

Volunteerism Part of Economic Recovery

Greater Peninsula citizens and organizations contribute to unemployment solutions

Newport News, VA - - President Obama's *Serve America Act* is a direct call to action for American citizens to take the initiative to "change history's course" through volunteerism and service. And, in the Greater Peninsula region, the community has stepped up its volunteering efforts with a mission to get the unemployed connected with services that can get them back to work. The program is called SHARE [Sharing How Access to Resources Empowers] Network, and it provides satellite access points at frequently visited community gathering places that offer job search services. These access points are known as SNAPS [SHARE Network Access Points], and are staffed mostly by volunteers who receive training from workforce development professionals affiliated with the Peninsula Worklink (PW), the region's One-Stop Career Centers.

The PW is funded through the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development (PCFWD) which oversees federally-funded workforce initiatives and provides program oversight and operations for the Centers that serve citizens with employment and training services. PCFWD President and CEO Matthew James said, "The concept of a SNAP is very powerful for the community on many levels. It engages volunteers to help keep the community working and growing, and it connects citizens with our region's faith-based and community-based organizations. SNAPS can serve people within their familiar neighborhoods and assist them with many job search services and resources that may not be accessible otherwise."

The Greater Peninsula region has a total of 18 SNAPS and provides dedicated volunteers who help citizens conduct self-directed job search activities, become more comfortable using the computer, complete job applications, create resumes, and connect individuals to other supportive services. The benefits to the community include 1) a high return on investment [serving more people with more hours and fewer resources]; 2) flexible locations at the neighborhood level, in both rural and urban communities; and 3) an extended reach into neighborhoods where the PW Centers are not located.

The SHARE Network was launched by the Department of Labor, with Virginia being one of 16 states that have adopted the initiative. Dr. Ned Carr, executive director for the PW Virginia Workforce Center, is an integral partner, and leads the efforts for the Greater Peninsula SNAPS. Said Carr, “We are very fortunate in this region to have outstanding partners as part of the One-Stop Career Center.” We have 18 SNAPS in the region to serve the community, and have recruited over 100 volunteers and agency employees. The outpouring of community support has been phenomenal.”

The PW SHARE team was recognized by the State Workforce Agency as the “SHARE Network Team of the Year”. Lisa Taylor, one of the PW SHARE Coordinators, was awarded a “Certificate of Achievement” for successfully establishing regional SNAPS. Taylor said, “We have wonderful volunteers and great community partners that contribute to our success. One of our SNAP sites, Good Seed Good Ground, won a Virginia State Award as the most successful SNAP site, by seeing the most customers in its first year of existence (1,907 customers served). We have passionate people within our community that really care about helping our job seekers.”

For a complete listing of the Greater Peninsula SNAPS, or for more information on the PW SHARE Network and how to volunteer, go to www.PCFWD.org/SNAPS

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