



Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council, Region 9 News

Baldwin-Choctaw-Clarke-Conecuh-Escambia-Mobile-Monroe-Washington

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In This Issue

[Hiring Ex-Offenders](#)

[Partnership with Mobile
Chamber](#)

[Partnership with Exploreum](#)

[2012 STEM Education Summit](#)

[A Word From our Chairman](#)

Announcements

SAWDC 2012 First Quarter Council Meeting

Wednesday March 14, 2012
Location TBD

Community College Round II Funding Grant Consideration Meeting

March 7, 2012

Quick Links

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Hiring Ex-Offenders is a Win-Win Proposition



In the words of U.S. Attorney Kenyen Brown, "Hiring ex-offenders puts them on the path to good citizenship and the greater community gains the tangential benefits of less crime in the community as well as safer neighborhoods in which to live, work and raise our children."

The challenge will be "getting employers comfortable with hiring a parolee," according to SAWDC Executive Committee member, Sheila Hodges, Chairman, Meyer Real Estate. "That has been my biggest challenge within my own companies. We recently hired a parolee as a full time seasonal worker as a test pilot. We wanted to see the quality of work, work ethic, and ability to relate well with existing staff. All proved to be a very positive experience and he was offered a full time position last quarter."

Ms. Hodges further comments on the State's Work Release Program, "We found the prisoners to be motivated to the point of being almost inspirational. Can there be issues? Certainly! We had a situation off the clock that resulted in them being picked up early one day and that group lost their privileges. But we were supplied with replacements and I stand by the program. I find it far more trustworthy than other sources of hiring."

What you didn't know:

- 32,000 inmates are incarcerated in the State of Alabama
- 97% of the offenders will be released to return to the communities from which they came
- 30% of adult offenders are re-arrested within the first 6 months of release
- within 3 years of release, 2 out of 3 ex-offenders will return to prison

What we can do about it:

According to statistics from the Administrative Office of the Courts in Washington, D.C., ex-offender employment is a major factor in the success rate of inmates upon their release. Between the years of 2002-2006, ninety-three percent of former inmates who were able to maintain employment during their supervised release term did not return to prison.

Not only do we as citizens benefit from this, but employers can benefit from hiring ex-offenders as well.

- Employers who hire ex-offenders within one year of release can receive \$2,500 Work Opportunity Tax Credit per ex-offender hired
- Through DOL and [Mobile-Works](#) employers can be reimbursed for 50% of ex-offender's on-the-job-training up to 6 weeks
- Ex-offenders can receive \$2,000-\$8,000 in DOL monies for vocational training
- With Mobile Weed & Seed ex-offenders can be insured up to \$5,000 in the workplace

If you would like to join SAWDC in working with the US Attorney's office on this worthy effort, please contact our office at (251)445-2090.

[Please click here for letter from U.S. Attorney Kenyen Brown.](#)

Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce to Serve as Project Manager for the 2012 SAWDC Worlds of Opportunity Career Expo



The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce will take on the important role of project management for the 2012 SAWDC Worlds of Opportunity Career Expo for 8th Graders. Many thanks go to Carol Lambert and Leida Javier-Ferrell with the Mobile Area

Chamber of Commerce's Center for Workforce Development for taking the lead.

If you would like to become a sponsor or volunteer for the 2012 SAWDC Worlds of Opportunity Career Expo, please contact Adelaide Smith at (251)445-2090 or ASmith@sawdc.org.

SAWDC Partners with the Exploreum Science Center for *Workout with Simple Machines*



The Exploreum Science Center did more than observe thousands of area eighth graders as they explored future job opportunities at the first SAWDC Worlds of Opportunity ("WOO") Career Expo in 2010 and again in 2011. The event afforded Exploreum staff an opportunity to quiz industry officials on what they see as the biggest impediment to filling their applicant pool. The responses revealed a common thread among some of our area's largest employers: Applicants could not pass the entry tests because they did not understand basic concepts of applied math and science. Specifically, applicants lacked an understanding of simple machines, teamwork and critical thinking skills.

The Exploreum in Mobile, Alabama features an entire 5,000 square foot gallery dedicated to simple machines, pulleys and gears and has an education team that specializes in providing hands-on, inquiry based lab demonstrations and activities. Conceptualization of an eighth grade-specific field lesson began to gel for the purpose of addressing the challenges noted, specifically:

1. To help teachers fulfill relevant Alabama Course of study science and math requirements
2. To reinforce among students the positive impact and momentum began with their WOO experience
3. To impact industry workforce development needs

The Exploreum began hosting a series of meetings with key stakeholders who share a common goal of better preparing our community's future workforce, specifically proficiency in math, science and technology. Partners included: SAWDC, area industry officials, Mobile and Baldwin County school administrators and the Mobile Area Education Foundation. What resulted was development of *Workout with Simple Machines*, a 90 minute interactive field lesson that utilizes gallery exhibits, the Explore TEC lab focusing on engineering and lots of hands-on fun!

Workout with Simple Machines will heighten students' awareness of simple machines in the world around them, engage them in a real-world engineering challenge, show practical application of mathematical principles in a real world challenge and showcase how simple machines/physics can be entertaining and fun.

The goals of this field experience are:

1. Help reconcile formal curriculum with what is being measured on workforce entry tests. (vocabulary, applied knowledge in math and sciences)
2. Promote critical thinking skills via hands-on inquiry-based fun opportunities in an informal setting.

Three Baldwin County schools along with one Mobile County school are participating in the initial pilot for Workout with Simple Machines in late February 2012. The pilot is designed to test the impact of the field lesson relative to exposure to SAWDC Worlds of Opportunity workforce opportunities and improved understanding of relevant formal education requirements.

For more information about the pilot, or to discuss educational sponsorship opportunities, please contact Appie Head at the Exploreum at 251-208-6869.

2012 STEM Education Summit

Presented by the Mobile Area Education Foundation and the Mobile County Education Commission

Register now for the 2012 Education Summit and Region 9 STEM Forum. The event will be held on Tuesday, February 7, 2012 at the University of South Alabama Mitchell Center. To register please contact Janice Rivers at the Mobile Area Education Foundation:

JRivers@maef.net or (251)476-0002.

2012 Education Summit and Region 9 STEM Forum

*in conjunction with
USA College of Education Founders Day*



**Tuesday, February 7, 2012
8:15AM - 3:00PM**

**The Mitchell Center
University of South Alabama**

A Word From the SAWDC Chairman

Troy Wayman

Workforce development has become a common subject of discussion among chambers of commerce and other economic development organizations. The importance of a trained workforce with a superior work ethic is obvious to any and all that understand anything about business and what it takes to succeed in today's ultra-competitive world. South Alabama is fortunate to have an organization and some passionate and visionary individuals that have made it their mission to address the needs of our employers.

The Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC) has a vision to develop a comprehensive, integrated workforce development system that creates a skilled, diverse, motivated, adaptable workforce that better meets the needs of employers and leads to a better quality of life for our citizens. Its mission is to develop strategic partnerships to attract, educate and train students and workers to better meet employer needs and foster economic growth in a global marketplace.

SAWDC is not the proverbial silver bullet for workforce issues, it is an organization that has the power to convene and focus the multitude of organizations already carrying out the good work of preparing today's workforce. Many of SAWDC's strategic partners and leaders have shown tremendous conviction through the growing pains of standing up such an organization. These partners include the Mobile Area Education Foundation, Alabama Power Co., Community Foundation, county partners, Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance, Coastal Gateway Economic Development Alliance, Georgia Pacific, the city of Mobile, Austal USA, the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce and many others. The chamber has been an ardent supporter of SAWDC since its inception.

A key component of the work that SAWDC performs is the relationship with the education and training providers in its eight-county region. The Alabama Community College System -- including Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) and the Alabama Technology Network (ATN) -- plays a major role in the preparedness of Alabama's workforce. Under the outstanding leadership of Frieda Hill, the system's chancellor, great work has been done to align the system's workforce development initiatives. Hill has become a champion of workforce development efforts in the state including SAWDC, and she and the college system are among SAWDC's most important strategic partners.

SAWDC has experienced some growing pains, but that is understandable for an organization that has come as far as it has in a relatively short time. Strong strategic partners, enthusiastic and committed leaders and a lot of good, old-fashioned elbow grease have resulted in an organization that is the envy of its peers within the state. And the best is yet to come!

Click [here](#) for this article from the Mobile Press Register.