

## 'Middle-skill' jobs could be path to success

By Cheryl Moore Guest writer

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As we tackle California's unemployment challenges, it's great to hear from a recent study by the Workforce Alliance, Skills2Compete and the California EDGE Campaign that 2.7 million "middle-skill" job openings are projected for the decade between 2006 and 2016.

Middle-skill jobs are those that require more than a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree. According to projections using California Employment Development Department data, approximately 43 percent of all job openings in California through 2016 will fall into this category.

These jobs are exceptionally diverse and well-paying, which makes them excellent alternatives to careers that require four or more years of college. In addition, many of these jobs are community-based, making them less susceptible to being outsourced. Among the numerous careers in the middle-skill category are medical technicians, police officers, firefighters, computer technicians, electricians, mechanics, air traffic controllers, construction workers and legal secretaries.

Also included are the middle-skill jobs being created from federal economic recovery funds that are being invested in building and repairing infrastructure, green jobs such as manufacturing renewable energy products and health-related careers to support the growing needs of our aging population.

Surprisingly, although opportunities already exist for these middle-skill careers, there is a shortage of qualified applicants. In Ventura County and across California, employers are scrambling to find trained workers. If not corrected, the skills shortage will have a negative long-term effect on local and state economic vitality.

The good news is that a recession is an ideal time for current and future job seekers to educate and/or train themselves. Many options exist for education and training for the variety of middle-skill careers. Community colleges, private career schools, nonprofit training organizations and apprenticeship programs all offer technical education programs. For more information about Moorpark, Oxnard, or Ventura community college programs, go to <http://www.vcccd.edu>.

Job training opportunities also are available through the Job & Career Centers in Ventura County. Adults, displaced workers and youths may qualify for access to training programs and services. To learn about these programs or locate a nearby career center, go to <http://www.venturacountyjcc.org> or call 800-705-7705.

A full report of occupations, salaries and worker demand can be accessed at <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>. Click on “California Occupational Guides.” Additional middle-skill information can be found at the Ventura County Workforce Investment Board Web site, <http://www.wib.ventura.org>.

— Cheryl Moore is the executive director of the Workforce Investment Board of Ventura County, which administers federal funds that help support the Job & Career Centers and other adult, youth, and employer programs and services in Ventura County.



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