

Region slowly reversing job loss trend

Registered nurses see highest demand; Construction sheds fewer jobs than last year

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MANKATO — If you're a registered nurse or home health aide, your skills are in high demand in the Mankato region.

So too are semi truck drivers, food service workers, office clerks and retail sales clerks.

As the region begins to slowly reverse a trend of continued job loss, a state survey of employers shows where job applicants are most likely to find openings. Registered nurses, with a median wage of \$62,000, remain most in demand in the nine county area, followed by home health aides who make a median wage of nearly \$23,000.

Truck drivers are the fourth most sought after employees these days, with a median wage of \$36,000.

Of the top 10 occupations most in demand, retail clerks rank 7th, janitors 8th, waiters 9th and licensed practical nurses 10th, according to the survey.

Over the past year, the greater Mankato-North Mankato region has been losing jobs overall, while other regional centers including St. Cloud and Rochester have been gaining. But local economic development officials say that trend began reversing, with jobs gains being posted starting earlier this spring.

One positive sign for the region is that the number of people filing first time unemployment benefit claims continues to fall dramatically in most sectors.

Construction, one of the hardest hit industries, is still shedding jobs in Region 9, but at a slower pace. July unemployment claims totaled 247 for construction workers in the area, 40 percent fewer than in July of 2009.

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Claims by former manufacturing workers totaled 209, less than half the number of claims filed a year ago.

For all occupations, more men than women were filing for first time benefits.

In the region, 575 men and 415 women filed for unemployment in July.

And older workers were most affected by layoffs. In the region, 203 people aged 40 to 49 filed for unemployment while 225 people aged 50 to 59 filed, a rate higher than other age categories.

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