

Grand opening showcases expanded jobs center

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By Gloria Young Journal Staff Writer



Ben Furtado/Auburn Journal

Alpine County Supervisor Skip Veatch stands with Susan Miller, chairwoman of the Workforce Investment Board and Jason Buckingham, executive director of the Golden Sierra Job Training Agency, at the Connections Center grand opening celebration in Auburn.

The Golden Sierra Job Training Agency's Connections career center welcomed directors, volunteers and invited guests to view the new offices during a grand-opening celebration Thursday.

The facility, previously located in the DeWitt Center in North Auburn, opened at the Highway 49 location in December.

"It's more space, a better layout, more conference rooms for workshops and (it allows us to provide) more services to employees and employers," program manager Jeff Coyle said.

Since moving into the new building, the center has seen an increase in visitors and has instituted some new programs targeted at specific populations "because we now have the facilities to do that," Coyle said.

Some of those programs are geared to helping parolees and probationary individuals enter the job market. Another assists middle managers looking for work.

"They're sort of an ignored group," Coyle said. "It has proven to be very successful."

In April the Connections Center will host a workshop for employers on wage and hour laws.

The workshop, provided in partnership with the **California Employers Association**, will instruct businesses on how to stay in compliance with payroll laws that cover minimum wage, overtime, recordkeeping, and family and medical leave. Topics will include new rules and regulations, exempt vs. nonexempt employees, contractor vs. employee and common mistakes.

Kim Parker, executive vice president of the California Employers Association, said the workshop addresses the state's strengthened stance on compliance.

“For 2010, we’ve got a new secretary of labor in office, Hilda Solis. She added 250 new wage-and-hour field investigators and she put \$2 billion in funding to have investigators go out to businesses to make sure there aren’t any wage and hour infractions,” Parker said. “Wage and hour issues are huge for employers.”

Examples of that are employers who aren’t applying overtime correctly — more than eight hours is time-and-a-half; more than 12 hours is double time, she explained.

The Labor Commission is receiving a lot of complaints about missed breaks and meals, according to Parker.

“When an employer isn’t familiar with how many breaks an employee should get in a given day or how many meal periods an employee is entitled to, there’s a penalty associated with that,” she said. “Often, employers are getting into trouble with ex-employees going to the commission and reporting they’re not being paid correctly. We’re trying to help employers understand the laws so they are protected and so employees’ rights are protected as well.”

The workshop will also talk about avoiding layoffs.

“(We’ll discuss) what creative ways can we come up with to keep staff,” Parker said. “We’ll discuss salary reductions, reduced work hours, the Employment Development Department’s workshare program, temporary shutdowns or furloughs — helping them stay in business.”

The Auburn workshop on wage and hour laws will be held from 8:30 to 10 a.m. Thursday, April 29. The Connections Career Center is at 1919 Grass Valley Highway, Suite 100; phone (530) 823-4631.