

LABOR Works...



September 1, 2007—Vol. I Issue I

Let LABOR Work For You



Commissioner's Message



Albert Bryan, Jr.

Dear Reader:

Labor Works! and our vision is to make Labor Work for you! The potential that lies untapped within the Department and our employees is amazing. As I walk through offices I see the opportunity to change lives both inside and out of Labor. During the coming months we

will be evolving into an entity that is customer driven and results oriented. To accomplish this we will be needing the expertise and support of the entire Labor staff. You are the professionals and the success of this department relies on your participation and commitment.

This newsletter will serve as a vehicle to carry our message to all of our stakeholders. It belongs to us and as such I look for you to utilize it to its fullest potential. Few people recognize the diversity of Labor and how our daily efforts shape lives. From keeping our workers safe, to availing our youth to life skills and summer employment, Labor touches the lives of Virgin Islanders in a variety of ways. It is important that residents know the myriad of

services available to them. More importantly, we must be prepared to deliver them in a courteous and professional manner.

I congratulate the newsletter team for the focus and determination that has made this project a reality and look forward to your thoughts and ideas in future issues. I stand committed to creating a Department of Labor that *“provides effective programs and services designed to develop, protect and maintain a viable workforce in order to promote economic growth, employment opportunities, stability and a higher standard of living in the territory.”*

Sincerely,

Albert Bryan, Jr.

Commissioner

Completing the GED in the Comfort of Your Home



Collaboration, Convenience, and Proactive are the words the Department of Labor (DOL) is using to describe its new pilot GED TV Initiative. DOL, in collaboration with WTJX Channel 12, the Department of Education, and the Department of Human Services are providing 38 participants, territory-wide, with the opportunity to prepare for the GED exam in the comfort of their own home.

WTJX approached DOL with the proposal to

provide GED instruction on television. DOL partnered with Department of Education to simplify the process and provide a “one stop” registration procedure for all the GED participants. Orientation sessions were held on both islands; the registrants were pre-tested and placed in either the Pre-GED Connection or the GED Connection program. This pilot initiative allows the participants the opportunity to watch daily lessons three times a day on Channel 93. DOL provided all participants with the necessary workbooks to use throughout the program while watching the lessons ...*Story con'd on page 2*

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Labor Affairs-NAOMI C. EARP TAKES OFFICE AS EEOC CHAIR



WASHINGTON -- President George W. Bush has designated Naomi Churchill Earp as Chair of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

While Ms. Earp has served as Vice Chair of EEOC, she created and launched the EEOC's Youth@Work Initiative, a national education and outreach campaign to promote equal employment

opportunity for America's newest generation of workers. To date, the EEOC has held more than 1,600 Youth@Work events nationwide, reaching more than 112,000 students, education professionals, and employers. As Chair, Ms. Earp states that she will continue to emphasize the importance of positive work experiences for youth through the use of broad-based outreach, business and community group partnerships, and vigorous enforcement. In addition, she plans

to focus on race and color issues - in particular, enhancing the Commission's efforts regarding race and color-based merit factor cases and cause findings. Chairman Earp aptly shares her commitment that race and color issues will also arise in the context of the Commission's renewed focus on systemic litigation. EEOC enforces Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

Recently, Ms. Earp, along with other EEOC officials visited the Virgin Islands and gave a personal interview with our local media at the DOL-St. Thomas location.

Local Employment Outlook

According to the latest labor force estimates, the number of employed persons in the territory rose slightly over one thousand between 2005 and 2006. The largest increase was in the goods - producing sector (+ 740), primarily in the construction industry (+ 657). The services - providing sector also exhibited gains, however more modestly (+322), with payroll growth in retail trade, educational and

“ According to the latest labor force estimates, the number of employed persons in the territory rose slightly over one thousand between 2005 and 2006.”

health services, leisure and hospitality services along with a minute increase in territorial government employment. Consequently, the labor force

also expanded from 51,159 in 2005 to 51,831 in 2006, the number of jobless persons fell by 414 to 3,192 and the jobless rate dropped from 7.0 to 6.2 percent over the year.

In the district of St. Croix the unemployment rate moved lower from 8.2 to 7.3 percent while the St. Thomas - St. John district posted a drop from 6.2 to 5.2 percent during this period.

GED TV



on Channel 90, 93 or 12. Participants will be monitored on a weekly basis.

All parties involved understand life's daily setbacks and the underlying stigma associated with not having a high school diploma and/or its equivalency, a GED. This project is part of DOL's strategic initiative to reduce the number of individuals in the workforce without a high school diploma or GED. The program is geared towards individuals who may

not feel comfortable or are unavailable for a classroom setting. A toll free hotline and online assistance is available to each candidate.

DOL will monitor the program's participants and "tweak" the program if necessary. DOL plans to launch another session and a Spanish program by October 2007. The future of the program not only lies in the hands of the participants, but in those of all the parties involved. DOL looks forward to the successes of this partnership and

towards establishing further collaborative efforts in fulfilling our mission to create the premier workforce for the territory. This initiative, takes DOL one step further towards its strategic initiative to reduce the number of non-graduates in the workforce. Special thanks goes out to the DOL staff, especially the E&T staff for their assistance and support of the program.

If you are interested in signing up for the next session of GED TV, feel free to contact our offices for more information. **St. Thomas: 776-3700 or St. Croix: 773-1440**



Summer Youth Employment

The Department of Labor/Division of Training/Youth Job Development Training Program/Summer Youth Employment Program (YJDTP/SYEP) was designed to provide training and employment opportunities for youth between the ages of 14-25, inclusive. The program is fully supported by the General Fund and primarily serves customers who are deemed ineligible for federally funded programs through the Workforce Development Unit.

This summer 2007 we were able to place approximately five hundred forty-seven (547) customers territorially, representing forty-nine (49%) of the customers that applied. Unfortunately, we were unable to place all the customers who had showed interest in the Summer Youth Employment Program. We encourage our applicants to keep in contact with us and we in turn will maintain their records to be considered for other projects/programs throughout the

year. The Department of Labor is on the move and is passionate about serving our youth.

During this summer, customers participated in work experiences, internships, or special projects. They were placed in government agencies, private for profit businesses and private not for profit businesses. Heartfelt thank you to those private for profit businesses that participated and shared the cost of customers' wages and FICA 50/50: Carambola Golf Club, CariCare Family Health Services, HOVENSA, Seaborne Airlines, St. Thomas Nursing Home, Prime Thomas Auto Body Repairs, Trans-Caribbean Dairy Corp, and Youth With A Promise.

Overall, supervisors at participating agencies/businesses spoke well of the program and the customers. Customers appreciated the experience and the opportunity to earn money. Here are some of the feelings customers have shared: "I have

Wonderful program! Students have the opportunity to decide if the duties/tasks will be an interesting career in the future."

learned that real life accounting compared to college was more than what I was learning. I saw and was around so many different aspects of accounting that a text book or professor can't give to you."

"I am learning and have learned that being organized is very essential in today's world."

"Being that this is my first job within an office setting, I guess it has given me a greater sense of professionalism. It offers responsibility, thus helping to develop greater work ethics. Overall, it was a great experience."

"This is my second year supervising employees from this program and I feel as though the employees/students this year were well oriented to the workforce from dress code to time and attendance."

EMPLOYEE SHOWCASE ~ Melvin George



VIDOL is pleased to shine the spotlight on **Mr. Melvin A. George, Facilities Manager** in this issue's Employee Showcase! Melvin first joined the VIDOL family in 1992 as a Safety and Health Compliance Officer with the OSHA division. After a brief time away, he returned home in 2002 to head the Consultation Program. In 2006 he assumed the responsibilities of Facilities Manager and is giving a stellar performance in this capacity. He has demonstrated dedication and

commitment in attending to all of the physical plants' needs of our department, from changing light bulbs to bodily relocating furniture and equipment. This he does for the six separate office locations of VIDOL. He has, by far, the most physically demanding job in our department. In addition, he has a full plate of administrative responsibilities to perform. Yet, he does it all with an appreciation of purpose, a sense of urgency, a cheerful spirit, and a great sense of humor. He is our "Hercules." *Thank you Melvin for a job well done and keep up the good work.*



Legal Corner



Every Quarter, Check out the LEGAL CORNER to update your legal humor

DUMB LAWS:

In **Arizona**: it's illegal for men and women over the age of 18 to have less than one missing tooth visible when smiling

In **California**, nobody is allowed to ride a bicycle in a swimming pool.

In **Illinois**, the law forbids eating in a place that is on fire.



UPCOMING LABOR MONTH ACTIVITIES...

St. Thomas:

54 A&B Kronprindsens Gade
St. Thomas, VI 00802
Phone: (340)-776-3700
Fax: (340)-714-4994

St. Croix:

#2203 Church Street
Christiansted, VI 00820-4612
Phone: (340)-773-1994
Fax: (340)-773-0094

Visit us on the Web:

www.vidol.gov

Newsletter Team:

June Austin, Janelle Gumbs, Gary
Halyard, Rhona Martinez, Cindy
Richardson and Rupert Ross

9-2-07: Church Services

STT: Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Church **10:30 am**

STX: New testament Church of God—Estate Whim **11:00 am**

Every Wednesday— Customer Appreciation Day STT/ STX

9-15-07: Career Fair—STX Canegata Ball Park **10:00 am—2:00 pm**

9-20-07: Employer Forum—STT—Holiday Inn

9-27-07: Employer Forum—STX—Gertrude's

9-29-07: Walk-A-Thon/ Beach Party—STT —Emancipation Garden to
Lindbergh Bay Beach

LABOR TRIVIA

Q: Name the Federal law which prohibits discrimination in employment based on color, sex, race, religion, and national origin?

A: Civil Rights Act

LABOR Will Always Remember ... Atty. John L. Sheen



JOHN LIONEL SHEEN was born to Charles Lionel Sheen and Mary Lillian Sheen, on December 31, 1940 in Christiansted, St. Croix. He was the first of three sons born to Charles and Mary. John had a great love for learning and a profound belief in education. Thus, following high school, he began his undergraduate studies at nearby Inter-American University of Puerto Rico in San German, Puerto Rico. He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of New York in Albany, New York, where he obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration. Although John loved living and working on the mainland, he also had a great love for his home, the Virgin

Islands. He, therefore, returned home in 1973. At that time, he began his career in public service in the Virgin Islands, working for the Tenth Legislature. Desiring to further his education and wanting to fulfill his dream of becoming a lawyer, in 1984, John moved to Washington D.C. to attend Antioch School of Law. Three years later, he received his Juris Doctorate Degree and was given the opportunity to serve as a Mediator/Resolution Program Case Manager with the Superior Court in Washington, D.C. Equipped with more knowledge and experience, John was determined to return to the Virgin Islands to contribute to the place and to the people that he so dearly loved. In 1991, he returned home to work as an Executive Assistant at the Department of Housing, Parks and Recreations under the Farrelly/Hodge Administration. At the end of that Administration, John sought employment in the private sector where he served as an Associate Director of the Nature Conservancy.

In 1997, John returned to public service and began employment with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor where he functioned in various capacities, commencing with Acting Director /Coordinator of Labor Relations. He was later promoted to Assistant Commissioner and also served as Acting Commissioner under the Turnbull/James Administration. He contributed greatly to the Department of Labor, and diligently worked to ensure that the labor laws were enforced in a manner that was consistent and fair to the Employer and the Virgin Islands Workforce.

John Sheen was a kind, compassionate, and humble man.

