

BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU

How to keep loyal workers

Recent worker shortages have left many industries understaffed and in desperate need to find new talent.

As a result, business owners' first reaction is to place a higher priority on hiring new employees. Unfortunately, though, they may forget the importance of ensuring their current employees aren't getting burned out.

Worker shortage or not, the bottom line is to demonstrate that you care and can empathize with your employees. A happy employee who feels understood



KEYLEN VILLAGRANA

and supported is more likely to remain loyal to your company. Especially if you take the time to help alleviate stress that stems from outside of the workplace.

Remember to be transparent with your employees about the status of your business and work with them to accommodate their circumstances. Building a mutual level of trust will make it tougher for them to leave. Better Business Bureau compiled a list of creative perks you can implement in your small business today.

- Shorten your Work Hours. While it might be a temporary solution for your employees to be working overtime, it is not sustainable in the long run. A more viable option is to open later than usual and/or close earlier. Perhaps even close one or two days a week to ensure your employees can recharge.

- Commuting Assistance. Offer monthly passes for employees who use public transportation to commute to work. Think of inclusivity and mindfulness. Not everyone has the financial means or the ability to own and operate their own vehicle. Taking this expense off their plate is an environmentally friendly option that will alleviate some financial stress.

- Invest in their professional development. Demonstrate to your employees that you care about their development and growth within the company. Offer to pay for training opportunities, online courses, and certificates. Whether it's to enhance their technical skills or develop soft skills that'll help your company run more efficiently, it will benefit everyone in the long run.

- Mental health counseling and support. Encouraging your employees to address their underlying mental health issues will help them live healthier lives. Consider providing a service that offers a confidential helpline or counseling at no charge for your employees. Everyone needs someone to talk to when life starts to feel very overwhelming.

- Chore help. Nobody really looks forward to doing laundry and tedious chores, especially after a long workday. Allot a few cleaning services a year for employees to schedule when they need it most.

- Massages. Who doesn't love a good massage? Schedule a quarterly massage day in your office, hire a masseuse for an allotted number of hours, and then have your employees sign up for a slot. For the busy worker that feels they never have time for themselves, help them make time for a bit of pampering.

Finding the perks that work for your business will go a long way in building employee loyalty and boosting morale.

For more tips on workplace culture, visit trust-bbb.org.



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Through an application and interview, students are paired with a summer job or internship.

Summer jobs program keeps growing with eye on the future

SPECIAL TO THE INDEPENDENT RECORD

The Helena Area Summer Jobs Program has connected more than 50 high school students and recent graduates since 2019 with jobs or internships at Helena-area businesses and organizations.

Helena Area Summer Jobs Program (HSJP) focuses on developing life and work skills needed for success in the workplace. In addition to matching students with a paid position, HSJP supports participating students with work skills training and mentoring.

The program has more than doubled since it began in 2019, with increasing numbers of students, employers and mentors participating. Additionally, HSJP grew to include East Helena and Broadwater County high schools in 2021. It serves students, primarily ages 16-19. Through an application and interview, students are paired with a summer job or internship. The program committee works to connect students with positions that align with their interests and goals.

HSJP incorporates a pre-summer work skills training for students to build the foundation necessary for success in any position. The four-hour work skills training takes place prior to the summer position, and is designed to complement job-specific training students receive from their employers. During the training, students learn strategies related to: communication, teamwork, customer service, positive attitude and time management.



The program connects students with positions that align with their interests and goals.

Upon completion of the training, students receive a stipend made possible by an iGraduate grant funded by the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Office of Public Instruction and Montana Department of Labor & Industry. Additionally, HSJP received funding through a City of Service

grant through the city of Helena. "I have improved my customer service and communication skills this summer," said Isabella Williamson, an HSJP participant from East Helena. "I have also learned to speak up more often and advocate for myself."

Volunteer adult mentors meet with students throughout the summer and provide support. HSJP mentors help students think about their current work experience, reflect on what they are learning, and explore future school and job options. These mentors are not the

student's supervisor, although the mentor may be another employee at the business hosting the HSJP student. This mentoring aspect expands the student's professional network and helps reinforce the work skills training.

Through developing local young employees, HSJP is helping local businesses and organizations address the challenge of attracting and building workforce talent.

Ashleigh Heimbach from West Mont, one of the employers hosting more than one student this year, says, "This is our first year being a part of the Helena Area Summer Job Program and it's been such an incredible experience. Mentoring multiple students, in an area that we feel so passionately about, is empowering."

Area employers participating in the HSJP program include governmental, nonprofit and for-profit organizations which span the health care, engineering, hospitality, legal, retail, information technology, education, automotive and construction sectors.

HSJP is a community-based collaborative program. The committee includes: American Jobs for America's Youth (AJAY

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FUTURES FILE

African swine fever presses pigs lower

So far, North American pig farms have been free of African Swine Fever (ASF).

No longer. It has been found in the Dominican Republic.



WALT BREITINGER

Some think it's not a matter of "if" ASF comes to the U.S. but "when" because the virus is highly contagious. It doesn't infect people, but people can unknowingly

spread it. Ticks, infected feed, and other contact with the virus are how it's transmitted.

The U.S. banned pork from the Dominican Republic in the early 1980s in response to a different swine fever strain. That ban remains in place. China and Europe have been

dealing with ASF for a few years and have taken drastic measures to stop it.

Hogs for August delivery closed around \$1.09 per pound on Friday.

Gold does down as dollar goes up

Precious metals took it on the chin Friday morning as the US Department of Labor announced a jump in new jobs (943,000) and a half-percent decline in the unemployment rate.

The implied strength in our economy confirms thoughts the Fed will have less incentive to keep interest rates down, subsequently increasing the cost of holding metals. Gold tumbled nearly \$50 per ounce on the news.

December gold traded at \$1,758 per ounce midday Friday.

Crude tanks on COVID concerns

Worldwide concerns about the Delta variant tanked liquid energy prices more than other commodities.

With feelings of déjà vu, demand destruction in the travel industry, trips to school, work, meetings, and concerts are being curtailed or, at least, threatened by the so-called fourth wave.

September crude oil was \$68.40 per barrel midday Friday.

Natural gas rises

Unlike liquid fuels linked to transportation demand, natural gas prices buoyed sharply higher on demand from electric power plants in the Northeast which use that commodity to drive turbines to generate power for air conditioning.

In addition, temps on the

east coast climbed higher than predicted, and hydropower plants are running on reduced water levels.

The tragic fires in California have worsened, breaking records for property damage and acres destroyed. Although not directly impacting natural gas usage, the drought out west and the heat surge in our central plains continue to remind us of how our bizarre weather swings could affect future markets.

September natural gas traded at \$4.17 on Friday, nearly double the price from last year at this time.

Opinions are solely the writer's. Walt Breitingger is a commodity futures broker with Paragon Investments in Silver Lake, KS. He can be reached at (800) 411-3888 or www.paragoninvestments.com. This is not a solicitation of any order to buy or sell any market.

ELK CAMP IS COMING!

August 11th 6pm-8pm Plan Your Hunt Seminar with FWP guests and CS Pro Staff

August 12th 6pm-8pm Elk Calling/Hunting Seminar with Rocky Mountain Calls

August 13th 5:30pm-8pm Hunter's Happy Hour enjoy local microbrews and elk burgers

August 14th 11am-2pm Hourly Mini Camps with Top Brands

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1092 Helena Ave 443-2978
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\$25K grant for study of emergency services

The Montana Healthcare Foundation has awarded a \$25,000 grant to Boulder and St. James Healthcare to address the need for improved access to sustainable and effective emergency medical services in Jefferson County.

The project will determine the feasibility of creating a county-wide ambulance district, in coordination with existing ambulance districts, to ensure the delivery of high-quality emergency medical services throughout the county, with a special emphasis on the county's rural and underserved communities.

"As southern Jefferson county's trauma center, we need to know what can be done to improve emergency services for our rural community members," said St. James Healthcare President Jay Doyle. "The feasibility study will help us identify any gaps in EMS coverage for those who live in Jefferson County and will guide future decisions on how to make the system sustainable."

A steering committee of local stake-

holders will work with an independent consultant to conduct a feasibility study by gathering, reviewing, and analyzing information from key informants, local data, and other sources.

The results of the 12-month study will be included in a final report with recommendations for stakeholders about whether to pursue the special district, and considerations for future work to improve emergency medical response in Jefferson County.

"Currently our EMS services are doing the best they can to ensure they can reach our residents when they are in need, but we are frequently short of EMS personnel here in Boulder," said Boulder City Council Member Drew Dawson. "The issue is we are currently walking a very tight line. We need to get a long-range strategy in place so that as changes happen in our region will have something in place to ensure every Jefferson County resident can receive the best emergency medical care possible."

Hay Hotline for producers affected by drought

As severe drought conditions and wildfires persist across the state, the Montana Department of Agriculture is reminding agricultural producers of the availability of the Hay Hotline, an online tool that connects those interested in buying, selling, or donating hay or pasture.

The Hay Hotline allows producers to enter new listings with descriptions of the forage they have available to sell or donate. It also provides users with an option to search for available hay or pasture. The online tool is maintained by the Montana Department of Agriculture as a service to the

agricultural industry with the expectation that all buyers and sellers will treat each other in an equitable and lawful manner.

The Hay Hotline is housed on the MDA website at agr.mt.gov/Hay-Hotline. For more details on the Hay Hotline, contact the Agricultural Development & Marketing Bureau at 406-444-2402 or danielle.jones@mt.gov.

The Montana Department of Agriculture is serving Montana Agriculture and growing prosperity under the Big Sky. For more details on department programs and services, visit agr.mt.gov.

Jobs

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MT); Helena WINS, which is a workforce innovation program through the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce and Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC); Reach Higher Montana; STOKE in Townsend; and Helena College. Other essential partners are public high schools

in Helena, East Helena and Townsend.

"We appreciate the community support that has helped this program succeed," said Gabrielle Eklund Rowley, Executive Director at AJAY MT. "For some of our students, this is their first job. Other students have some work experience and are eager to see firsthand what it would be like to work in a certain field. It's such a great opportunity for both

students and employers."

The Helena Area Summer Jobs Program wraps up in late August as the 2021-22 school year begins. For the next year, the HSJP program committee will begin recruiting employers in January, and students in February. The program welcomes more community-based volunteer mentors.

For more information visit www.americanjobs4youth.org/hsjp.

Anaconda company makes vehicle to support US president

ANDROMEDA TALLMAN
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BUTTE — Intercontinental Truck Body in Anaconda has made vehicles for U.S. Air Force bases all across the world. Now one of their Flight Line Tow Tractors will provide ground support for Air Force One.

ITB operations manager Cory Rilley said the USAF approached them earlier in the year about making a vehicle in a custom blue color, and they moved it up the production queue. The truck is all ready, but it may be a few weeks before it's shipped out to the Joint Base Andrews Air Force base in Maryland.

Intercontinental Truck Body has been in business since the late '70s and moved to Anaconda from Conrad in 2018. They've been making Air Force ve-



MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD

The Flight Line Tow Tractor is a one-of-a-kind a special order for the United States Air Force's presidential air group. "We've been building these trucks for years but this is the first time we've had a blue one," says Cory Rilley, of Intercontinental Truck Body in Anaconda. "Usually they are green or tan."

hicles since 2006.

"We're always very proud to support our military," Rilley said.

He said it was "pretty special" to send a vehicle

all the way to support the president.

The tow tractors have a lifespan of 15 years, so the vehicle will support future administrations as well.

August
Featured Artist

CARROLL JENKINS




Helena artist Carroll Jenkins began painting while working as a Psychotherapist and uses it as a form of meditation and physical workout. He likes to paint art "in the moment"! Carroll paints with oils, oil sticks and acrylics on canvas or panels, working in roughly hour-long sessions.

left: "Painted Pony" above: "Jack"



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