



Education, health jobs grow in Franklin County area

By **MARCUS RAUHUT** Staff writer

Education and health jobs are weathering the economic downturn.

Over the past year, employment in those fields not only held steady but actually grew in Franklin County.

August employment figures from the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis show that the education and health care sector added about 300 jobs since last August.

Overall, jobs in Franklin County are down.

"Education, health care and institutional employment generally is strong and less subject to recessionary trends. That's not to say they're totally immune, but they are less impacted," said L. Michael Ross, president of Franklin County Area Development Corp. "The manufacturing sector and the service sector are impacted more adversely."

Franklin County lost an estimated 200 manufacturing jobs in August. About 1,400 have been lost since August 2008.

The Center for Workforce Information and Analysis said county-wide employment in

manufacturing is at its lowest point in at least 19 years,

"The most consistent message that we seem to be receiving among our larger OEMs is that they believe the recession has bottomed. They're not projecting an immediate recovery, but the good news is they believe it's not going to get worse," Ross said.

Franklin County's seasonally adjusted jobless rate rose one-half of a percentage point to 8.8 percent from July to August, reaching the highest level since August 1984.

The total non-farm job count is down about 2,400 from a year ago, according to the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis.

The education and health services sector was the only private sector to show growth in Franklin County during the past 12 months. The 3.3 percent growth rate beat the state's increase of 2.2 percent in that sector.

John Rinaldo, branch manager of Manpower, an employment agency on Wayne Avenue in Chambersburg, said that while the education and health sector has grown in Franklin County, other service sectors have been stagnant.

The job market for construction and durable and non-durable manufacturing continues to be weak, he said.

"But we are seeing some improvement out there. It's really hit or miss. Some people are really

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picking up and some are not," Rinaldo said.

In Fulton County, manufacturing jobs actually increased in August by about 200. JLG Industries in McConnellsburg plans to rehire several hundred laid off employees to build all-terrain MRAPs for the Defense Department.

Fulton County's unemployment inched downward for the second consecutive month to 14.9 percent in August.

About 30,000 people statewide will exhaust the maximum 79 weeks of unemployment benefits by the end of the month -- the first large wave since the recession began. About 300 Franklin County residents are part of that wave.

The House approved a bill last week to extend jobless benefits in 25 states where unemployment is the highest, including Pennsylvania.

Gov. Ed Rendell and the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry are backing the effort to extend federal unemployment compensation.

Franklin County tied Snyder County for the 26th lowest jobless rate in the state in August. Centre County had the lowest in the state at 5.9 percent.

Unemployment in Franklin County rose above the state level of 8.6 percent in August but was still below the national rate of 9.7 percent.

Ross said many local manufacturers expect 2010 to be slightly better than 2009, but expect to see more recovery in 2011.

"The fact that they had a decent month in August was not to, in any way, suggest they're ready to claim victory, but there's a growing consensus that this has bottomed. We're optimistic that there's going to be good things happening down the road, but how quickly remains to be seen," Ross said. "There have been some announcements that pertain well to Franklin County, like Norfolk Southern and Volvo, and we're working on a number of other projects."

Marcus Rauhut can be reached at mrauhut@publicopinionnews.com or 262-4752.

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