

FEATURED

## DWD commissioner promotes programs

DIANE RAVER THE HERALD-TRIBUNE Apr 25, 2018

Fred Payne, Indiana Department of Workforce Development commissioner, stopped in Batesville recently to talk about his responsibilities and goals in this position, which he started Dec. 12, and programs and resources available for employers and employees.

Prior to joining the state agency, Payne was the chief administrator for Honda Manufacturing of Indiana, Greensburg, and oversaw corporate affairs, information services and administrative functions. "In my different roles, I also worked with human resources and planning and had to address workforce needs."

He explained that the DWD "is responsible for the state's workforce and workforce training and the state's unemployment insurance .... As commissioner, I set the direction and the strategy and vision for the agency and ensure those things are handed out according to the governor's agenda."

During his travels around the state, the Indianapolis resident has discovered that

employers all have the same concerns. "They really want to know how to get the skilled workforce they need and how the state can help them. They need trained, middle-skilled people, like machinists and welders."

One of the attorney's goals is "to ensure that we have a workforce development system that is ... providing good training and preparing the future workforce."

The DWD has several programs that can help:

- Employer Training Grants – Employers in high-demand business sectors can be reimbursed up to \$2,500 for each new employee who is trained, hired and retained for six months. There is a \$25,000 cap for each employer. Jobs must be middle skill, high-demand and high-wage that require more than a high school diploma, but less than an associate degree. Info: Bryon Silk, [BSilk@dwd.in.gov](mailto:BSilk@dwd.in.gov) or 317-273-3531.

- Hoosier Initiative for Re-Entry (HIRE) – It provides incarcerated individuals and discharged ex-offenders with

job readiness training and job placement assistance to help them transition back into their communities as productive members of society. Info: Carrie Heck, [CHeck@dwd.in.gov](mailto:CHeck@dwd.in.gov) or 812-549-8634.

"This is one of our top programs," reported Bob Birge, DWD chief communications officer, who was with Payne. "We have over a thousand employers working with them."

- Indiana Adult Education – Programs provide math, reading and writing instruction free of charge to help individuals acquire the basic skills needed to earn a High School Equivalency diploma, go to college or enter an entry-level occupational certification program. Info: Jerry Haffner, [JHaffner@dwd.in.gov](mailto:JHaffner@dwd.in.gov) or 317-719-2406.

Birge reported, "Almost a half million, 470,000, Hoosiers don't have a high school diploma or its equivalent. We want to make sure we are reducing that number and providing a gateway for better opportunities for individuals."

• Innovation Network – This is made up of a series of networks throughout the state that serve local employers and their expertise of sector needs and talent pipelines by aligning education and training providers to better serve community businesses. Info: Ryan Withem, [RWithem@dwd.in.gov](mailto:RWithem@dwd.in.gov) or 317-670-2213.

• Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) – The state-based, national nonprofit organization is dedicated to preventing dropouts among young people who are most at risk. Indiana's program consistently graduates about 94 percent of participants, and most students choose to continue their education or enter the workforce after graduating from high school. Info: Brianna Morse, [BMorse1@dwd.in.gov](mailto:BMorse1@dwd.in.gov) or 317-234-8434.

"Students in this program are getting scholarships to universities and access to employers. This is one of the platinum programs we have. It's creating a pathway for our future workforce and giving students a different way of thinking about their future. The governor wants to ensure we are increasing the JAG program to 250 schools," Payne announced. Area high schools that have this program include Jac-Cen-Del, South Ripley, Franklin County, South Dearborn and Lawrenceburg.

• Work Ethic Certificate (WEC) – Employability skills recognized in the governor's WEC have been vetted by Hoosier employers, community-based organizations and postsecondary education institutions and are designed to encourage students to meet the benchmarks that will assist them in their college or career goals. Info: Chris Fitzgerald, [CMFitzgerald@dwd.in.gov](mailto:CMFitzgerald@dwd.in.gov) or 317-233-6480.

• WorkINdiana – This enables an individual to earn a High School Equivalency diploma or improve basic skills in an adult education classroom and earn one of 30 industry certifications. Info: Nathan Storm, [NStorm@dwd.in.gov](mailto:NStorm@dwd.in.gov) or 317-741-1308.

• Sector Partnerships – Partnerships of employers within one industry sector or cluster work closely with the government, education and training, economic development, labor and community organizations in a region to focus on the workforce and other competitive needs of their industry. Info: Ryan Witham, [RWithem@dwd.in.gov](mailto:RWithem@dwd.in.gov) or 317-670-2213.

• Skill UP Indiana – This grant program will provide more than \$20 million to support the Innovation Networks. The grants will help address the skills gap and fulfill Indiana's workforce

needs. Info: Ryan Withem, [RWithem@dwd.in.gov](mailto:RWithem@dwd.in.gov) or 317-670-2213.

There are also some online resources, including

• [IndianaCareerReady.com](http://IndianaCareerReady.com) – This is a one-stop shop to provide the tools needed to prepare and find high-demand and high-wage jobs of the future.

• [IndianaCareerExplorer.com](http://IndianaCareerExplorer.com) – This is a career planning program for students, adults and parents to explore jobs in demand, assess skills and develop a plan to get the proper education and training needed in preparing for a career.

• [IndianaCareerConnect.com](http://IndianaCareerConnect.com) – This site is the No. 1 source of jobs in Indiana, with more than 100,000 open positions available.

"At the end of the day, part of our mission is connecting employees and employers .... We connect people to jobs or training to get them the jobs they want to live the lives they want," Payne pointed out.