

Latest Southwest Washington latest labor market data released

The Clark County/Portland Metro area, including the Cowlitz County labor market, worsened considerably in October according to **Scott Bailey**, regional economist for Washington State Employment Security. Bailey issued his Southwest Washinton/Portland Labor Market News report today.

Bailey reports that seasonally-adjusted nonfarm employment fell by 8,600 jobs, though 1,200 of that figure was due to the Boeing strike.

Every county in the region is now showing a loss of jobs over the year, said Bailey, except for Clark, "where revised data put job growth at only 500 jobs (0.4 %).

Health care employment is the bright spot, said Bailey, and "continues to expand across the region. Professional services also showed a gain over the year, for the region as a whole "and for Clark County as well."

On the negative side, construction is off 6% across the region. Manufacturing declined by 2,200 jobs over the month, including 400 in Clark County. Trade & transportation dropped by 1,500 jobs across the region. Information services remained essentially flat over the month and year, region-wide.

Take a virtual volcano flight

New video clips recently added to the Mount St. Helens website now allow visitors to take a virtual flight (www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/mshnvm/video/immersive-media/vid1.shtml) over the National Volcanic Monument.

These images were provided courtesy of Immersive Media of Portland, Oregon which shot the video under a special use permit this past spring. Three video clips are posted on the Mount St. Helens Teacher's Corner of the Forest web site (www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/).

The videos allow online visitors to take a 360-degree virtual flight around the Mount St. Helens blast zone, over the rim and into the crater of the volcano.

"We are excited to bring this type of virtual presentation to our visitors," said Monument Manager **Tom Mulder**, "this is just one more way in which we continue to use new technology to help connect people with their public lands.

News brief

Allstate Insurance in owned by Washougal resident **Kirk Bruce**, will be the second to be recognized as the Camas-Washougal Chamber's Business of the Week for the week of December 15. Bruce is a former Washougal city councilman.

Unemployment taxes to decrease for many employers

For the first time ever, more than half of all Washington employers will be in the lowest unemployment-insurance tax bracket in 2009, with tax savings totaling some \$45 million.

"There hasn't been a lot of good news for businesses lately, so it feels good to spread a little holiday cheer," said Employment Security Commissioner Karen Lee.

Employment security is currently mailing 2009 tax-rate notices to more than 150,000 businesses. About 25 percent of employers will see rate decreases, with just 18 percent seeing rate increases.

For 2009, 51 percent of employers will be in the lowest tax-rate class (rate class 1), which is 0.35 percent of payroll costs. Only 3 percent of employers will pay the highest tax rate (rate class 40), totaling 6 percent. The average tax rate will drop to 1.55 percent, from 1.7 percent in 2008.

The taxable wage base, which is the amount of wages on which an employer pays taxes for each employee, is \$35,700 for 2009.

Lee said that 2009 tax rates are improving for many employers because unemployment rates have been relatively low over the past four years.

Vancouver Rotary announces winning trees

Over Thanksgiving weekend, The Vancouver Rotary Foundation's Festival of Trees hosted trees decorated by 17 other local nonprofit organizations to express their missions. Visitors supported their favorite trees or organizations by voting with dollars, putting money into vote boxes that accompanied each tree.

After three days of voting and events that saw 5,000+ visitors, Arc of Clark County received the most votes.

Arc will receive one-third of the total dollar votes cast, the Vancouver Rotary Foundation will receive one-third, and other participants will each receive an equal share of the remaining donations.

Each organization involved produced a unique tree that helped promote and further their mission and outreach. The total votes cast amounted to nearly \$1,500. The organizations involved, and the themes of their trees were as follows:

Arc of Clark County – You Know Me: A Season of Belonging
Furry Friends Pet Rescue – Cats and Dogs Home for the Holidays
North County Food Bank – Gifts of the Harvest
Share – There's No Place Like Home
Caring Ambassadors Program – Caring Cranes – Wings of Hope
Columbia River Miracle League – Angels in the Outfield
Loaves and Fishes Centers – Delivering Christmas
The MJ Foundation – Steps of Strength
Children's Home Society – Turning Hope into Reality for over 100 Years
Affordable Community Environments – A Fruit Valley Children's Holiday
WSU-Vancouver Foundation – A Crimson & Gray Cougar Holiday
Boy Scouts – A Scouting Holiday
Columbia Dance – The Nutcracker
Clark County Family YMCA – The Polar Express
Equal Opportunities for Children & Families – Children's Holiday Magic
Camas Educational Foundation – Giving and Growing. Together...
CDM Services – A Bright and Brilliant Hope

Says Vancouver Rotary Foundation president **George Middleton**, "This effort allows us to live the Vancouver Rotary Foundation's mission in a tangible, noticeable way. We aren't just giving money, we're also giving time and support to help these organizations continue to make a positive impact on our community. This is everything that we are about."

Calendar

12/13--St. Joseph Catholic Church presents a live Biblical Christmas Story as part of its day-long Advent Festival Saturday, Dec. 13, beginning with Mass at 9 a.m. in the church at 400 Highland Drive. An exhibit of Madonnas will be shown in the church from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Choir International performs from 1 to 3 p.m. At 3:30 p.m. there will be a presentation of the Rosary. Following a 5 p.m. mass, participants are invited to go caroling with parishioners.

12/16—Rescheduled Meeting: The Vancouver Library Capital Facility Area Board will meet on **Tuesday, December 16, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.** (meeting was previously scheduled for December 9) in the Clark County Commissioners Hearing Room, 6th Floor, Public Service Center, 1300 Franklin Street, Vancouver, Washington, for review and approval of the final design for the new main library.

12/16--The Clark Public Utilities Board of Commissioners WILL NOT MEET for it's regularly scheduled December 16 meeting. The meeting is cancelled.

Additional Community Calendar Links

The **Southwest Washington Center for the Arts** has published its December newsletter and calendar of events. [Click here](#) for the PDF file.

Greater Vancouver Chamber Community Calendar:

[Click here](#)

City of Vancouver Calendar of Community Events:

[Click here](#)

Today's CVTV Schedule

(Clark-Vancouver Television Channel 23):

2:00 p.m. [Clark County Land Use Hearings \(12-11-08\)](#)

7:00 p.m. [Clark County Animal Control Hearings \(11-12-08\)](#) 7:30 p.m.

[Bravo! Vancouver - Messiah: An Oratorio \(12-7-08\)](#) 10:00 p.m. [Clark County Board of Commissioners - Stormwater Hearing \(12-8-08\)](#)

Today's Live Sports Schedule

NBA

5:00 p.m. New Orleans at Boston ESPN

7:00 p.m. L.A. Clippers at Portland CSN, KXTG (95.5)

7:30 p.m. Houston at Golden State ESPN

Town Tabloids and the Weather

Sherri Falkner hoping for snow. <> **Mike Worthy** spreading cheer.<> **Maya Muller** signing on.<> **Addison Jacobs** sending cards.<> **Anay Jennings** learning new words. <> **Ted Schatz** establishing protocol. **Friday**, rain arriving in earnest, 34-42. **Saturday**, snow showers possible, 33-38. **Sunday**, so-called arctic blast headed into town, 28-33.