



Shaping the Economy

A Monthly Newsletter from the West Central Workforce Development Board

10th Anniversary Edition

December 2006

Ten Years of Progress

(Article written in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the West Central Texas Workforce Development Board by Mary Ross, Executive Director)

Executive Director

Mary Ross

Board Members

Brenda Adams
 Alice Andrade
 Chance Barr
 Dixie Bassett
 Jeff Benton
 Dave Boyll
 William (Lex) Browning
 Robert Cobb
 Randall Conner
 Dave Dalzell
 Rebecca Downing
 Fran Farmer
 Marilyn Flournoy
 Andrew Gannaway
 Samuel Garcia
 El Wanda Grogan
 Petty Hunter
 Mary Island
 Robert Jimenez
 Claire Johnson
 Gary Larremore
 Katy Lord
 Michael McBroom
 Michael McMahan
 Virginia Mosier
 Philip Nichols
 Cynthia Pearson
 David Polnick
 Lori Rodriguez
 Thomas Winter

MISSION

Our mission is to provide an effective local service delivery system to place Texans in jobs and to equip workers with skills needed to foster economic development.

It's hard to believe that ten years ago in September 1996, Governor George W. Bush, certified the West Central Texas Workforce Development Board, the eighth region of 28 areas in the State to attain certification. Certification of the Board was the culmination of 28 months of work by a study committee comprised of county judges, mayors and representatives of agencies that would be affected by the creation of a workforce board. SB 642 and HB 1863, which created local workforce development boards and an integrated delivery system for workforce services, required all 19 of the area county judges and the Mayor of Abilene to agree on the formation of a board. Perhaps this explains why the process took 28 months

Reaching agreement to form a local board was just half of the challenge. Once agreement was reached, a smaller group of five county judges, representing different areas of the 19-county West Central Texas Council of Governments region, and Abilene Mayor Gary McCaleb had to develop the guidelines under which the board would operate as well as select and appoint the first board members. Individuals had to be nominated by a chamber of commerce, school, labor union, state agency, or community-based organization. On July 1, 1996, the elected officials, led by Taylor County Judge Lee Hamilton, met to appoint 27 members from the pool of 61 nominations. The selections were forwarded to the Governor's Office along with all the necessary paperwork supporting the Board's formation, which led to the certification of the Board on September 11, 1996. Who

could have imagined that five years later this date would be known throughout the world for another reason.

And, as they say, the rest is history . . . Well, the last ten years haven't been quite that easy or unremarkable... But before moving forward, I need to digress and recognize a few key individuals. The study committee would not have been successful without the leadership and foresight of Brad Helbert, Executive Director of the West Central Texas Council of Governments, and Tom Smith, Director of Employment and Training for the WCTCOG. These two men invested tremendous time and energy to assist in the formation of the Board and its continued support in the early months.

The Board also owes much of its success to the visionary guidance of Taylor County Judge Lee Hamilton, the first Chair of the five-member Chief Elected Official Workforce Committee. Despite concerns by some that the newly formed workforce board might take actions that negatively impacted local organizations, Judge Hamilton stated that the board had to function independently and that volunteer citizens who served should be trusted, not second-guessed, to make the best decisions for the region. His support and belief in the knowledge and wisdom of local citizens served as the foundation that has guided the Board's actions throughout its ten-year history. Callahan County Judge Roger Corn, who currently chairs the CEO Committee, has maintained this philosophy of support and independence.

(continued on back page)

Economic Indicators

West Central WDA				Texas			West Central WDA		
	Oct 06	Sep 06	Oct 05	Oct 06	Sep 06	Oct 05	Average Weekly Wage		
Labor Force	158,737	159,415	157,175	11,622,409	11,535,540	11,339,714	WDA	Texas	
Employment	152,104	152,832	150,933	11,088,131	10,995,414	10,780,179	2nd QTR 06	\$544	\$781
Unemployment Rate	6,633	6,583	6,242	534,278	540,126	559,535	2005 Avg	\$536	\$823
	4.2	4.1	4.0		4.6	4.7	2004 Avg	\$516	\$799

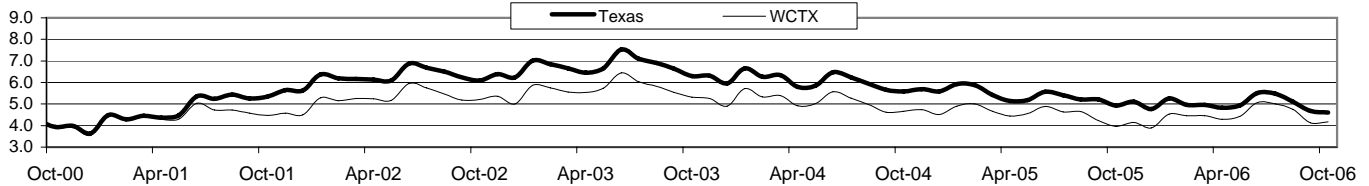
West Central Texas Workforce Development Area

October 2006

Civilian Labor Force Estimates (Not Seasonally Adjusted)

	West Central Texas WDA				Texas			
	CLF	Employed	Unemployed	Rate	CLF	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Oct-06	158,737	152,104	6,633	4.2	11,622,409	11,088,131	534,278	4.6
Sep-06	159,415	152,832	6,583	4.1	11,535,540	10,995,414	540,126	4.7
Oct-05	157,175	150,933	6,242	4.0	11,339,714	10,780,179	559,535	4.9

Historical Unemployment Rates



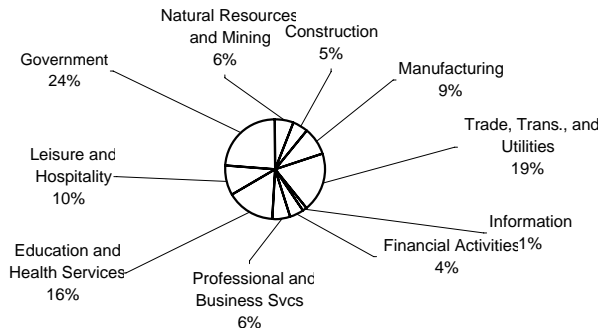
Total Claims

	Oct-06	Sep-06	Oct-05	OTY
Initial	662	412	534	128
Continued	2,215	1,991	3,365	-1,150
Continued Claims for the Week of the 12th				
Continued	519	492	669	-150

Average Weekly Wage

	WCTX	Change	Texas
2nd Qtr 2006	\$544.04	7.84	\$781.37
2005 Average	\$536.20	20.63	\$822.95
2004 Average	\$515.57		\$799.03

West Central WDA Industry Composition 2nd Quarter 2006



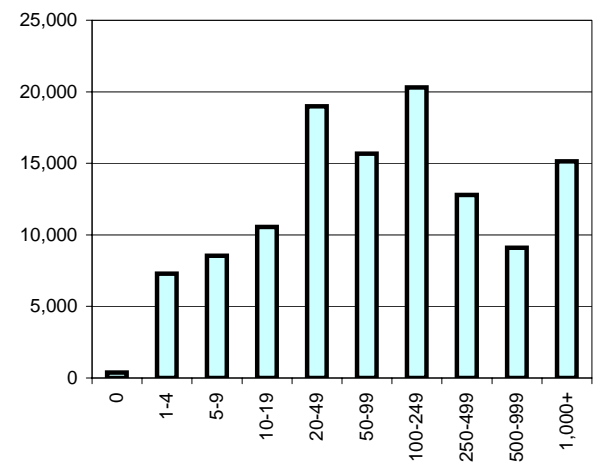
Top 10 Private Employers in the WDA 2nd Quarter 2006

3M COMPANY MANUFACTURING COMPANY
 ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
 ABILENE REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER
 AMS BUSINESS SOLUTIONS & STERLING PERSONNEL
 BROWNWOOD MEDICAL CENTER LLC
 GIRLING HEALTH CARE INC
 HENDRICK MEDICAL CENTER
 KOHLER COMPANY
 UNITED SUPERMARKETS LTD
 WAL-MART ASSOCIATES INC

NAICS COVERED EMPLOYMENT QUARTERLY DATA 2nd Quarter 2006

SUPER SECTOR	Total	Change Quarter	Year
Natural Resources & Mining	7,039	392	1,064
Construction	5,705	-64	364
Manufacturing	10,309	163	437
Trade, Trans., and Utilities	21,968	209	388
Information	1,687	10	-14
Financial Activities	5,161	103	120
Professional and Business Svcs.	6,483	158	502
Education & Health Services	17,994	-444	-231
Leisure & Hospitality	11,226	460	693
Other Services	3,539	100	-46
Federal Government	1,992	56	310
State Government	6,046	80	68
Local Government	19,454	141	143
Nonclassified & Confidential	166	40	49
TOTAL	118,769	1,404	3,847

Size Class Employment Composition 2nd Quarter 2006



A Tribute to Ten Years of Workforce Board Leadership

As a newly-created organization, the West Central Texas Workforce Development Board was fortunate to have visionary leadership in defining its mission and purpose. The tradition of sound leadership has continued through ten years of progress and has helped to shape our regional workforce system into a recognized authority in workforce development efforts, both regionally and throughout the state. Our utmost appreciation and highest regard is bestowed on the following individuals for their role in our success...

Ross L. Jones, Coleman County District Attorney and a private practice attorney, served as the first Board Chair from 1996 to 1998. During his tenure, the Board created bylaws, operating policies and procedures, formed committees, hired staff and began discussing the formation of a single location for workforce services in Abilene. The Board entered into a contract with Region XIV Education Service Center to serve as the fiscal agent and employer of record for staff.

Cleve Whitener, President of Lauren Engineers and Constructors, served as Chair from 1998 to 1999. The Board took responsibility for childcare services during this period and the bylaws were changed to increase the membership from 27 to 30 members. In October 1998, the region was recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor at the Enterprise Award Ceremony in Washington, DC as “best in class” in the Baldrige category of process management.

Dennis Gloyna, Area Manager of Southwestern Bell, served as Chair from 1999 to 2001. The grand opening of the Workforce Center on May 24, 2000 was also an educational event that included a panel discussion with area legislators and dialogue sessions with each of the three Workforce Commissioners, Chair Diane Rath, Commissioner Ron Lehman and Commissioner Terry O’Mahoney. The introduction of the consent agenda began moving Board meetings from an operational to a strategic focus.

Claire Johnson, Manager/Co-Owner John L. Johnson, DDS, became the first (and still only) female to serve as Chair from 2001 to 2003. The Board partnered with the Development Corporation of Abilene and the Brownwood Economic Development Corporation to conduct a regional workforce assessment (better known as the Wadley-Donovan Study). One of the Board’s long-time dreams was realized with the creation of the Workforce Investment Fund that was launched in January 2003. Since it’s creation, 544 new jobs have been created, 1305 jobs retained and \$577,000 expended in WIF grants with a cash match of \$1.49 million by employers.

Ken Becker, Executive Director of Sweetwater Chamber of Commerce, chaired the Board from 2003 to 2004. The Board assumed a leadership role in addressing the recommendations of the Wadley Donovan Study at a regional level by making a two-year commitment to provide staff support. In partnership with Region XIV Education Service Center, the Board established five, state-of-the-art video teleconferencing labs in fall 2003, making the Workforce Center the first one-stop center in the state (maybe the nation) to have such capabilities on-site. The lab has been used to conduct training, Executive Committee meetings and employer workshops.

Samuel Garcia, Owner of State Farm Insurance, served two terms as Chair from 2004 to 2006. One word, “partnership” best describes the philosophy and events of this period, which included co-sponsorship of a regional community visioning workshop, co-funding of the Center for Business and Economic Research website, a regional economic development workshop for ten community teams; collaboration with the Development Corporation of Abilene and Cisco Junior College to implement a fast track welding program; establishment of a health industry cluster and a coordinated regional application for a federal job training grant.

Gary Larremore, Training and Development Manager for Superior Essex, began serving in fall 2006. As a result of the Board’s most recent strategic planning session, the Board will continue to focus on partnerships, but at an even broader level, and on the areas of gathering and distributing workforce intelligence and identifying and training for critical skills in the current and future economy.

Ten Years of Progress *(continued from page 1)*

Now, back to our story of the Board. Ross L. Jones, Attorney, was selected as the first Board Chair, an office he held for two years. This was a busy time with the Board meeting every month (not even a break in the summer or December) to create bylaws, committees and operating policies, hire staff and develop a strategic plan for the region. The first (and still only) Executive Director, Mary Ross was hired in January 1997 to support the Board and manage a budget of less than \$100,000. But as time progressed, the budget and the staff correspondingly grew to the current budget of \$11.5 million and 13 full-time staff. Again, I would be remiss if I didn't give special recognition to Ross for his leadership and wisdom. He spent many hours on phone calls, in meetings and traveling to Austin to learn all the ins and outs of workforce, not to mention the complexities of the State and federal workforce systems and programs.

During the next eight years, six Board Chairs, each with strong leadership skills and a commitment to improving the region's workforce, would serve the Board. Over the next few years, the Board changed childcare contractors, moved to new facilities, opened new workforce centers and piloted new programs. More recently, the Board changed workforce center operators, consolidated youth programs under a single contractor and established a non-profit corporation. Most importantly, the Board has become a valued and recognized partner in development of the region's economy. The Board regularly partners with education, economic development and business to improve the current workforce, develop the future workforce and address the issues that ensure our region's competitiveness. The past ten years have been times of challenge, change, opportunity and advancement—sometimes all at the same time, but throughout the Board's history, one thing has never changed—the dedication of volunteer Board members to represent their communities and their commitment to making the best decisions for the region. For this reason, I feel very blessed to be associated with the West Central Texas Workforce Development Board--both the many fine volunteer members and the excellent staff who I am privileged to work with each day.



WEST CENTRAL TEXAS WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT BOARD
400 Oak St. * Abilene, Texas 79602

The Workforce Center is an equal opportunity employer. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request in individuals with disabilities. For TDD call 1-800-735-2898 or voice accessible communication at 1-800-735-2988