employment if the opportunities were right. Those opportunities might drive individuals to work outside their primary occupational field or seek opportunities in their field that better utilize their skills. The most important benefits desired by the workers surveyed are good health benefits, on-the-job training, good retirement, and good salary or hourly pay.

Grants from the Workforce Investment Board of Southwest Missouri and the Empire District Electric Company funded the labor study, in conjunction with economic development partnerships through the Southwest Missouri Development Alliance. Participating local economic development sponsors in the Alliance initiative included Carl Junction, Lamar, Joplin, Mt. Vernon, Neosho, Webb City, and the Harry S Truman Coordinating Council.

The Labor Availability Analysis will be the focus of a luncheon presentation at the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, December 8th. For more information on the luncheon event, contact the Joplin Chamber at (417) 624-4150 or send an email to scloyd@joplincc.com. ■

Bosses Hard to Beat

Managers who worry their employees are angling for their position can rest easier. Most workers don't want to be the boss, according to a recent survey by staffing company OfficeTeam. Of those surveyed, 71% say they don't want their manager's job and 63% don't think they could do a better job than their current boss. "The top jobs can be demanding and many employees acknowledge that fact, even if they may not always express their appreciation for their manager's efforts," said Diane Domeyer, executive director of OfficeTeam.

Labor Availability Results Now Available for Download

Get your copy of the Southwest Missouri Labor Availability Study from the web. The region-wide study is downloadable in Portable Document Format (PDF) online at <http://www.workforcezone.com/news/SWMORegionalLabor%20Study2005.pdf>.

What's Different About this Labor Availability Study?

Much of the traditional labor market data comes from actual census or unemployment system data through state and federal government sources. The Southwest Missouri Labor Availability Study is a psychographic survey that analyzes the behaviors and attitudes of employees in the region towards issues like underemployment and commuting.

Resources Help Businesses Deal With Disasters

Small and medium-sized businesses in Missouri and across the nation now have a blueprint for dealing with disasters thanks to the Ready Program developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The Ready Program -- which can be accessed at <http://www.ready.gov> -- provides disaster preparedness information for businesses ranging from employee disaster training to dealing with utility disruptions and cyber security.

While 92 percent of respondents to a recent Ad Council survey felt it was very important or somewhat important for businesses to prepare for a catastrophic disaster, only 39 percent said their company had a disaster plan in place.

Tri-State HR Group Announces New Leadership

The November Meeting of the Tri-State Human Resources Association netted new officers for 2006. Tracy Lemmons from the Division of Workforce Development will lead the organization as President. Vice-President is Debbie Dutch-Kelly of Missouri Southern State University. Suzanne Alumbaugh of Community Bank and Trust is the Treasurer and the Secretary role will be filled by Duane Bullard of La-Z-Boy.

Southwest Missouri Excellence Recognized at State Workforce Conference

The Missouri Governors Conference on Workforce Development, held October 12-14 at the Lake of Ozarks, netted two awards for Southwest Missouri. The region was also recognized for its excellence in workforce development through presentations at the conference.

Rob O'Brian, director of the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce, was awarded the Excellence in Economic Development Leadership award. Rob recently served as president of the Missouri Economic Development Council and was key in advocating for pro-business environment initiatives that positioned Missouri as a competitive state for job retention, commercial investment, and new job creation. Locally, Rob and the Chamber helped bring the Workforce Investment Board through a transition that revitalized career center services in the region. Rob's leadership helped build strong linkages with economic development organizations throughout the region. The Career Center's business services are now regularly represented at the table when working with high profile new and expanding companies, thanks in part to Rob's efforts. Pictured: Rod Nunn, Director for DWD (right), and Lew Chartock, Acting Chair of MTEC (left) present the Economic Development Leadership Award to Rob O'Brian (center).

Falling in line with the conference theme of "Open for Business: Preparing a Competitive Workforce," the Individual Achievement Award recipients were honored for their efforts in successfully preparing for new career opportunities through achieving training and employment goals with assistance from the Career Center. Daren Godfrey, of Aurora, was homeless and without a job in January 2005 as he began working with the VOICES Youth Program. The youth program is operated

by the Alliance for Business Consulting and Development under a contract with the Workforce Investment Board. This 19-year-old youth enrolled and completed truck driver training at Crowder College and was hired at a top wage by C.E. Barton and Company as a delivery driver.

Other highlights of the conference included a general session on new initiatives for workforce development across the state. Rod Nunn, director of the Missouri Division for Workforce Development, emphasized local best practices for employment and training programs, including projects in Kansas City and Joplin. His presentation profiled the region's approach to demonstrating return on investment in economic development activities and a project related to advancing career pathways in the healthcare field for the region.



Workforce Investment Board Executive Director Jasen Jones, along with Rob O'Brian of the Joplin Chamber, presented a workshop at the request of state officials. A packed crowd attended the session, Best Practices: WIBs Making the Connection with Economic Development. This informative and entertaining workshop showcased the unique approach for partnership success in Southwest Missouri and explored other promising models across the nation.

The 23rd annual conference had a total registration of more than 800 local workforce and business leaders from across Missouri. The event is sponsored by the Missouri Division of Workforce Development and the Missouri Training and Employment Council. ■



From Corrections to Careers...Businesses Discover New Workforce Recruiting Solutions

There are more than thirty thousand offenders incarcerated in Missouri Department of Corrections facilities statewide. Of those individuals, 97% are headed back to communities across the state, including Southwest Missouri. The Missouri Career Centers in Joplin and Monett are joining forces with other centers statewide and the Missouri Department of Corrections to help ex-offenders successfully re-enter society. Partnerships with businesses in the region will be crucial to make re-entry a success.

The release of thousands of inmates presents both challenges and opportunities for Missouri's communities. While programs exist to help re-integrate ex-offenders into community life, studies have shown that employment ties directly to the success of an individual outside of prison. Getting ex-offenders into full-time employment quickly upon their release is good for Missouri's communities and helps fill the gap needed for available, qualified workers.

While not every occupation is suitable for an ex-offender, several companies in Southwest Missouri may find value in this workforce supply. The connection of Missouri Career Centers to the corrections system helps prepare ex-offenders to become work ready. While incarcerated, offenders have daily work assignments that teach punctuality and work ethics, preparing them for employment once they reenter the community. Offenders also receive employment skills training, which includes instruction on completing a resume, mock interviews, and job retention.

Beyond job-building skills, offenders who do not have a GED or high school diploma attend GED classes daily. As a result, the Department of Corrections produces the highest number of individuals receiving their GED in the state of Missouri. The Corrections Department uses twenty-three apprenticeship training programs

certified by the U.S. Department of Labor to produce skills in high demand by employers.

Two incentive programs are geared to help businesses utilize the ex-offender workforce. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is available to private businesses that hire targeted groups of workers, including ex-offenders. The Federal Bonding Program provides bonding insurance to employers willing to hire certain high-risk applicants who may otherwise be denied coverage from commercial bond carriers. The bonds protect employers against theft, forgery, larceny, and embezzlement.

To assist the transition from Corrections to career life, the Division of Probation and Parole regularly monitors the ex-offenders.

Through local offices in Joplin, Neosho, and Aurora, the division serves as an external support system for the ex-offenders and is another resource for business employers. Mandatory drug testing is a mechanism for ex-offenders through Probation and Parole to assist in the offenders' long term success.

Ex-offenders re-enter Missouri's workforce with GEDs and training in any of 23 apprenticeship opportunities

In most cases, it is legal for a business to hire an ex-offender. While there are some types of jobs that individuals with certain criminal histories cannot hold due to the nature of the job, most occupations can be open to ex-offenders. Factors to consider when making an individual determination about a job applicant may include: relevance of the criminal offense to the job being sought, time elapsed since the offense, magnitude of the offense, possible work-related characteristics of the offense, and the ex-offender's attitude regarding the offense.

Approximately twenty-five percent of Americans have criminal records. Helping career success of ex-offenders improves public safety, since people with jobs commit fewer crimes than those without jobs. Communities benefit when qualified workers are out earning a living and contributing to society. Instead of paying \$14,000+ a year to house an inmate in prison, it is more cost effective to help individuals earn a living and contribute to the tax base. ■

Advanced Tech Center Receives Funding Boost

In a cooperative effort to provide services to entrepreneurs at the earliest stage in the development of promising advanced-technology companies, the Department of Economic Development and Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation announced an agreement to open the Joseph Newman Business and Technology Innovation Center in Joplin.

This effort to promote job creation through innovation comes from the Department of Economic Development (DED) and their allocation of \$125,275 to fund the center that will be run by the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation. The center will be located at 320 East Fourth Street in Joplin.

"This agreement represents a partnership that will provide us with the tools for innovation that can lead to the creation of high quality, high paying, family supporting jobs for Missourians while at the same time strengthening Missouri's growing technology sector," said Greg Steinhoff, director of the Missouri Department of Economic Development. "These innovation centers are part of Gov. Blunt's pro-jobs agenda and his commitment to improving the state's entrepreneurial climate."

DED currently contracts with innovation centers in Cape Girardeau, St. Louis, Rolla and Columbia.



O*NET Upgraded

The new O*NET 8.0 database has been deployed for O*NET Online. This 4th major update brings the number of comprehensively updated occupations to 380. In addition, numerous application enhancements have been made. Another major update is scheduled for later in December. To download the 8.0 database, go to <http://onetcenter.org/database.html>.

MERIC Upgraded

A powerful array of new labor market information is now part of the arsenal of business intelligence through MERIC, the Missouri Economic Research Information Center. MERIC re-organized their website to better serve its customers and better present the wide variety of information the research center has to offer.

Several new data applications are now available thanks to the upgrade. Current Employment Statistics provides more timely data and reports on employment, hours, and earnings of workers on non-farm payrolls. The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages industry information is organized by NAICS sectors. Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates along with Occupational Employment Projections are now featured at MERIC, along with Industry Employment Projections and a new Employer Locator tool.



Market Research Made Easier

You can have the best product or service in the world, but if no one wants it, needs it or can afford it, you just have the best product or service in the world.

And while you can't actually guarantee there will be an audience for what you want to sell, you can make an informed prediction with the assistance of a new tool developed by the Business Research Information Development Group (BRIDG) through Missouri's Small Business Development Centers.

The Business Indicators Analysis Tool is an online resource that provides prospective or existing business owners with accurate and meaningful data to use in developing their marketing or business plan. Data on a specific industry or on customer demographics is easily accessible. Users can produce radius maps and tables and access additional important information such as purchasing and buying power for a community or region. The tool is located at <http://missouribusiness.net/bridg/indicators>.

"This tool allows users to create the necessary projections and develop a wide range of scenarios so they truly can make the best decisions for their businesses," says Dr. Gwen Richtermeyer, BRIDG director, and one of the developers of the Business Indicators Analysis Tool.

"All of the research on entrepreneurship tells us that conducting market research is one of the most challenging problems business owners face, so we decided to develop a tool that will make it easier to find critical market information."

The Business Indicators Analysis Tool was created in partnership with the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSED) at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The tool also incorporates resources from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for information on purchasing power by region.

"When considering business start-up, business expansion, new product development or many other business changes, entrepreneurs need to examine the target market for their product or service, identify the characteristics of their customers and then assess their competition,"

Richtermeyer says. "This tool allows them to do all of that very conveniently."

Reliable financial projections are dependent upon the characteristics of a target market. In other words, business owners need to know where their customers are and how much they spend on the type of product or service the business is attempting to sell.

Likewise, Richtermeyer says, it's important to know something about customers so business owners can develop the best strategy to reach them. What do they look like in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, occupation and marital status? Where do they live and work? What level of education do they have? What is their income? How large is their family?

The third component is the competition, and Richtermeyer says it's important to understand competition to better assess one's own strengths and weaknesses.

"Businesses need to understand not only how many competitors they face, but what those competitors are like," Richtermeyer adds. "How do competitors differ from the business you are starting or operating? How are they similar? Are those competitors' businesses growing? Do they offer benefits or features you don't?"

"The Business Indicators Analysis Tool can help entrepreneurs answer key questions and focus their efforts in targeting the right market for their products and services. There is a wealth of information here, and it's all available at no cost. I would encourage anyone considering a business start-up, expansion or diversification to use this powerful tool."

BRIDG is a component of the University of Missouri's business development programs, which include the Missouri Small Business Development Centers, the Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, the Missouri Small Business Technology Development Centers and the Missouri Market Development Program. For more information on BRIDG and the above named programs, visit www.missouribusiness.net. In Joplin, the Small Business Development Center is located in Matthews Hall on the campus of Missouri Southern State University. The local contact number is (417) 625-3128. ■



Costly Unscheduled Absence Issue Continues to Perplex Employers

With the cost of last-minute employee no-shows climbing, U.S. employers are still struggling to find effective programs that keep healthy workers on the job, according to the 15th annual CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey by CCH INCORPORATED (CCH). The 2005 survey found that while the rate of unscheduled absenteeism barely budged since last year, the average per-employee cost has risen to \$660 per employee – costing some large employers over \$1 million per year.

What may be of most concern to employers is that almost two out of three employees who fail to show up for work aren't physically ill, according to the CCH survey. The survey found that Personal Illness accounts for only 35 percent of unscheduled absences, while 65 percent of absences are due to other reasons, including Family Issues (21 percent), Personal Needs (18 percent), Entitlement Mentality (14 percent) and Stress (12 percent).

The CCH survey found that both the Entitlement Mentality and Stress numbers are higher in 2005 than in the previous two years (Entitlement Mentality: 2004, 10 percent; 2003, 13 percent. Stress: 11 percent in 2004 and 2003.)

“Lean staffing levels over the past several years have intensified workloads for those employees who avoided layoffs. Now that the labor market is opening up, those survivors may not be as fearful of losing their jobs and may be taking the mental health breaks they feel they deserve,” said CCH workplace analyst Lisa Franke, CCP, SPHR. “Employers may even see a ‘culture of entitlement’ emerge as the economy strengthens further.”

According to the 2005 CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey, conducted for CCH by Harris Interactive®, the absenteeism rate was 2.3 percent in 2005 down slightly from 2.4 percent last year. The average cost of absenteeism rose to \$660 per person per year, up from \$610 in 2004. Notably, the survey only measures direct payroll costs for paid, unproductive time. The high cost of absenteeism hurts organizations even more when other costs, such as lost productivity, morale and temporary labor costs, are considered.

Companies with low morale saw higher rates and costs of unscheduled absences. The rate

of unscheduled absenteeism is twice as high at companies with Poor/Fair morale (3.2 percent) than those with Good/Very Good morale (1.5 percent).

The CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey, conducted annually by CCH for the past 15 years, is the definitive survey on absenteeism in the workplace and the only one that measures costs associated with unscheduled absences. A special review of CCH's findings on employee absenteeism and employer trends over the past 15 years can be found on the CCH Press Center at www.cch.com.

Employers are concerned about the impact of unscheduled absenteeism, with nearly one in three (31 percent) reporting that it is a “serious problem,” and 87 percent stating that they think the problem may stay the same, or worsen, in the next two years.

With traditional “sick time” programs clearly out of sync with the times, the survey found that employers are increasingly offering programs to help employees manage in a more planned way the issues that take them away from work.

“Traditional sick leave policies that allow time off only for illness may put an employee in the position of having to conjure up a cold at the last minute to get the time off they really need for taking a parent or child to a pre-arranged medical appointment,” noted Franke. “The CCH survey found that employers increasingly are adopting programs that recognize that the issues keeping an employee away from work often have nothing to do with a stuffy nose.”

On the other hand, the problem of presenteeism – when employees come to work even though they are ill and pose problems of contagion and lower productivity – is an emerging area of concern for organizations.

The 2005 CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey found that U.S. companies now offer an average of 9 work-life programs, up from 8 in 2004 and 7 in 2003. Employers report they use an average of 6 absence control programs, up from 5 programs in 2004.

The effect of morale is reflected across the board in the 2005 CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey. The survey found that employee morale can affect a company's absenteeism rate, with organizations with Good/Very Good morale experiencing a 1.5-percent rate of unscheduled absences while those reporting Poor/Fair morale had a rate of 3.2 percent. ■

Single-Language Workforce Obsolete

Facilities where only one language is spoken are becoming a thing of the past – a trend which brings with it big new challenges for OSHA safety training. Safety professionals report that more and more languages are being spoken in their workplaces and that worksites where only one language is spoken are now a distinct minority. The survey from *Safety.BLR.com*, highlights the difficulty that today's safety managers have in training their multicultural workforces. Fully 3 of every 4 of the 493 respondents reported that at least two languages were spoken at their facility. Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported 3 to 6 languages, 28 percent reported 2 languages, 6 percent reported 7 to 10, and 4 percent reported more than 10. Only 24 percent reported that theirs was a one-language workforce.

Finance Program Makes Big Return

The BIG Missouri Linked Deposit program marks the return of an effective financing incentive for new business growth in Missouri. Senate Bill 270 funds \$720 million for the new version of the BIG Missouri program, which stands for believe, invest, and grow. Financial institutions take the initial applications from interested businesses. If approved by the Missouri State Treasurer's Office, banks and businesses enjoy preferred interest rates with the savings passed on directly to the business borrower.