

## **Regional job fair, business expo slated May 11 in Fort Atkinson**

**By Ryan Whisner [rwhisner@dailyunion.com](mailto:rwhisner@dailyunion.com) | Posted: Monday, May 2, 2016 8:37 am**

The Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium will host a regional job fair and business expo on Wednesday, May 11, in downtown Fort Atkinson.

The event will take place from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on the second and third floors of the Creamery Building, 201 N. Main St. Attendees are asked to park in municipal lot on the corner of Sherman Avenue and North Main Street to avoid placing a strain on neighboring businesses' customers and employees.

“Our area is experiencing a significant number of layoffs — including Tyson, McCain, Eaton and others — but the workforce is set to grow by nearly 1,000 jobs in the next year or so,” said Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium (JCEDC) executive director Genevieve Coady.

“This fair is critical in connecting our employers to the workforce needed. Recruitment and retention of quality workforce has been the number-one issue heard from area companies.”

Entry to the event is free. It is intended for persons seeking internships, apprenticeships, entry-level and professional-grade positions.

Coady said the morning hours from 10 a.m. to noon will focus on veterans and high school students seeking part-time/seasonal, apprenticeships and career-path opportunities. From noon to 6 p.m., it will be open to the general public.

Job-seekers are encouraged to bring their resumes and network with employers at booths.

As many as 50 Jefferson County employers are expected to participate.

“We are still accepting sign-ups for businesses,” Coady said.

Employers can register at <http://jcedcjobfair.eventbrite.com>. Space is limited and available to employers on a first-come, first-served basis.

The registration fee for mid- to large-sized businesses (more than five employees) is \$75, and for small businesses (five or fewer employees) is \$50.

For small businesses, there will be a job board to post job openings for free. Send an inquiry for this option to Coady at [genevievec@jcedc.net](mailto:genevievec@jcedc.net).

All proceeds will be used for marketing the event to recruit job seekers from both within Jefferson County, as well as the surrounding area.

Coady noted that there never has been such a regional approach to a job fair before in Jefferson County.

The Jefferson County Workforce Development Board does hold a fairly regular job fair at the Workforce Development Center in Jefferson.

“It doesn’t have as broad of a scope as the one we’re doing on May 11,” Coady said, noting that the event is being held in cooperation with the Workforce Development Board.

The JCEDC is asking area partners to help spread the word about the job fair to area employers and job-seekers. Flyers for distribution can be downloaded at:  
<http://jcedc.net/businesssolutions/jobfair.php>.

Coady noted that part of the decision to hold a larger event was in response to the mass layoffs of 2015.

Jefferson County accounted for nearly 10 percent of the announced layoffs in Wisconsin last year, with more than 1,000 jobs cut.

McCain Foods in Fort Atkinson; Littelfuse Inc., formerly Hamlin Inc., of Lake Mills; and Eaton Corporation in Watertown all announced layoffs of more than 100 employees each during 2015.

Also, Coady noted, the 140-year-old Tyson Foods meat processing plant in Jefferson is expected to close this summer. Company officials have referred to the closure and idling of the 400 employees as “part of efforts to improve the overall performance” of Tyson’s prepared foods business.

Fortunately, due to the opening of new facilities and renovations at former sites, a similar number of jobs is expected to be created in the next couple of years.

“With unemployment rates wavering between 3 percent and 5 percent in our area, we are nearing max employment for the workforce,” Jefferson County Administrator Ben Wehmeier said. “This job fair aims to connect more highly-skilled workers to the positions they seek in our area.”

For more information, contact Genevieve Coady at (920) 674-8711 or by email at [genevievec@jcedc.net](mailto:genevievec@jcedc.net).