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Fox Cities Not-for-Profit Receives Second Grant to Retrain Laid-Off Retail Workers

The Fox Valley Workforce Development Board, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit based in Neenah, and one of 11 workforce boards in Wisconsin, has received a \$97,000 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development to serve individuals laid off from a retail job. This is the second grant the Board received to serve this group. In 2019, the Board received a \$64,580 grant, which has now been exhausted. This brings the total to \$161,996 to serve this growing group.

Throughout the country, retail workers are quickly becoming the casualties of consumers' move from brick and mortar stores to Amazon and other online shopping sites. Locally, vacant storefronts in our shopping centers and strip malls are the silent reminder that retail is not a growth industry. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, retail employment in Wisconsin is down by about 9,000 workers, (3.0%) from its peak in 2016.

In response to this growing trend, DWD is providing grants local workforce boards to cover retraining for individuals who have been laid off from a retail role. Besides covering the cost of tuition, books, supplies and equipment needed for retraining, the grants may also cover the cost

of housing, mileage, child care and other bills. This grant aims to train individuals for roles in sectors as varied as manufacturing, IT, healthcare, and transportation.

“We want displaced retail workers to consider skilled roles with higher pay, better benefits and paid holidays and vacations,” said Anthony Snyder, CEO of the Board. “Covering the cost of re-training is important, but also ensuring that other needs are met are critical to the individual completing their training without worry over a loss of income. Most retail workers are not given severance so we want to do everything possible to keep them focused on retraining efforts.”

“Retail stores continue to make up a significant part of our local economy, but it’s clear that the long-term future of many retail roles simply isn’t there,” said Snyder. “Besides layoffs due to closures, some stores are also ramping up their use of technology to replace workers, including the growing use of self-serve checkouts. Although primarily being done to deal with labor shortages, eventually a retail store cashier will be as uncommon as someone to pump your gas and check the air in your tires at the gas station.”

If you have been laid off from another sector outside of retail, the FVWDB also has financial resources available through Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding. Any laid off individual will be evaluated for all the programs available at their local American Job Center and will have a plan developed to meet their re-employment needs.

Locally, residents should visit the Fox Cities Job Center, 1802 Appleton Road, Menasha, or the Fond du Lac Job Center, 349 N. Peters Avenue, Fond du Lac. For more information or to set up an appointment with a local career planner, call 920-968-6373 or text 920-850-2032.

If you reside outside of the Fox Valley Workforce Development Board region of Calumet, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago counties, another workforce

board job center may have resources to assist. A list of all job centers in the State of Wisconsin is found at www.jobcenterofwisconsin.com.



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

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Fox Valley Workforce Development Board (FVWDB) is a not-for-profit building a world-class workforce in northeast Wisconsin. Serving six counties — Calumet, Green Lake, Fond du Lac, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago — FVWDB collaborates with a number of state and local workforce partners to help job seekers gain the skills needed to find employment and help businesses find the highly skilled workers they need.

FVWDB is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider.

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