



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Marsha Walker, Outreach Coordinator – Regional Center for Workforce Excellence
mwalker@nwpawib.org | Ph: 814.333.1286 | C: 814.547.3244

In Recession, PA's Workforce Training Efforts More Important Than Ever

March 8-14 will mark Workforce Solutions Week, a celebration of the innovative work of local partnerships to build next generation workforce

Erie, PA (March 8, 2010) – This week, employees, businesses and community leaders across Pennsylvania are recognizing the work of local partnerships that are training individuals to succeed as the economy recovers, while meeting the evolving workforce needs of employers.

With unemployment at a nearly 30-year high in Pennsylvania, the collaboration between the RCWE, NWPA WIB and support from the Pennsylvania Fund for Workforce Solutions (PFWS) and the Erie Community Foundation, is more important than ever. **Nearly six out of 10 unemployed workers in Pennsylvania lack any education beyond high school.** At the same time, more than two-thirds of jobs in today's economy require post-secondary education or skills training. As the economy changes over time, new skills and specialties are constantly needed for workers to compete in a global economy.

“There is a great deal of talk about jobs today, but little straight talk about the fact that many of the jobs that existed before the recession will not exist after the recovery,” said Michele Zieziula, RCWE CEO. “In Northwest Pennsylvania we are preparing jobseekers and employees for careers in fields that offer great opportunity and are the future of the economy, such as in healthcare and green jobs.”

From March 8-14, The Pennsylvania Fund for Workforce Solutions, a statewide collaborative of private and public funders across the state, will participate in Workforce Solutions Week, **honoring the innovative work of local partnerships across the U.S. to build the nation's frontline workforce.** It is part of a national weeklong celebration, coordinated by Jobs for the Future.

Pennsylvania is a leader in this effort with its Industry Partnerships strategy, which helps connect workforce education and training programs to the critical needs of industry across Pennsylvania. The public and private funds invested in these efforts have seen a high rate of return over time, with over 70,000 workers and 7,000 employers participating in the program.

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Equal Employment Opportunity Programs



The success of workforce training efforts in Northwest PA is clear. In conjunction with Workforce Solutions Week, the **RCWE** along with the **PA CareerLink® - Erie County** and the **Northwest PA Healthcare Industry Partnership** will offer a Healthcare Employer and Job Ready Candidate Coffee Hour for participants of the PA Fund for Workforce Solutions Healthcare Recruitment and Screen Pilot Project on **Thursday March 11, 2010**.

This event will allow successful Job Ready Candidates an opportunity to meet with participating Healthcare Employers from the **Northwest PA Healthcare Industry Partnership**. The event will be held at the PA CareerLink® - Erie County, 1309 French Street.

“We have partnered with healthcare employers here to strengthen our local economy, ensure our local businesses are prepared to compete, and create good jobs for the women and men who live here,” said Zieziula.

Pennsylvania is one of only a few states to recognize Industry Partnerships as the foundation for a more effective workforce that delivers for businesses and employers. However, state funding was slashed for the program – from \$20 million last year to \$8 million this year. If Pennsylvania is to continue to be a leader in workforce solutions, it needs to make Industry Partnerships permanent and identify dedicated funding to sustain Industry Partnerships for the long term.

The Pennsylvania Fund for Workforce Solutions (PFWS) provides training and supports to help entry-level workers gain employment and advance in good-paying jobs with employers who participate in Industry Partnerships. PFWS trained nearly 500 workers and placed 120 in jobs in manufacturing, healthcare, construction, and utilities, most at wages ranging from \$10 to \$15 per hour.

Workforce Solutions Week is being coordinated nationally by Jobs for the Future, which develops innovative education and workforce strategies that enable individuals to achieve family-sustaining careers and strength the nation’s global competitiveness. In nearly 200 communities in 41 states, Jobs for the Future improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers.

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