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## Saving jobs just as good as creating them



**By Steve Hunt**  
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We hope you had a chance to read Staff Writer Shea Johnson's frontpage story Sunday on the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board.

According to data provided by the WIB, more than 2,500 unemployed High Desert residents have found jobs in the past two years with help from that county agency. Countywide, the figure stood at 8,000.

The WIB received a federal allocation of just over \$15 million for each of the past two years. If you do the math, that works out to taxpayers spending about \$3,750 per person to help those 8,000 find work.

In government, that's a bargain. Especially when you consider those 8,000 are no longer receiving unemployment or other county, state or federal entitlements.

But what really caught our eye was a program that WIB Executive Director Sandy Harmsen told Johnson about. It's a specialized layoff aversion program in which WIB partners with consulting firms to help struggling companies.

Because businesses with 50 or more employees are required to notify the county of pending layoffs, the WIB is able to take preventive measures to try to head off those job cuts.

Harmsen said in the past two years, this program — which uses federal Rapid Response dollars — has saved 686 jobs at 47 local businesses. It also has created 114 new jobs and helped those struggling companies save \$13.5 million in operational costs and revenue.

The WIB gets the consultants to visit the companies and help them find efficiencies. The consultants don't get paid until after the county receives confirmation that jobs were saved.

Harmsen said the WIB was one of the first in the country to use Rapid Response funding to try to prevent layoffs.

It's a creative idea that should be copied throughout the country. Creating new jobs is important, but you can't go wrong when you save jobs and help struggling companies to gain strength.

Meanwhile, the WIB continues to try to match up unemployed High Desert residents with local employers. It will hold the High Desert Regional Job Fair from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday at the Hilton Garden Inn, 12603 Mariposa Road, Victorville.

There will be employers in several different sectors looking to hire: Health care, warehousing, hospitality, manufacturing, technology and construction. Some will conduct interviews with job candidates at the event.

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If you're looking for work, we advise you to take plenty of copies of your resume, dress like you want a job and head to the Hilton on Wednesday morning.

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**Job Fair**

Wednesday, Aug 13, 9:00 am  
Hilton Garden Inn, Victorville

**Doctor Who Season Premiere**

Monday, Aug 25, 7:00 pm  
Cinemark at Victor Valley Mall, Victorville

**Back To School Skating Party**

Thursday, Aug 28, 6:00 pm  
Holiday Skate Center, Victorville

**City of Victorville Fall...**

Saturday, Oct 4, 10:00 am  
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